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Dialogue with a Designer



BATHS OF AMERICA
FINE BATH & KITCHEN GALLERY

Karen Black

Karen Black Interiors | 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 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 Karen Black, RID, ASID, a registered Interior Designer, licensed in the state of Texas and specializing in new construction and remodels. Her strong technical background and project management skills, combined with her design education and experience, allow her to assist her clients throughout every phase of the design process, from the early planning phase through the entire build process, to applying the finishing touches with furnishings and accessories.

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

Karen Black: I have always had a passion for decorating and design. I inherited that from my mother who, while

not a designer herself, instilled in me an appreciation for beautiful spaces.

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

Karen Black: Social Media now plays a huge roll in interior design, which was not the case a decade ago. It is often where clients and designers alike turn for inspiration and updates on the latest trends. It is also one of the ways we stay connected with others in our field and market our services.

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

Karen Black: In my experience, builders and contractors often need help keeping the clients on track when it comes to making selections in a timely manner. I understand the sequence of events in a construction project and stay in close communication with the builder to help ensure selections are made on time and on budget to keep the projects moving forward.

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

Karen Black: The biggest thing that sets me apart



from other designers is the fact that I have an MBA and understand both the project management and business aspects of design projects. It's not just about creating a pretty space. Interior design requires you to approach the project as a whole, taking everything into consideration, including budget, timeline, and aesthetics.

BATHS OF AMERICA: *What has been your most challenging project and why? This is a hard one... I think that all design projects have their challenges.*

Karen Black: The most challenging project I ever worked on was a new construction home for a family from Mexico. The builder referred me because he knew I spoke Spanish. While my Spanish was definitely an asset, communication was still a challenge. That, combined with the fact that the homeowners were living in Mexico during construction, made the project more difficult for the builder and myself. In the end, it was a rewarding and successful project and I learned a great deal.

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

Karen Black: I understand the phases of construction and I work with my clients to make selections in the order that they will be needed. It is always my goal to have selections made ahead of the builder's deadline so that we do not delay the project.

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





Karen Black: The biggest mistake made by builders and homeowners is not hiring a designer early enough! The ideal time for a designer to get involved in a project is during the planning stage with the architect. Having a strong team in place from the beginning is key to a project's success.

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?*

Karen Black: Networking with and attending CEU's offered by industry partners is one of the best ways to learn about new products and design trends.

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

Karen Black: I love them all, from modern to traditional to eclectic. I can't pick just one!

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

Karen Black: My very first degree was in Math and Computer Science and I am a problem solver at heart. I love to find solutions to problems and one of the most rewarding areas to do this for me has been with aging in place spaces. It is easy to prioritize function over form, but then you end up with a utilitarian looking space that no one enjoys. I love to create functional spaces that are also beautiful. I recently completed a beautiful aging in place bathroom with Baths of America that I am very proud of.

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

Karen Black: While I appreciate all design styles, I would have to classify my personal style as transitional with a leaning toward the traditional.



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