## THE METROPOLITAN BUILDER

Greater Houston Edition

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## Success Is Black and White for Thakkar & Co.

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Sneller Custom Homes & Remodeling: A Designers' Builder Dialogue with a Designer -Jennifer Burgess Loh, ASID

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## THE METROPOLITAN BUILDER

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By Kathy Bowen Stolz

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### PUBLISHER'S Note

**Giselle Bernard** Publisher

How exciting! We are meeting in person this year. Below is some of the information you'll want to know regarding the IBS, DCW and KBIS.

\*\*\*\*\*\*

The 2022 NAHB International Builders' Show® (IBS) is back and in person! The Builders' Show is the premier, once-a-year event that connects, educates and improves the residential construction industry. All registered IBS attendees will have access to Design & Construction Week® (DCW) in Orlando, Florida.

#### All Access Pass

### What does it include?

- 3-day access to all IBS education sessions, Tuesday-Thursday, February 8-10, 2022.
- 3-day entry to the IBS and KBIS exhibit floors, as part of Design & Construction Week in Orlando, Florida. See dates and hours for each show, Tuesday-Thursday, February 8-10, 2022. https://buildersshow.com

### Health & Safety Protocol Measures Being Taken to Keep All Safe

The Updated Health and Safety Protocol for DCW, which includes KBIS and IBS:

### All registered attendees and exhibitors are required to provide:

Proof of a Negative COVID-19 Test Result within five days of attending the show\*.

- Two types of Negative COVID-19 tests are acceptable: polymerase chain reaction referred to as "PCR" (also called diagnostic or molecular), or rapid antigen test (also referred to as a "rapid test").
- Either of the following will be accepted for entry (when accompanied by a valid government issued photo ID):
  - 1. Electronic proof of a Negative test result through a Show Management approved app, or
  - 2. A printed or digital copy of your Negative COVID -19 test results, written in English, that indicates the type of test administered (PCR or Antigen) and has your name and the date the test was administered.



If the individual is unable or unwilling to provide proof of a Negative COVID-19 Test Result:

- Proof of full COVID-19 vaccination prior to entry will suffice.
- Per the CDC, US domestic residents are fully vaccinated if they have completed two doses of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. The CDC has also indicated that it will consider international travelers who have completed full regimens of vaccines approved for emergency use by the World Health Organization as fully vaccinated.
- Either of the following will be accepted for entry (when accompanied by a valid government issued photo ID):
  - 1. A CDC Vaccination Card (a photo or photocopy of your card is also valid, as is digital documentation via a mobile device), or
  - 2. A Government Issued Vaccination Record in English (paper, electronic, or photo).

In addition, all registered attendees and exhibitors are:

Required to wear a face mask regardless of vaccination status when riding on an Official Show Hotel Shuttle and when indoors at the OCCC from move-in through move-out and at other show related venues. Masks will be available at the OCCC if needed.

The Orange County Convention Center has established safety measures for visitors including cleaning and hand sanitizer stations throughout the center.

> For more information, please log onto https://buildersshow.com



## Success Is Black and White for Thakkar & Co.

#### By Kathy Bowen Stolz

If you're dazzled by a two-story white house with black trim, look to Thakkar & Co. to deliver your dream house.

Its most popular design is a "transitional" or "contemporary-transitional" house between 4,500 and 5,500 sq. ft. with prominent gables and plenty of windows on the front façade that "pop" out of the white walls, thanks to that contrasting trim. The white theme continues in the interior with most of its clients requesting white kitchens and white primary bathrooms with natural stone and white oak accents.

However, Thakkar & Co. does not limit itself to the

current trends. Clients often bring inspiration pictures from social media and other sources. "Our focus is on creating lifestyles. We strive to create residences which are elegant and beautiful but welcoming and cozy at the same time. We consider how space within each room will be used, with form and function equally represented. We're building all shapes and sizes in all locations across the greater metro area. We focus on the luxury market with homes in the \$1 million to \$2.5 million being our most popular," Ravi Thakkar, president of Thakkar & Co., said.

