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PUBLISHER'S NOTE



Giselle Bernard
Publisher

As I sit here trying to decide what to write as my Publisher's Note this month, I try to contain my anger and disappointment as to all that is going on in our country today. I am sure you can agree that these are uncertain times, and we all need to do what we can to see that we survive as a cohesive group of business owners within an awesome industry. We need to



support our local businesses as well. Never assume! Always reach out to those within your business and personal network and ask how they are doing. Ask if there is anything you can do to assist them in growing business. I promise you, rarely does a good deed go undone. God Bless!



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Madsen Inspired to Start Sky Builders

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

Isn't it always a woman who changes a man's plans? For Henrik Madsen, it was Laura.

You see, in 1988 Henrik was a young Danish carpenter in the United States for a year on a trainee visa. He wanted to take a break after completing his formal training in construction management, business and an apprenticeship

in carpentry. He was planning on taking over his father's construction company in Denmark because his father retired. He was working at Danish Inspirations furniture store in Houston when he met Laura. This Dane was inspired to stay in Houston, soon starting his business with hand tools shipped from Denmark and a pick-up truck.



And so began Sky Builders, LLC, a custom remodeling company in Houston.

Madsen found his niche in the Memorial Villages and West University neighborhoods of Houston where he completes about 50-60 projects each year with his employee team of two carpenters and three painters plus subcontractors -- plumbers, framers, electricians -- as needed. He also does projects in Clear Lake, where he lives.

"It took about 5-6 years to get to meet people, but 30 years later, the company is not too big, just right," he continued. The size of his business fits him perfectly, he said, because if it grows, he would have to hire more employees and wouldn't be able to control the operation as efficiently.

"With more guys, it becomes a different business."

About 75 percent of his business comes from referrals from a realtor friend in those neighborhoods, while others come from architects who prefer him or from the "friend-of-a-friend" referrals or now from the children of early clients. His company's reputation is such that people will wait for months for him to be available, he said.

"You have to know how to work in a nice home. My crew knows how to be in a house. You've got to put up plastic protection and drop cloths. Vacuum. Clean up. Be careful. Be clean. I put a lot of emphasis on this. Dirt in corners is where a lot of complaints can start."

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Sky Builders will do projects as small as a powder room because of the potential of return business. It's not unusual for a small project to lead to a major project, he said. After Sky Builders has done that first project, "many of my customers become repeat customers." "You have to work hard, even six days a week, and you have to be honest."

As custom remodelers, "we do everything because we're well-rounded in construction. There's a wide spread of things we do," he explained. "We can do a small job and can do a big one, too. Sometimes we need a big job to offset small ones to keep the crew busy."

Although Sky Builders will tackle big projects, such as house tear-downs and rebuilds, it doesn't build speculative homes. "We did a tear-down in 2018-19. The clients wanted a custom house that is easy to maintain in the Danish-modern style with good quality materials and good insulation to keep air conditioning costs down to \$50-60 in summer. It was about 2,500 sq. ft."

He encourages clients to come visit their projects and to ask questions, stating that he doesn't have anything to hide. "They want to know they can trust the contractor. If the client is happy, then I'm happy."

Half of Sky Builders' clients are people who want to upgrade their homes' appearances. "People now want black and white color schemes with white floors. They want us to tear out the travertine tile [that used to be popular]. They want bigger closets and back-lit mirrors."

Sky Builders' clients fall into the "mature" clientele of people he's worked with off-and-on during the years he's been in Houston who are now in their 70s and 80s or are people in their 30s and 40s who are professionals.

For many companies, the COVID-19 pandemic hurt their business. "I've never been as busy as I was in 2020. We kept on going during the pandemic. I met with clients over Zoom [visual software]. We worked outside much of the time, and we had masks on. I had only one client who decided to wait [until the pandemic was over]," Henrik noted.

