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DIALOGUE WITH A DESIGNER

Amy Salazar, AASID, RID



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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 its clients a private showroom full of exotic wood floors not found in retail showrooms.

This month International Flooring speaks with Amy Salazar, ASID, RID, owner of The Woodlands Design Firm, which specializes in finish selections for new home buyers and remodeling clients. The Woodlands Design Firm takes care of all the details to ensure the clients' ideas are being executed properly. Amy specifies all the materials to be used, provides Auto CAD drawings and electrical plans for accuracy, coordinates with the best tradespeople in town and visits the building sites. With more than 26 years of experience in the interior design and home furnishings industries, Amy has all the right tools, sources, skills and passion clients would want in a partner to create their dream homes.

International Flooring: What motivated you to go into the interior design field?

Amy Salazar: I am truly blessed that I have known since I was 10 years old that I wanted to be an interior designer.

I was always interested in rearranging the furniture and decorating my parents' house, creating murals and paintings, etc. I have always been interested in construction sites and the entire building/remodeling process.

International Flooring: How has the field of interior design changed since you graduated?

Amy Salazar: When I was in college acquiring my interior design degree, computer-aided drafting (CAD) classes were not offered as part of the design curriculum. (I think I'm showing my age now). Now Auto CAD is a large part of the everyday curriculum in design classes, and 3D rendering is also commonplace in both classes and in interior design practices. These are great sources to help the clients who have a hard time visualizing to see what their actual space will look like ahead of the construction phase.

International Flooring: How can an experienced interior designer help custom home builders with their building or remodeling projects?

Amy Salazar: We work with their clients from the very beginning and are partners with them on the project until all the final details are completed. We help free up their time so they can concentrate on what is important to them, the building part of the process. Many builders get caught spending time with selections and fielding questions. We prepare a binder for the builder with complete information detailing selections, sketch, CAD drawings, manufacturer specs, vendor info and much more.

International Flooring: What sets you apart from other designers?

Amy Salazar: I have over 26 years in the home furnishings and interior design industry. I have worked in many aspects of the field (flooring and stone sales, window treatment and wall coverings, closet and cabinet design, bath design and more), so I can be the expert for my clients in all things “design.”

International Flooring: What has been your most challenging project and why?

Amy Salazar: I have found the most challenging problem I’ve experienced on a job was when things were out of my control, such as items coming in damaged or back-ordered by a supplier. Designers typically have organized, controlled and in-charge personalities, which are great for our clients. We are on top of what is happening and going to happen on their jobs. But sometimes things are out of our control, and it is very frustrating.

International Flooring: How do you begin the material selection process when working with builders’ and remodelers’ clients?

Amy Salazar: I meet with the client to assess their needs, wants and tastes for the project. The first thing I do with clients is take them shopping for their countertop slabs. There are a lot fewer choices in slabs than there are tile, paint, lighting, plumbing choices, so I always start there. I specify a lot of quartzite countertops as well. They are so beautiful and make such a dramatic statement that it makes sense to start with that product and coordinate the other products around the slabs.

International Flooring: What are some common mistakes made by builders and homeowners?

Amy Salazar: ***The biggest mistake is not hiring a designer. Designers can*** save builders and homeowners time and money because they have the resources and skills to specify products for an entire house and give it a cohesive look. Many people pick one product, then another and another and don’t consider what the final overall look will be.

International Flooring: How do you keep yourself up to date with all the design trends happening in the industry today?

Amy Salazar: I feel the best way to stay current with the latest and greatest is to attend the major design markets such as High Point, Las Vegas and Dallas at least once a year. I see the newest in colors, finishes, vendors and styles to share with my clients. As a Texas State Registered Interior Designer and Professional Member of ASID, I am also required to have 12 hours of continuing



education courses each year to keep me updated on trends, issues facing the industry and the latest information on universal design and building codes.

International Flooring: What is your favorite design style?

Amy Salazar: My personal style is transitional leaning to a little bit contemporary. I like simplicity and clean lines. I work with every design style for my clients, though. My job is to bring my clients' tastes, needs and wishes into their homes using my knowledge, resources and skills but not my personal tastes. My designs are not trendy, but more classic. I want my clients to have a room that they will love as much 10 years from now as they love it today

International Flooring: What fascinates you and how have you incorporated that into your designs?

Amy Salazar: Since I had a debilitating injury last year and was unable to move around my house or function normally, I have a new appreciation for designing for "the future" and the aging-in-place movement. I try to integrate elements into homes that will help my clients to be able to stay in their homes, even while dealing with an injury, an illness or just aging. Now I am specifying a lot more items, such as grab bars, shower seats, roll-in showers with no transitions, larger doorways for wheelchairs and clearer pathways.

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

Amy Salazar: Have an interior designer review your blueprints with you and make suggestions/notes.

Interior designers help plan for a cohesive look from outdoors to indoors. Cabinet elevation drawings are very generic on blueprints typically, and we can help add the "customization," such as feet, legs, custom vent hoods, organization features, etc. We can rearrange elements, make the layout more functional, make sure switches and lights are in the correct location with the right quantity. We will also make recommendations for ceiling and wall treatments and make suggestions on placement of stone, brick, stucco areas outside and plumbing.

International Flooring: Any last thoughts, comments?

Amy Salazar: Remember that experience does make the difference. Anyone can call themselves an interior designer, but you need to qualify your potential designer. There are many people that decide to one day become a designer and don't necessarily have the skills, years of experience in the industry, an interior design degree, work experience under a licensed designer or the technical knowledge that a licensed interior designer will provide.



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