He offers a turnkey operation to his clients from lot



acquisition to design and through construction. His team of 10 employees, which includes a technical staff and an operations staff, is able provide the full range of services to the 90 percent of clients who do not have plans in hand. Clients work with his architect/design team to fulfill their vision of a dream home.

His "highly educated" clients are often "mid-experience" in life, ranging in age between their mid-30s to mid-50s and seeking to upgrade their housing, according to Thakkar. Most of them want to be close to their work or their children's schools, which often puts them in the "coveted" Houston neighborhoods of River Oaks, West University and the Villages "where lots are becoming more and more scarce" with tear-downs of existing houses being the standard procedure. "We are respectful of the neighborhood; we keep the community in mind," he added.

Thakkar & Co. is also respectful of its clients. "We are really passionate about the communication process with our clients. We have a virtual workspace for our clients to have direct communication with their build team. We require timely responses to any questions that come through. Our staff is required to respond within 24 hours," Ravi stated.

The company had built five to seven houses (including two or three speculative houses) a year in the past but now has16 custom houses under contract for next year! "The demand in the Greater Houston market is just incredible," Ravi commented. "We had a spec house in River Oaks

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that didn't sell immediately, so we unexpectedly had two months of open houses. That led to a lot of the contracts. We're staffing up our operations and spacing out the builds to meet the demand." With a custom home taking 9½ months to build on average, the project team is "doing a lot of up-front planning, creating a 'recipe book' for each home" to streamline the construction process. He hopes to build two spec homes during the next year also, but they may have to be delayed. "It's very fluid."

The Thakkars market their homes on social media ("Instagram has done us very well.") in addition to the traditional marketing route of having signs on the build sites.

Both having worked in the energy industry, Ravi and his wife Rachana, the company CEO, realized that adopting the concept of using one vendor – with several others to fill in the gaps –for as many materials as possible would make their purchasing more efficient. However, with the current volatility in the pricing and supply chain of materials, they find it hard to plan. With so many houses under contract, they are placing orders for materials much earlier than in the past. What took two or three months previously is now taking a year to obtain. But placing those early orders for multiples of appliances, garage doors and other materials means having to put money down at the time of order – another challenge.

They are evaluating getting a storage facility, but Houston's high humidity is a consideration. They don't want to be in a position where they have a lot of materials exposed to the humid temperatures in the Houston area, Ravi said.

He expects a little bit of a slowdown in building during the next few years, thanks to a combination of rising interest rates, smaller numbers of tradespeople and uncertainties in the supply chain. However, he sees the long-term future of the building industry to be "very, very positive."

Like many Houstonites, the Thakkars came to town through a job transfer. Both Ravi and Rachana, a Chicago native, were working in the energy industry in his hometown of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, "the Texas of the north." They "were very excited" to move south in 2011 to escape the cold weather. "I would rather battle heat than cold," he declared.

Always interested in construction, Ravi started investing in the Houston real estate market. "As an engineer it always fascinated me to see something on paper come to life." He built his first spec house in 2017 because he saw an opportunity to bring a different style of architecture to Houston, a style that he continues to use.





The Thakkars' first client asked them to design and build a similar white house with black trim in a different neighborhood. That same client, a physician who relocated to Dallas, sold his home within 24 hours, proving the continuing popularity of the style.

For Thakkar & Co., success is as simple as black and white.

To contact Thakkar & Co., call 281-318-1515, email info@thakkarandcompany.com, or visit www. thakkarandcompany.com. The office is located at 550 Westcott St., Suite 449, Houston, TX 77007.





## KITCHEN AND BATH PRODUCTS WITH THE FEEL-GOOD FACTOR!

### **By Linda Jennings**

Great design is all about spending time around the things you love - this includes fixtures that bring a sense of calm and wellness to the space, because even builders and homeowners need a place to recharge.