As the business owner, Madsen meets with potential clients among his duties. "I tell them, 'I'm not selling anything. I'm here to listen.'" He also takes measurements and creates proposals with the help of his wife, who left her job working in a Big Five accounting firm to become his assistant. She gets prices for tile, fixtures, finishes and lighting to complete the proposals. "We put together a



very detailed bid. It's not a lump sum. The more details I put in it, the more people can see what we're doing. We're upfront on costs and profit. If there's a change order, we show them the cost difference."

Madsen continues to look for ways to improve the experience for his clients. He now offers 3D renderings to help clients visualize their final product in addition to his proposal.

He continued, "If something goes wrong, I know that I'll have to take the heat straight on. Like a client told me years ago, 'Just put your big boy pants on and fix it.'"

Although it's been 20 years since Henrik pounded nails, he still finds construction very satisfying. "You can stand back and see what you did. It's very rewarding. While a lot of people don't show big emotions, most of our clients are really happy. It's like TV, it truly is. You knocked walls down, but they couldn't see how it would turn out. Then they say, 'Oh, my god, this is really great!'"

And if you're wondering about the Laura that inspired Henrik Madsen to stay in Houston, well, Henrik sees her every day. You see, she's the wife who assists him in the business!



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TOP UPGRADES TO CREATE LUXURIOUS KITCHEN & BATH SPACES!

By Linda Jennings

The best product designs combine beauty and functionality to create a home that lives well! From jaw-dropping kitchen faucets to luxurious bath vanities, these

new products elevate the luxury factor providing fixtures that are a wise investment with a wow factor!



Hamat USA KANTA Dual Function Kitchen Faucet

SINUOUS KITCHEN SENSATION

The new KANTA Dual Function Kitchen Faucet from Hamat transforms the flow of water into something outright futuristic. The fixture works as a rotating faucet while seated in the base and as a fully hand-held faucet when removed. This faucet is the epitome of form following function. Crafted from solid brass, KANTA is available in six different finish combinations including brushed brass, brushed nickel, polished brass and polished chrome (with black sleeve) and brushed nickel and polished chrome (with silver sleeve). With a robust 1.75 gpm maximum flow rate, the KANTA is equipped with a signature QuickConnect system designed for a secure and easy installation.

CLASSIC STYLE - MADE IN AMERICA

The Classic vanity from Lenova, a freestanding frameless design with arched trim, is as timeless as its name suggests. The latest design in a line of bathroom vanities made in Hillside, Illinois, the Classic captures the best of American innovation and old-fashioned craftsmanship. Lenova uses only the best sustainable hardwoods, veneered plywood, and engineered substrates to stand up to the most demanding bathroom environment without warping or splitting. Baked catalyzed paint and clear finishes ensure the vanities will look new and last for years. Blum



Classic Vanity from Lenova

hinges and drawer slides offer soft-close action and years of trouble-free use. The Classic in Candelite finish is the perfect choice for the natural trend of “bringing the outside in.”

NEW SHAPE FOR MINIMALIST ICON

Rettangolo K, the latest iteration of Gessi’s legendary Rettangolo Faucet Collection, offers a fresh twist to a



Rettangolo K, the latest iteration of Gessi

signature line. The redesigned faucet focuses on a sleek diagonal line that bisects the body, reshaping its chic silhouette and evoking a futuristic K. The Rettangolo K has a striking profile and a perfectly proportioned look that is timeless and elegant yet also very fashion-forward. The single-lever design is available in 15 different configurations to complement basins, tubs, bidets and showers. The Rettangolo K Collection is offered in an array of on-trend finishes, including copper, chrome, polished nickel and brushed black metal. .

FLOORED BY STYLE

A floor-mounted tub filler creates an immediate wow factor in the bathroom. Add a trendy industrial-style vibe and the results are truly electric. The Serie 250 tub filler by Isenberg captures the look with a boldly curved silhouette and knurled handles. Standing 40” tall, this dramatic unit was created in the Isenberg Design Lab and features solid brass construction, single lever control of volume and temperature, and a convenient hand shower. The Serie 250 tub filler is offered in a choice of three finishes – chrome, brushed nickel and matte black – and is a great choice for fashion-forward bathrooms that want to have a cool, edgy style.



The Serie 250 tub filler by Isenberg



Acquabella shower base in Beton finish

ARTISAN TEXTURE

Acquabella’s Beton finish for shower bases has the look and feel of cement, blending artistic inspiration with a trendy industrial vibe. The high-definition finish is

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Dialogue with a Designer

House of Cottet LLC

BATHS OF AMERICA opened its doors in January 2005 when brothers Ali and Zeeshan Sultanali decided to start selling plumbing and tiles to the Houston market. Baths of America focuses on customer service and partners only with brands offering quality products and customer service. In addition to plumbing, Baths of America now offers door and cabinet hardware, major appliances, cabinetry, and countertops. It has turned into a one-stop shop for designers, builders, and architects, offering the latest designs and trends in the market.

This month BATHS OF AMERICA speaks with Alison Cottet, owner of House of Cottet, LLC; providing interior design solutions to residential and commercial clients, as well as new home builders throughout Houston and surrounding area, coordinating all aspects of their projects within budget and timelines.

Alison is described as down to earth and easy to work with, and her design philosophy stresses a close link between the disciplines of architecture and interior decoration. The end results are gorgeous environments defined by rich color palettes, refined materials and detailing that will AWE your guests. Her expertise ranges

from a wide range of styles, including traditional, modern, rustic chic, and eclectic.

BATHS OF AMERICA: What motivated you to go into the interior design field?

Alison Cottet: Being able to take a plain or nonfunctional space and turn it into something that is breathtaking and functional is what motivates me. Seeing the different styles from traveling led me into wanting to get into the field of Design. In my earlier years of my career, I became a project coordinator for a multimillion-dollar custom home builder where I was even more drawn to Interior design, and it led me to become the interior designer for all projects. The look on my clients faces when they walk into their beautifully designed home is what makes my job priceless.

BATHS OF AMERICA: How has the field of interior design changed since you graduated?

Alison Cottet: Social Media has grown, new programs have been created and a demand for E-designs has impacted the interior design industry. With social media being a big part of society now, Builders and remodeling contractors love to collab to show casing completed jobs. Clients are more interested in E-design more than ever and



we are digging it! For small room makeovers clients are not scared of taking on a project and get their hands dirty but just need direction from an interior designer and that is where I come in! With all of the new ways people are socializing new technology is made that helps designers show clients a sneak peek of what the space will look like.

BATHS OF AMERICA: *How can an experienced interior designer help a custom home builder or a remodeling contractor with their building or remodeling projects?*

Alison Cottet: Let's be honest, home builders and remodeling contractors are not interior designers plus don't have the time to be the role of designer. Partnering up with an interior designer like myself that is experienced makes the project run a million times smoother. Because of my background in project coordinating, I know how important it is to stay on schedule and have everything prepared to hand off to project managers.

BATHS OF AMERICA: *What sets you apart from other designers?*



Alison Cottet: My experience in working as a project coordinator for a custom home builder sets me apart from other designers. Knowing what builders and remodeling contractors are expecting when working with an interior designer is what has been appreciated and complimented. Knowing their processes helps me focus on deadlines and

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making sure my work is being completed before they are needing any of the selection. A lot of my work is using my creativity, but I also strongly enforce structure and stay organized throughout the project.

BATHS OF AMERICA: What has been your most challenging project and why?

Alison Cottet: Honestly it would have to be my own home! With the skill of being able to put together different design styles that I all love so much It became hard to commit to only one style for my home. If I am working on a midcentury modern project with a client then I come home wanting to add a little of that style into my living room because I am inspired.

BATHS OF AMERICA: How do you begin the materials selection process when working with builders' and remodelers' clients?

Alison Cottet: The key to having a successful outcome when working on a project with a builder or remodeling contractor is to finalize design selections as early in the construction process as possible. We start by looking at inspirational pictures and getting a good feel of what direction we are wanting to go for as far as style. Budgets are discussed and design plans are made. Putting together selections and designing every little detail on paper as soon as architectural plans are ready is what makes our design process different than other design firms. Imagine having all selections finalized while the foundation is being poured!

