

As seen in

architecture & design

O F T H E W E S T

Beautiful spaces and the people who design, live and work in them



As seen in
COLORADO
expression



ABOVE/BELOW PHOTOS: RON RUSCIO



ABOVE PHOTO: LIBBIE MARTIN



by **KATHY SMITH**

BEAUTIFUL *habitat* INTERIOR DESIGN

TIME SPENT ABROAD INFORMS THIS DESIGNER'S WORK IN DENVER

COLORADO NATIVE

Owner and principal designer Tennille Wood of Beautiful Habitat Interior Design always had a penchant for decorating and interior design. As a native Coloradan, what she hadn't planned on was an opportunity to attend a two-year program at Chelsea College of Art and Design in London, England. Today, Wood is an internationally trained and award-winning interior designer.

Wood was captivated by the work of an aunt who was an interior designer. "My aunt painted beautiful murals and faux paintings. In my head I had this rule that I had to be a painter to be an interior designer, so I discounted the idea and took the practical route and got a business degree in college," explains Wood. She attended University of Northern Colorado, which is where she met her husband, Dirk, and then entered the business world. In 2004, Wood decided it was time to pursue her passion and began searching for interior design programs in Colorado. Coincidentally, Dirk's job changed and he was offered a position in London. "When we decided we were moving, I began researching interior design schools in London and was accepted into the Chelsea College of Art and Design," she says.

HISTORICAL PROJECTS

The program I attended started with entry-level projects where I did everything (except lighting) and the classes built up from there and got more complicated. It was a rigorous schedule but I loved it," Wood states. With a diploma in hand and a promotion for Dirk, the couple headed back to Denver. Wood realized her experience working on historical, small projects in London was beneficial for design work on pop-tops and bungalow remodels in Denver. "With old properties you never know what you are going to get when you start opening them up," she says. Some can be challenging problems, but in one remodel in Berkeley, she and her clients discovered an early 1900s newspaper inside a wall. "This was really exciting because we uncovered a piece of history."

Beautiful Habitat associate designer Jennifer Ognibene shares, "As a former intern and now full time designer, I have learned so much from Tennille. One of the most important talents I think she possesses is her confidence when working with her clients. Even when problems arise, she's calm and reassures them, 'We'll figure it out!'" Wood enjoyed discovering period antique pieces in London, and she also studied French classical architecture on her travels throughout Europe. "From an art history perspective, I learned a lot about how the historical events influenced the architecture, furniture and design style," describes Wood.

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A TOTAL EXPRESSION

y philosophy is I’ve never tried to have a branded look or signature style where someone would look at my work and say ‘that’s clearly Beautiful Habitat.’ “It’s always been more about my clients and making their home a total expression of who they are,” she explains. Having already designed kitchen, bath and basement remodels, Wood got a big remodel on a home in Boulder. “It started out with a kitchen remodel and I stayed on with them until the entire house had been remodeled,” she says. By 2014, the overall scope and number of her projects tripled. “I have fun doing this work. There are times a client’s style is not what I would put in my home, but I appreciate different styles and if I know it fits the client really well, then I have fun building it for them,” relays Wood.

Continuing education is a top priority for Wood. “I constantly want to learn more. When we first moved back, I took a couple of kitchen design classes just to be sure I know my stuff, because I learned the European standard metric methods. I joined the National Kitchen and Bath Association and their focus is on kitchens and bathrooms; those are the primary rooms we run into with codes that are important to

know.” “Your home is a sanctuary and it should be a place where you can recharge and destress. When I focus on a room that is really meaningful to a client, I get really excited,” Wood describes. She designs for sustainability by purchasing less disposable pieces to stay with the client for a long time, which ultimately puts less stress on the environment.

She shares, “Not all projects go as planned. On one project, I special ordered a stainless steel apron front farmhouse sink and when it arrived it was dented, rusty and out of stock for four

months. You can’t go forward on anything until that sink is installed. Oh, and did I forget to mention that the client was eight months pregnant? She needed that sink to wash baby bottles. After scouring websites I found the sink but had to pay double just to keep the project moving forward.” The international training helps tremendously with old and new renovations. “I like rehabbing what is there, seeing that it has a history and honoring what it was when it was built, but updating it. A big bonus is that the British love draperies, so I learned so much more about custom window coverings in London,” Wood relates.



ABOVE PHOTO: DANA McGRATH



ABOVE PHOTO: RON RUSCIO

THE USE OF COLOR

Shadowmaker owner Ben Comstock, who has been in the window covering business for more than 20 years says, “Tennille is one of the best designers I know at using color. The patterns of color that she puts together would scare other designers, but Tennille makes it work and her clients love it.”

To get the perfect color, she coordinates with other materials used in a room and tests paint sample boards. “I take them in the room and look at each sample on every wall, because on one wall a sample may look fantastic and on the next wall it might get too much sunlight and wash it out completely.” She says for a single house remodel they might use seven or eight different room colors because of sunlight effects. Upon completion of a project, Wood hopes her clients feel her Beautiful Habitat team made the process easier, less stressful and fun. “I hope they feel they’ve achieved what they wanted and the house fits them. When their friends and family come over I hope they say ‘this house is you.’”

Kathy Smith is a freelance writer and frequent contributor to the New West Publishing family of magazines.



BELOW PHOTOS: LIBBIE MARTIN