Vars Totem by Acquabella

#### **PURITY OF FORM**

Refined and minimalist lines, inspired by the purest nature, outline Acquabella's latest sink debut, which pays homage to the beauty of simplicity. The Vars Totem is a floor washbasin that takes risks with the thickness of its profile, a wider cylindrical shape at its base, and clean yet compact lines. This basin includes a Dolotek valve and cover and is crafted from Acquabella's signature Dolotek material. Offered in the collection's characteristic white, this new antibacterial surface is not only a delight to the touch, but also ensures easy and thorough cleaning with minimal effort as it is non-porous.

#### SPARKLE ALL YEAR ROUND

Make a festive first impression by dressing your front door with this elegant clear crystal hardware set from Viaggio These new product introductions offer up some great options that are classic or whimsical depending on what helps you unwind.



Circolo Leather Entry Set with Stella Crystal Knob

Hardware. The contemporary, one-of-a-kind Stella Crystal Knob is an exclusive design that is made from perfectly clear lead-free crystal knobs. Each is meticulously shaped and polished with sculptural arcs and angles that add visual and tactile interest. Built on a base of solid forged brass, the hardware sets are carefully constructed with no visible fasteners. The company's signature Concealed Screw Mechanism (CSM) neatly hides all installation apparatus, creating a sleek and clean finished look.

#### SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

Made from real wood chips, Woodio sinks are crafted from the world's first 100% waterproof solid wood composite. The finished look is beautifully organic and definitely unique. Woodio sinks are recyclable and have a minimal carbon footprint, making them a smart and sustainable option for bathroom design. The sinks are lightweight and incredibly durable with elevated impact resistance that



MTI Baths DoloMatte Freestanding Tub - 178

makes them virtually unbreakable. Woodio is a Finnish modern-day brand that incorporates the best of Nordic design traditions and the latest biomaterial innovation. Woodio recently launched in North America with products available exclusively through VELLA.

### WHIMSICAL WATER FLOW

The LIPS bath filler by Nickles is perfect for fans of iconic pop culture who like to go big with their design options. The bright red lips are instantly recognizable as a style



phenomenon of the 90s; now they have been repurposed as a bold and colorful design element for the tub. The LIPS filler features a cascade spray with intelligent water distribution and a flow limit of four gallons per minute. As a global manufacturer of shower

Nickles LIPS bath filler

equipment, Nickles is known for design innovation. Their LIPS filler is a whimsical choice for contemporary baths that makes a most memorable style statement.



HamatUSA's Imagine Split Finish Faucet

### **IMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES**

HamatUSA's new Imagine Kitchen Faucet in a dramatic Split Finish will add flair to any kitchen design. The dual function, hidden pull-down features an extendable hose that reaches all edges of the sink and beyond 20+ inches. Crafted from solid brass, the Imagine Kitchen Faucet is available in 4 finish options. It includes an oversized deck mounting locknut for ease of installation, and hybrid stainless steel and nylon hoses for increased durability and flexibility. All HamatUSA faucets are ICC certified to meet or exceed US State and Federal plumbing codes and low lead safety standards and are covered by a Limited Lifetime Warranty.

#### WHAT'S OLD IS NEW

The pop of blue on the Nantucket Sinks was an imaginative take on a classic style. The acclaimed sink manufacturer

offers a fresh spin on a vintage-inspired look with their Victorian Collection of bathroom basins. Plucked from the past and reimagined for modern times, these beautiful sinks are handmade in Italy from durable fireclay and finished with a porcelain enamel glaze. Offered as a wallmounted design or with a black metal stand, the Victorian

sinks feature an elegant backsplash and softly curved silhouette. They are finished in a glossy white or a fun twotone option that pairs white tops with blue, black or grey bottoms. The blue and white combination is a great way to add unexpected color to the bathroom!