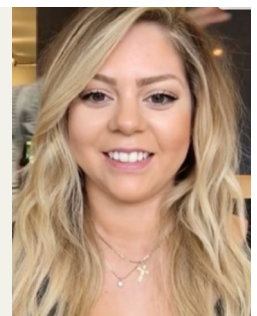
BATHS OF AMERICA: What are some common mistakes made by builders and homeowners?

Alison Cottet: I run into builders and homeowners wanting or thinking their home needs to have the same two-color tone scheme throughout the entire home. This is a mistake that is on going and takes some convincing to change. A home should flow and keep the same esthetic throughout but there can be specialty rooms that make the space exiting and unique. Think of a wet bar having high gloss emerald-green cabinets with a fun black and white mosaic backsplash and brass hexagon cabinet hardware vs an all-white wet bar that matches the kitchen. Now color is not everyone's cup of tea but playing with textures, tones, and layering can do wonders to a space!

BATHS OF AMERICA: Speaking about staying current, how do you keep yourself up to date with all the design trends happening in the industry today?

Alison Cottet: Attending design seminars, keeping up to date with new trends and techniques with our trade partners, and following design organizations is how we stay current with design trends. As we all know design trends come and go and we are always up to date on what is in, but we also know what are staple looks that are timeless, so you don't have to update your home regularly. Traveling to beautiful places around the world has always been a secret tool on keeping up to date with trends and incorporating them into my designs. Interior design is totally different around the world, and it is very inspiring seeing new trends that have not hit America yet!

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Housing Affordability Plunges on Soaring Material Costs, Rising Home Prices



Soaring building material costs, high demand and low inventory have added tens of thousands of dollars to the price of a new home and caused housing affordability to fall to its lowest level in nearly a decade during the second quarter of 2021.

According to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)/Wells Fargo Housing Opportunity Index (HOI) released today, 56.6 percent of new and existing homes sold between the beginning of April and end of June were affordable to families earning the U.S. median income of \$79,900. This is down sharply from the 63.1 percent of homes sold in the first quarter of 2021 and the lowest affordability level since the beginning of the revised series in the first quarter of 2012.

“Runaway construction cost growth, such as ongoing elevated prices for oriented strand board that has skyrocketed by nearly 500 percent since January 2020, continue to put upward pressure on home prices,” said NAHB Chairman Chuck Fowke, a custom home builder from Tampa, Fla. “Policymakers must address supply chain bottlenecks for building materials that are raising costs and harming housing affordability.”

“Recent NAHB analysis shows that higher costs for lumber products have added nearly \$30,000 to the price of an average new single-family home and raised the rental price of a new apartment unit by more than \$90,” said NAHB Chief Economist Robert Dietz. “With the U.S. housing market more than 1 million homes short of what is needed to meet the nation’s demand, policymakers need to focus on supply-side solutions that will enable builders to increase housing production and rein in rising home prices.”

The HOI shows that the national median home price surged to a record \$350,000 in the second quarter, up \$30,000

from the first quarter. This is the largest quarterly price hike in the history of this series. Meanwhile, average mortgage rates increased by 13 basis points in the second quarter to 3.09 percent from the rate of 2.96 percent in the first quarter. However, mortgage rates are currently running at 2.8 percent, which has provided some support for housing demand in recent weeks.

The Most and Least Affordable Markets

Pittsburgh, Pa., was the nation’s most affordable major housing market, defined as a metro with a population of at least 500,000. In Pittsburgh, 90.6 percent of all new and existing homes sold in the second quarter were affordable to families earning the area’s median income of \$84,800.

Rounding out the top five affordable major housing markets in respective order were Lansing-East Lansing, Mich.; Youngstown-Warren-Boardman, Ohio-Pa.; Scranton-Wilkes-Barre-Hazleton, Pa.; and Harrisburg-Carlisle, Pa.

