

# THE METROPOLITAN BUILDER

Greater Houston Edition

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## Dialogue with a Designer



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

Tami Owen

The Owen Group Design Firm



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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 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 Tami Owen, founder and Creative Director of The Owen Group Design Firm. After years of designing the homes of friends and family, The Owen Group was officially established in 2003 when Tami was hired as the designer of the Intercontinental Hotel. Over the years, Tami has grown her business from a small one-woman firm into having her daughter join her as her partner, along with 8 interior designers on staff. Tami has offices in Houston, Austin and Florida. Tami works closely with builders, architects, and vendors in all phases in her design process. When she is not designing, she loves to cook, go to the beach and spend time with family and friends.*

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

**Tami:** I've been designing interiors for over 20 years. Even as a young child, I was fascinated by gorgeous hotels, old buildings, beautiful homes, and (timeless) furnishings.

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

**Tami:** I have seen many changes since starting The Owen Group Design Firm. From my early days of arranging bookshelves to now being a full-service (foundation to furnishings) design firm, technology has created the biggest change in interior design.

Having the internet and the ability to source material or search for ideas with a click of a button has changed how we work today. Thirty years ago, I just had magazines or coffee table books to peruse. With sources such as Instagram, Pinterest, and Houzz, people can find inspiration and share ideas to create almost any space in a home.

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

**Tami:** Collaboration between our design team, the architect,



Photo by Wade Blissard • Builder: Goodchild Custom Homes and Renovations

and the builder are essential in our projects. Every successful project starts with a great design. Our team of interior designers are experienced in making sure our client's vision is brought to reality. We know what works and what doesn't, especially when the client is operating within a specific budget and timeline. The goal is to make the building process a wonderful, fun experience and keep the job within budget and on time.

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

**Tami:** A talented team, attention to detail, and most importantly, relationships with our clients, builders, and vendors.

We have a very talented team focused on attention to detail. It's the details that will keep a project on schedule and within budget. The biggest factor that sets us apart is the relationships we establish with clients, builders, and vendors. Our clients usually come to us through referrals from previous clients, which means they trust us, and we take that trust very seriously.

We genuinely care about our clients and realize it is a privilege to help them with their home or office.

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

**Tami:** Every project has its unique set of challenges, but

I would say the challenge that is consistent in each project is managing the client's vision within the given budget and timeline provided. Covid, for instance, has created considerable challenges in the availability of products, from furniture to paint to fabric. Thankfully, The Owen Group custom designs and builds much of our furniture and, therefore, has managed those shortages more effectively.

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

**Tami:** Everything starts with the client. Our preliminary discussions with our clients focus on their vision. Once we understand what the client wants, we can begin presenting ideas that build a foundation for selections. Because we work with fabrics, tile, flooring, hardware, and so much more on a daily basis, we can develop a plan that correlates with what they are looking for in their home. We have many resources and work with amazing vendors that understand what we are looking for in materials.

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

**Tami:** I think the most common mistakes made by builders and homeowners is that they don't invest in an interior designer to help with their project. Many try to do it themselves, which costs them more time and money. It can be very overwhelming and frustrating without the assistance and guidance of a professional designer.



Photo by Wade Blissard • Builder: Goodchild Custom Homes and Renovations

**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?

**Tami:** Our team attends several builders shows and most major design markets, including Dallas, Atlanta, High Point, New York, and Las Vegas markets. We are members of ASID and keep up with our continuing education. This keeps us educated and up to date on all the newest items in the industry.

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

**Tami:** I have been asked this a lot. My favorite is the Transitional design style, a mix of old and new furnishings, accompanied by modern art.

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

**Tami:** I like to keep a neutral palette, with a burst of color coming from accessories and art. This style transitions well when our clients buy and sell other homes. It makes for an easy transition which our clients appreciate.

**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?

**Tami:** Make a list. Make a list of ideas, inspiration, and particular needs that will help us understand their style and establish the scope of work for the project.

**BATHS OF AMERICA:** Any last thoughts, comments?

**Tami:** I appreciate the opportunity to discuss design and The Owen Group Design Firm with Baths of America. I mentioned earlier that relationships are essential in our business, and I’m proud to say I have been working with the same reps there for almost 20 years.



Photo by Wade Blissard • Builder: Silverwood Custom Homes



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Photo on the cover by Wade Blissard • Builder: Stonehenge Classic Homes



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