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## Sneller Custom Homes & Remodeling: A Designers' Builder

#### By Kathy Bowen Stolz

"I've heard that some builders find it a hassle to work with designers," according to Jenny Sneller, co-owner of Sneller Custom Homes & Remodeling in Spring. "For us, designers are so integrated into our process, we consider ourselves a designer's builder. Every project happens because of a team effort." Designers and architects are integral members of the company's build team, working together toward creativity, quality and problem solving, she added.

Her husband Matt, co-owner, agreed. "Great design drives everything we do. Assembling a design team around each customer, with the best professionals in the industry, who are just as passionate as we are, is pretty fun. It not only brings about an extremely high quality product, but it gives our customers a team of experts who can add experience, knowledge and advice at every stage of the project." Beyond the design team, their relationship with trade partners and subcontractors is absolutely essential. "We couldn't do what we do without them," he said.

During design, Matt likes to be very involved, especially on remodeling projects. "I'm good at visualizing what it could be," he offered. "I love it when a client comes to us with a picture, wondering if something is possible. If it's in a picture, I know there's a way. The challenge of figuring out how is the fun part."

When it comes to design styles, Sneller Custom Homes & Remodeling stays true to the fully custom concept, not landing on just one particular style, Matt said. "We don't build a certain style. Every project is a one-time prototype built for a certain person in mind."

"Customers that gravitate to us are obviously looking for a



quality product. The difference they find in us from other builders is the experience we'll take them on from start to finish," Jenny explained.

In fact, that ability to create a one-of-a-kind house and experience is what led the Snellers to open their own business in 2011. After graduating from Texas A&M and gaining valuable skills with both a commercial builder and then a large production builder, Matt made the move to working for a custom builder. He quickly realized his

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passion for custom building and remodeling and couldn't shake the feeling that he wanted to open his own company one day. "Our first project as Sneller Custom Homes was an 11,000 sq ft home in The Woodlands, still our largest project to date," Matt said.

Nowadays their projects range from bathroom remodels to new construction luxury homes, with 10 to 12 projects in progress at any given time. "We really enjoy the mix of new builds and remodels," Matt noted. "The challenges, the methods, and even the experience is so different for each one. I can't imagine not doing both."

Their clients range from young families, singles, empty nesters, grandparents and everything in between. "What unites our customers is they want to love their home. They want to love how it looks and also how it works for them. If a material they choose isn't going to hold up well, we'll say something. Form and function go hand in hand. A house that looks amazing but doesn't perform over time isn't worth much," said Jenny, who is also a Texas A&M graduate.

After 10 years in business, Sneller Custom Homes & Remodeling has quite a collection of awards. Houzz. com has awarded them Best of Houzz in the categories of Service and Design every year between 2014 and 2021. They have also won numerous local Greater Houston Builders Association Prism Awards as well as statewide Texas Association of Builders Star Awards throughout the years.

"We are running out of space in our office to put awards. That's something I didn't think I'd ever be saying," Matt said with a laugh. "When we take a minute to look at how far we've come, and all the customers and homes those awards represent, it's humbling. We're so lucky to get to do this every day."

To contact Sneller Custom Homes & Remodeling, call 832-797-4320, email info@snellercustomhomes.com or visit www.snellercustomhomes.com. Their brand new showcase office is set to open mid-2022 and will be located at 9070 Gleannloch Forest Drive, Spring, TX 77379.





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### **BRINGING ARTISTRY TO THE TRADES**

## Dialogue with a Designer Jennifer Burgess Loh, ASID

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 Jennifer Burgess Loh, ASID, Creative Director and CEO of Burgess Loh Interiors, Inc., founder, and principal of Burgess Loh is a Houston designer known for creating artistically curated interiors. Her extensive studies in the design disciplines, travel experiences locally and abroad, and her versatility with clients have created a loyal following for 30 years that extended her work beyond Houston and across the country.

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

Jennifer Burgess: As a young child I was always interested

in art and fashion. My aunt is an interior designer, and my uncle is a developer. I was exposed at an early age to the built environment and all things design related.