Meanwhile, Cumberland-Md.-W.Va., was rated the nation’s most affordable smaller market, with 94.0 percent of homes sold in the second quarter being affordable to families earning the median income of \$60,800. Smaller markets joining Cumberland at the top of the list included Davenport-Moline-Rock Island, Iowa-Ill.; Sierra Vista-Douglas, Ariz.; California-Lexington Park, Md.; and Fairbanks, Alaska.

For the third straight quarter, Los Angeles-Long Beach-Glendale, Calif., remained the nation’s least affordable major housing market. There, just 8.4 percent of the homes sold during the second quarter were affordable to families earning the area’s median income of \$78,700.

In fact, the top five least affordable major markets were all located in California. In descending order, San Francisco-Redwood City-South San Francisco; Anaheim-Santa Ana-Irvine; San Diego-Carlsbad; and Oxnard-Thousand Oaks-

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California Faucets' D Street Bath Collection Reimagines Modern Flexibility with a Textural Twist



Highly customizable beach-city inspired series boasts mix-and-match spout styles, handle choices, textured inserts and dozens of luxurious finishes

(Huntington Beach, CA, August 3, 2021) California Faucets presents their most customizable bath series to date. The new D Street modular bath collection pays homage to the casual-yet-modern D Street community in Encinitas. Like its namesake surf town, the collection mixes fun and funky elements, such as smooth, knurled, or carbon fiber inserts with modern style spouts and handles. The result is an eclectic combination that adds personality to today's transitional and contemporary bathrooms.

"D Street adds a whole new dimension to customization. Not only can you play with geometric shapes and colors, but now you can experiment with textures, too," says Noah Taft, California Faucets Chief Marketing Officer. "All told, the palette of choices means over 500 unique configurations," Taft adds.

The range of options for the all-brass D Street collection

includes three spout styles in three unique sizes: the arc style Medium and High spouts, plus the more angular double-bend Quad spout. For handles, designers can choose from two clean and minimal styles: the cylindrical Stick handle or the more geometric, tapered Tang handle. And adding even more creativity and personalization into the mix, D Street offers a selection of textured handle inserts.

Pair a polished finish with a Knurled insert for contrasting texture, choose a Smooth insert in matte black to infuse an Art Deco vibe, or go with a Carbon Fiber insert for a high-tech, modern feel. The vast array of possibilities means there's a combination just right for virtually any contemporary or transitional bath design.



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Made-to-order from California Faucets' signature solid brass, D Street lavatory faucets come in 8" widespread and single-hole versions. The collection includes a complete line of coordinating accessories such as Roman tub sets, handshowers, shower trim, tub spouts, wall spouts, bidet sets and more, to carry the personalized look throughout the bath.

List pricing starts at \$739 for the D Street 8" Widespread Lavatory Faucet with Medium spout in Polished Chrome.



CF-D-Street-5302MK-SB-B



CF-D-Street-52-52F-52K-B-Handles



CF-D-Street-52-53-Spout-Hero



CF-D-Street-5202QF-PC-B

About California Faucets

At California Faucets we believe in artisan hands, not mass production. Since 1988, our factory in Huntington Beach has manufactured handcrafted bath products available in 28 finishes that can be easily customized or purchased exactly as shown in our catalog. We proudly provide the latest in bath and shower technology with innovations such as StyleDrain®, StyleTherm®, and ZeroDrain®. These groundbreaking innovations turn utilitarian products into beautiful design statements and are the heart of our ever-evolving line of bath faucets, shower fittings, luxury drains, and accessories. We've also applied the same handcrafted quality and custom options to a full line of kitchen faucets. Our Kitchen Collection combines Italian design with California craftsmanship and offers a full range of matching accessories for a thoroughly coordinated look. For more information about California Faucets call 800-822-8855 or visit CaliforniaFaucets.com.



