

THE

METROPOLITAN BUILDER

INSIDE SHOWCASE



Cathy O Designs Born in Nursery



Photographs by www.ganphotography.com

All homes pictured were built by Riverwood Building Company.

Cathy O Designs Born in Nursery

By Kathy Bowen Stolz

For someone who grew up never knowing a decorator – in fact, never hearing of decorating as a career – Cathy Osoria has had a busy and fulfilling 30 years making Houston-area homes beautiful through Cathy O Designs.

“As an only child, I was by myself a lot, drawing and painting. I especially liked working with the colors. However, I was pretty sure I couldn’t make a living picking out colors, so I majored in marketing and minored in design in college,” she said.

When her daughter was born, Cathy decorated the nursery in such a way that her friends all said, “Would you do mine?” Decorating nurseries led to decorating living rooms, and then to the launch of her business, Cathy O Designs, allowing Osoria to make a living picking out colors after all!

“I’m probably not your normal decorator. I’ve never, ever advertised in 30 years, but I’m as busy as can be. All of my work is referrals,” she explained. “A lot of times I work with the same family, first decorating their Houston house, then a lake house or vacation home.” Working with repeat clients or referrals is easier for her, she said, because building trust with a client takes a lot of time. Her ultimate goal is to make sure customers are happy as they enjoy their new space.

Most of her jobs are within a two-hour radius of her Clear Lake home. Staying close to the Houston market allows her to use vendors that she’s familiar with. “Houston has countless resources!” she exclaimed.

Redesigning kitchens and bathrooms are her most common



projects, but she also does commercial projects, such as dentists' offices. About 60 percent of her projects are remodels, with 40 percent new construction.

She typically juggles seven or eight projects at a time; most take three to six months on average to complete, depending on availability of appliances and furniture. Collaboration between the designer and contractor is important, she notes. "When we are on the same page, it makes the execution of budget, timelines and details go smoother."

Also helping Cathy to fulfill her decorating vision is Barbie Clariday, her longtime business associate and dear friend who owns Ooh's and Aah's furniture and accessory store in Webster.

Osoria said she is very "hands on" in her work, unlike many decorators. "I personally do it so it's done right. I am very particular about proportion and size. You can search all day long for the perfect table, but it'll be two inches too tall or too short. I will fix it to make it right no matter what."

Cathy will even create original art because "it's 'way more convenient than trying to find art that is perfect in texture, context, color and size."

On the job sites she will cut a board or a piece of tile to help out the crews. Even in college she would accompany her design professor to job sites to hang art or move furniture because she liked doing hands-on work.

Cathy admits she's "kind of old school" because she still





uses graph paper and vision boards for her projects. “I have literally measured every inch, so I know every inch. I know what’s behind the walls. I can switch to Plan B on a dime.”

She also loves the challenge of things not working out. “Most people have an idea of what they want. But I have to be pretty creative to make clients happy with Plan B or Plan C [when the space doesn’t quite fit their concept].”

She said her favorite part of decorating is “when I can see people’s brains switch gears.” One instance was a kitchen remodeling project where the roof line didn’t quite match the way the homeowner wanted. Now that homeowner loves the resulting gambol roof!

Osoria said she is probably known for creating “hidden things,” such as disguising doors. In a bathroom with four doors, she made the two closet doors appear to be upper and lower cabinets. In a kitchen, she disguised the butler’s pantry to look like a cabinet. A door may not have a tell-tale knob but rather a hidden panel that the homeowner must push to open the door.

She said she likes to have a major focal point in a kitchen, such as a big window with a vent hood above it, a double island or dramatic light fixtures. She considers herself

something of a “vent hood person,” making an artistic statement with the vent hood so that it appears to be classic European design.

Most people would call her decorating style transitional, she said, but she personally leans more toward European architecture with hints of modern accessories. She said all rooms need some “warmth,” which often comes from textures in her designs.





*To contact Cathy O Designs,
call 713-882-1019
or email cathyodesign@gmail.com*