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

*Jennifer Burgess:* My first degree was in fashion. After about a week of my required internship I knew it wasn't my calling. I started a degree interior design after that. When I graduated CAD and all things computer was extremely new. We were schooled mostly in hand drafting. Online tools like Pinterest, HOUZZ, and Instagram were nonexistent.

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

*Jennifer Burgess:* A professional interior designer and team brings a lot to a project. We are often recognized as the MVP. We bring project organization, detailed specifications, manage deadlines, help with budgets, meet with trades to convey design and details, and most importantly we provide solutions when challenges arise.



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

Jennifer Burgess: I believe that for every project there is a designer/client "great match" in the universe. The trick is finding it. At Burgess Loh we believe the most important item in a successful project is the designer/client relationship. Borrowing from a good friend, that fit is a match if we can achieve the Design Trifecta: Can we do what you want, for the price that you want, in the timeline that you want. If so great! If not, we are not setting ourselves up for a successful relationship. I believe this formula and our honesty up front sets our firm apart.

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

Jennifer Burgess: I would say one of our most challenging projects was a custom residence around 20,000 sq ft. This project started without the level of detail the client wanted in the plan set. We were brought on after plans had been finalized and we were designing almost daily just to keep up with the pace of the carpenter and the millwork. This is a big reason we prefer to start early with clients, at plan stage with the architect. –Side note it was a great success and we won five ASID awards including best of show.

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



*Jennifer Burgess:* Before material selection starts, we do an onboarding meeting with the client to determine their needs, their esthetic, and we have a meeting with builder/ remodeler to understand their process

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

*Jennifer Burgess:* I think sometimes it boils down to understanding the process. We always start with the big

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picture and funnel down into the fine details. It is getting the clients comfortable with thinking outside the box and letting the designer do what they do best.

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

*Jennifer Burgess:* One of the things I love most about design is it is always changing. Although, as they say nothing is new under the sun—it is new to the generation it presents itself to in the current moment. As a team we love knowledge. We attend trade shows both nationally and internationally and subscribe to a lifestyle platform that forecasts trend up to 4 years in advance. We also take CEU's for our industry throughout the year.

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

*Jennifer Burgess:* That is loaded question to a designer ;). I'd say over style, I love color, pattern, and texture and the interaction or juxtaposition between them.

BATHS OF AMERICA: What fascinates you and how have you incorporated that into your designs?



*Jennifer Burgess:* Culture and History. It started with two classes in my school years...History of Fashion and History of Interiors. I always try to incorporate some nod to these in my designs.

### **BATHS OF AMERICA:** How would you characterize your personal style?

Jennifer Burgess: Two words: Eclectic and Layered

BATHS OF AMERICA: What would be your recommendation for "what to do first" in a decorating project when working with the builders and/or homeowners?

*Jennifer Burgess*: Well, I'd like to point we don't "decorate." As a design professional we design the built environment and layer in the interiors. The most important item always is identifying how will the space need to function for the client's lifestyle and identifying this. Once you have the "outline" then you can design.

Jennifer Burgess Loh, ASID Burgess Loh Interiors, Inc. 713-334-0077



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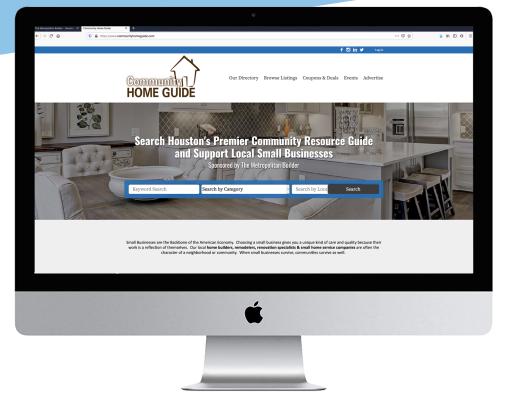
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