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Sonoma Forge Coordinating Drains

Sonoma Forge's handsome Shower drains are reminiscent of industrial grates, with a solid, forged look and nickel-bronze tops. The ADA-compliant drains come in 4" square, 5" square, 6" square, 4" round, and 6" round. Sonoma Forge is renowned for its industrial-inspired faucets and fixtures that are hand-forged to create a beautifully raw and rustic effect. While emulating Sonoma Forge's aesthetic, their shower drains were designed to retain functionality and performance. Available in custom finishes they coordinate with the company's unique faucets.



5" Square shower drain in Hand-Hammered Steel finish

Continued from page 13

Ventura rounded out the top five.

Four of the five least affordable small housing markets were also in the Golden State. However, at the very bottom of the affordability chart was Corvallis, Ore., where 7.2 percent of all new and existing homes sold in the second quarter were affordable to families earning the area's median income of \$93,000.

In descending order, other small markets at the lowest end of the affordability scale included Salinas, Calif.; Napa, Calif.; Santa Cruz-Watsonville, Calif.; and San Luis Obispo-Paso Robles-Arroyo Grande, Calif.

Please visit nahb.org/hoi for tables, historic data and details.

Continued from page 9

amazingly practical with a non-slip surface that is resistant to impact, thermal shock and includes antibacterial properties for easy cleaning and maintenance. The base itself is constructed from the brand's signature Akron compound of polyurethan and mineral fillers that produces a solid finish. The Duo Beton base will appeal to those who love customization, with options for a hidden drain for a minimalist look or with a stainless steel grid for a bolder style. This unexpected texture in the shower feels amazing underfoot and adds prominence to an often-overlooked space.

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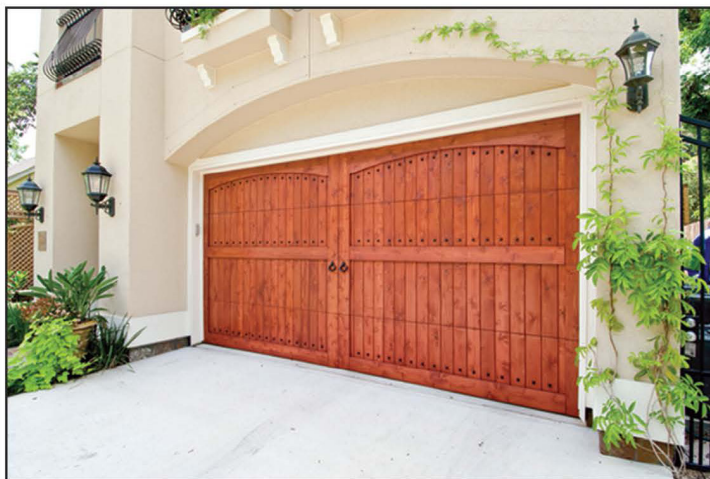
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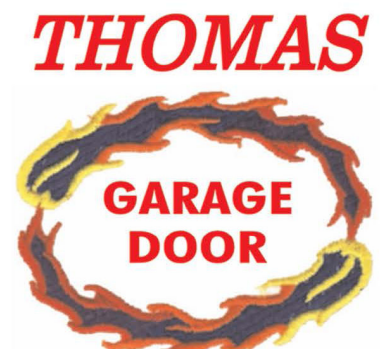
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Our mobile-friendly website allows potential customers to search and find your business 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from any device - including desktop, tablets and smartphones.

7 Your Competitors are Advertising

If you're still on the fence about advertising on our directory website, consider this one very important fact: your competitors are doing it. Each day that passes when you're not taking advantage of advertising on our site is another day you're losing market share to someone else.

Finally...a fast, easy and affordable way to grow your small business online.



Welcome to the Community Home Guide

Houston's newest digital marketplace; connecting homeowners with the local home builders, remodelers, renovation specialists & small home service companies.

We believe that Small Business is the backbone of our great country; therefore, the directory focuses on supporting our local, small

businesses. The very same businesses that are often the character of our neighborhoods and communities.

It is time to make buying from small businesses a conscious part of our routines, just like physical exercise — something you do because of the many benefits it brings.

Get Started Today: www.communityhomeguide.com

Phone: 832-317-4505 • Email: Gbernard43@aol.com

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