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WOMAN



Complimentary

Hunter Dominick

BRINGS CREATIVE LIVING HOME

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY GIBEON PHOTOGRAPHY

There's something about a kitchen. At a party, the living room is like a runway model—pretty for photos, but not much fun to hang out with. The kitchen, however, is an old friend—a place where guests seek refuge. Perhaps it is the comforting smells of simmering pots and warm baked goods, or maybe it is the intimate conversations that transpire around a center island that put everyone at ease. However, kitchens and bathrooms are often treated as the Cinderellas of a home despite the fact they are the rooms in which people spend most of their time. Hunter Dominick, of Hunter & Company Interior Design, declares the kitchen as her own favorite space in a house, but admits it is also the room that demands the most attention from a design standpoint.

"I have always loved the kitchen, because I am a very social person, and my husband and I enjoy cooking," explains Dominick. "But the kitchen simply has to be functional. For example, it should have lots of counter space on which to work, two trash or recycling receptacles, big drawers everywhere and 15-inch upper cabinets for things like big pasta bowls and such." In all her designs, she strives to strike the fine balance of designing something beautiful without losing its sense of purpose.

In the fashion versus function debate, designers like Dominick have long attempted to reconcile these seemingly conflicting goals when creating a look. They seek to achieve practicality while still making the design aesthetically pleasing—something in between sexy stilettos and comfy slippers.

Launching Hunter & Company Interior Design in Whitefish in 2001 and opening her showroom shortly thereafter, Dominick keeps her clients' needs at the center of her work. Her team of three designers brings a diverse but complimentary expertise to the table and offers services ranging from project management, space planning, budgeting, fixed finishes, and furniture that Dominick classifies as resort residential design. She sees interior design as part of a team effort, fill-

ing the gaps between the architect, the builder and the client to make a finished project successful.

"Everyone is different and everyone has her own style," Dominick says and confesses that her favorite aspect of her job is that no two projects are the same. Some are complete solutions for new construction, such as the one depicted in the photographs of a recent Whitefish Lake home, to simple hourly consults on furnishing a single room or completing a remodel. Unlike some designers who strive to be identified by a particular look, