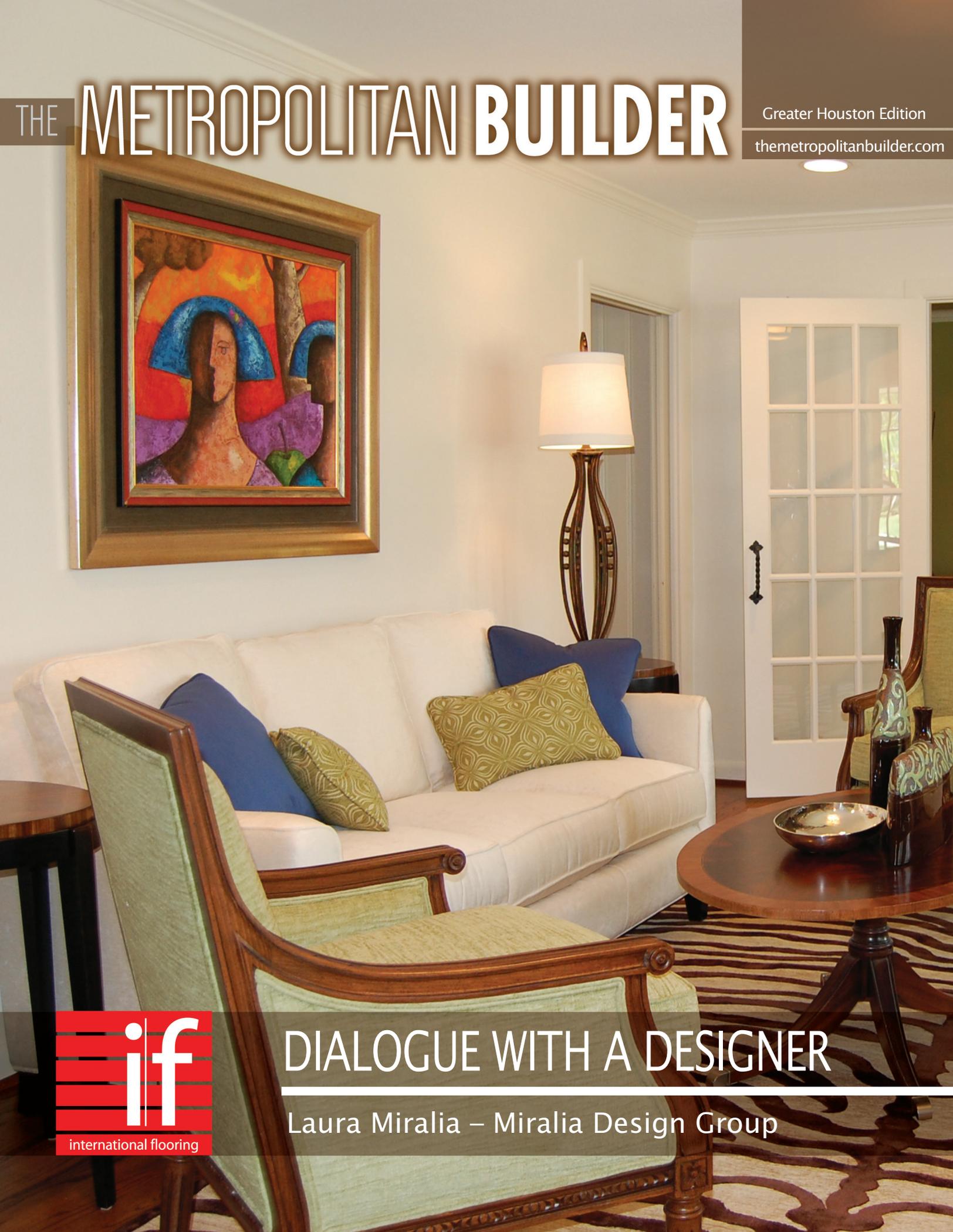


# THE METROPOLITAN BUILDER

Greater Houston Edition  
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## DIALOGUE WITH A DESIGNER

Laura Miralia – Miralia Design Group



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*International Flooring knows that dreams, reality and inspiration make a house a home. It also knows that an interior designer or interior design firm often becomes an integral part of this process. As a National Wood Flooring Association (NWFA)-certified company, International Flooring takes great pride in working with some of the finest professionals in the Houston market, providing the best quality wood flooring and carpets available and superb customer service. International Flooring offers their clients a private showroom full of exotic wood floors not found in retail showrooms.*

*This month International Flooring speaks with Laura Miralia, owner of Miralia Design Group, who has 20 years of experience in Ohio and Houston. During her years in Ohio, she built more than 1,000 custom homes and model homes, learning the construction business process from beginning to end. At the same time she owned an interior design and remodeling business. When the economy took a downturn in 2009, she relocated to Houston. While in Houston she honed her design skills by working with some great design houses and builders. After nine years, she opened Miralia Design Group.*

**INTERNATIONAL FLOORING:** *What motivated you to go into the interior design field?*

**Laura Miralia:** My mother was a huge inspiration.

Growing up in a house full of artful and creative “finds” collected by my mother influenced my thinking about space and color. Being allowed to paint my room any color made me think about the “want” and “why” at an early age.

**INTERNATIONAL FLOORING:** *How has the field of interior design changed since you graduated?*

**Laura Miralia:** With the onset of the popular TV shows, it has become prestigious and fashionable to be a designer! It has gotten much more technical with the use of computer-aided drawings and other technologies being incorporated into homes today.

**INTERNATIONAL FLOORING:** *How can an experienced interior designer help custom homebuilders or remodeling contractors with their building or remodeling projects?*

**Laura Miralia:** Designers are an important cog in the wheel for a project to move forward and run smoothly. They take the burden of having to run all over with the client to make selections off the builder. A good designer can foresee problems before they become costly to correct or upgrade materials to help the client get a desired look. Also, accurate and effective communication and organized information are the keys to a successful builder/designer relationship.

**INTERNATIONAL FLOORING:** *What sets you apart*

*Continued on page 8*

*from other designers?*

**Laura Miralia:** My attention to details, drawings and organizational skills, extensive construction knowledge and my ability to design many styles. I am passionate about what I do, and it comes out in my work. I also do a lot of client education along the way, which helps clients feel content about their decisions.

**INTERNATIONAL FLOORING:** *What was your most challenging project and why?*

**Laura Miralia:** Having to design, procure and install four model homes at once for an open house with a short lead time and only one assistant, while keeping my daily work progressing, was a monumental task. We worked very long days, and the accounting was an added challenge with all the accessories!

**INTERNATIONAL FLOORING:** *How do you begin the materials' selection process when working with builders' and remodelers' clients?*

**Laura Miralia:** There is a logical sequence to building and remodeling. I find out which vendors I am to use for various selections and what the allowance is. Then the



selections begin with the exterior, followed by all things that are behind the drywall.

**INTERNATIONAL FLOORING:** *What are some common mistakes made by builders and homeowners?*

**Laura Miralia:** Homeowners always think it will be simple and easy to make their selections; television makes it look simple! But they are surprised just how much thought and time goes in those decisions, and they get quickly overwhelmed.

Builders don't always keep their homeowners informed during the building process. Like, if a painter isn't completed with a job at the end of the day, and the builders don't update the client with the status, the client jumps to conclusions that the builder missed things and start to look for more omissions. It becomes much harder to overcome and regain the clients' trust.

**INTERNATIONAL FLOORING:** *How do you keep yourself up-to-date with all the design trends happening in the industry today?*

**Laura Miralia:** Trade magazine and shows, stores, home tours, continuing education and movies (these have a huge influence on people!).

**INTERNATIONAL FLOORING:** *What is your favorite design style?*

**Laura Miralia:** This is a difficult one for me to answer.



I like so many styles and enjoy the variety. Because of the way I immerse myself in a project for a client, I feel satiated with that style and the end. Every room in my house is different with a mix of many styles, and it changes as I get inspired for a fresh look.

**INTERNATIONAL FLOORING:** *what fascinates you and how have you incorporated that into your designs?*

**Laura Miralia:** Mirrors! I love how they open up a wall and draw your curiosity into them with their shiny reflection and what they reflect. I use them to add variety and sculpture to wall compositions since they come in so many different shapes and sizes.

**INTERNATIONAL FLOORING:** *What would characterize your personal style?*

**Laura Miralia:** Romantic with a classic edge.

**INTERNATIONAL FLOORING:** *What would be your recommendation for “what to do first” in a*

*decorating project when working with the builder and/or homeowner?*

**Laura Miralia:** Have a plan and furniture layout. Homeowners typically call in a builder to price a project but don't have a clear idea of their direction and cannot get apples-to-apples bids. Doing furniture layouts also confirms the space and lighting requirements for a room.

**INTERNATIONAL FLOORING:** *Any last thoughts?*

**Laura Miralia:** Homeowners commonly ask friends and family for their opinions. If you ask five people, you can get five different answers. This variety can create confusion and hard feelings when the homeowner takes a different direction. A designer can pick up on homeowners' styles and guide them effectively through the myriad of choices out there. Without the costly mistakes often made by do-it-yourselfers, designers can save the homeowners lots of money and make them very happy with the cohesive and beautiful finished product.



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