

# THE METROPOLITAN BUILDER

Greater Houston Edition

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## Dialogue with a Designer



 **BATHS**  
OF AMERICA  
FINE BATH & KITCHEN GALLERY

Traci Marlow Designs

Houston, TX







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*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 those brands which provide quality products and outstanding 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, showcasing the latest designs and trends in the market.*

*This month BATHS OF AMERICA speaks with Traci Marlow of Traci Marlow Designs, a full-service Interior Designer servicing the greater Houston area, who specializes in creating turning her clients dreams into a reality by creating the beautiful spaces in which to live.*

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

***Traci Marlow:*** My passion for design and interiors started as a young girl, when I was always changing my room or helping my mother with our home. I was obsessed with design magazines and fashion. One of my first big projects as a child was creating a very Parisian look in my bedroom with fabric walls and ceilings. Ha!

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

***Traci Marlow:*** This question has been asked of me many times. In my opinion, the business has changed tremendously. I attribute it [the changes] to social media, reality design shows, mass production of products and online availability. Clients are much more involved now.

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

***Traci Marlow:*** My favorite time to be involved is in the infant stages. For me personally, I offer a second set of eyes, seeing things from a real-life function and aesthetic. Luckily for me, I work with some of the very best architects and builders; however, I add a layer that is very necessary. Lighting can be just that, but until you know the particular art piece being installed on a wall, the insight on lighting knowledge for the wall is limited. That is where I come in. I see the family and how they truly live in the space. The translation from plans to real world always needs that design input. In the end it brings the plan to life.

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

***Traci Marlow:*** I only know what I do for my clients; it's much more than what I said above. Really looking at my clients' day-to-day lives and doing my best to make their homes function and feel true to them. In addition, I spend a lot of time on each piece, each area. It's not a mass rollout of what I always do; it is with real thought and planning, most times into the morning hours.

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

***Traci Marlow:*** The most challenging project. LOL. Well, I have had a few; however, one stands out in a tremendous way. It was post-Hurricane Harvey when families were at a standstill in the Houston area. A lot of them were living in conditions that were not easy while waiting for a contractor and designer to help. One particular job was the most stressful and complicated from 1/8-inch of base and casing. This is when I ask my clients, "Please trust me. Go to work, manage your family. Let me do what I do, and I assure you





your expectations will be met when it is complete. It is why you hired me.”

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

**Traci Marlow:** Ahhh, my favorite! The special details that make a home sing! Typically, I create a vision page with the look and feel of the space. From that moment sourcing of materials begins, and each one is dropped into a project database and a spreadsheet. This is my strength and my weakness. I am extremely particular and absolutely love interesting and unique finishes! With that said, I spend a lot of time on this process. I am a perfectionist, and it’s never complete until it’s great. Some [homes] may “sing” a black ring light chandelier. What is behind the scenes are hundreds of ring lights in every combination of materials,

and I obsess over just the right one. Currently I am sourcing 587 cabinet pulls. Yes, lots of coffee is needed!

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

**Traci Marlow:** In my opinion, it is missing the value of the designer, which results a lot of times in “we should have, wish we had thought of this, and how did we miss that?” Seeing the value [of using] a great designer from the start helps eliminate these moments and, even better, allows the plan to be truer and more complete before the builder closes in walls, etc. I see this more often than you would think. One of my current builders, Melrose Construction, gets this, and I am thankful. Sal [of Melrose Construction] asks for my input on plans from the start. It is the best feeling to know he values my input before he starts plumbing and framing. It makes for a great team.

**BATHS OF AMERICA:** *How do you keep yourself up to date with all the design trends happening in the industry today?*

**Traci Marlow:** I get a lot of literature, and ASID is very good about getting out industry information that is relevant and trending -- from environmentally motivated to resources.

**BATHS OF AMERICA:** *What is your favorite design style?*

**Traci Marlow:** Oh, wow! This question is like asking what my favorite band is! I love so many! All strike a different mood in me, and all are welcome at different times. I love a very classic, tailored space -- block panel, Charles Edward-style drum lighting, crisp polished nickel. My forever home, however, is absolutely a modern, masculine, moody space. A nod to Frank Lloyd Wright. Vaulted ceilings, sunken living space and floor-to-ceiling windows bringing the outside in. Warm tones, mixed white with lots of texture, yet minimal. My Instagram page regularly features my love for this style.

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