

DESIGN PROFILE

SIMPLY WESLEY LLC CREATES A PERFECT BLEND OF DESIGN, USE OF SPACE – BASED ON DESIRES OF CLIENTS

As seen in
The Baltimore Sun!

BALTIMORE-
METRO-AREA
INTERIOR DESIGN
TEAM WORKS CLOSELY
WITH CLIENT FROM
START TO FINISH

By Mary Medland, Contributing Writer

Most people who are building a new home work first with the architect and the construction crew. Then, after the home is completed, they will call in an interior designer to put on the finishing touches.

But, insists Wesley Thompson, of Annapolis-based Simply Wesley LLC, there's a much better way to do things. "Get your interior designer brought onto your team early," she says. "My collaboration with architects and builders creates the best possible design."

Thompson is adamant about having a scaled drawing of a space. "It is so important to design a room that is entirely to scale," she says. "There may be a wonderful and very comfortable chair in a furniture store, but if the proportion is wrong, it will kill the space."

Also important to successfully decorating a home is taking into consideration the elevations in rooms: A beautiful side table might not work with the client's side chairs. And, she notes, homeowners should look at a given space from a number of different points of view, including viewing it from a different room while taking into account every angle and every elevation.

In order to have that scaled drawing, Thompson uses AutoCAD, a computer program that architects make use of, which basically designs an entire room to scale. "For example, AutoCAD will let one see that the windows that are being planned are too big to accommodate the sideboard from one's great grandmother," she says. "I also take into account all the little questions, including details such as what the light



switches need to look like ... all of these things are important to the entire design of the room."

But, as important as working with an architect early on, Thompson notes that her job is to act as a filter by listening to the client. "I interpret and translate what my clients are asking for in terms of a space and how it will function, and what their likes and dislikes are. I also make certain that I always stay within their budget," says Thompson, who, while largely self-taught, learned her craft by years of working with an interior designer for a number of years, as well as working with a company that furnished model homes, before striking out on her own



in 2010. "I truly feel I have a gift when it comes to understanding the way my clients want things done and following through on that ... I really have very tight, trusting relationships with all of my clients."

Nonetheless, things do not always go as smoothly as possible. Thompson tells the story of decorating – everything from top to bottom – a guesthouse. She had planned everything down to a 1/2-inch scale and designed everything according to the architect's plan. Unfortunately, the builder did not comply with that plan. Worse yet, the home had to be completed in less than a week in order to accommodate an important visitor.

"Very little of what was specified was

actually built," she says. "I pretty much worked around the clock to get this project taken care of – I drove rugs to Baltimore to be cut down and shuffled furniture around to make the home work."

When it comes to today's trends, Thompson notes that her clients want spaces that are livable and comfortable, rather than rooms that are formal and only used on special occasions. Another popular element is that "gray is the new brown." Gray has pretty much replaced the browns and khakis of 10 years ago, she says.

Another trend is that fabrics, which were previously relegated to the outdoors due to their durability, have made their way inside. "All of my clients have family rooms, and indoor-outdoor fabrics make these rooms livable and kid-friendly," she notes. "The fabric manufacturers caught on and have created wonderfully soft fabrics that can be used indoors."

Thompson adds that she has a client with three young boys, but the white fabric in the family room is "absolutely bulletproof."

Also back on the interior-design menu these days is wallpaper. "Grass cloth is extremely popular on walls," says Thompson. "My grandmother had it in her bathroom and, while I didn't think it was ever going to make a comeback, it has done so and done so big time."

For those wondering, grass cloth is a natural fiber wall covering that looks, well, like grass.

Thompson, and her staff of two, regularly make trips to the Washington Design Center, a showplace of vendors whose niche is high-end furnishing and fabrics. While the center is only open to the trade, Thompson nonetheless is more than willing to take her clients there. "I want them to be part of the process, and I don't want them to be intimidated," she says. "If I know I'm taking a client there, I'll sort of pre-shop for her, so I can give her very clear directions and so that we don't walk around for hours getting absolutely nothing accomplished."

In the end, Thompson says that her own sense of style has nothing to do with her work. "I have wonderful clients all over metropolitan Washington, D.C., and the metropolitan Baltimore area," she says. "There is no one type of people I work for ... they are all over the place. But all of my projects are fun and challenging." •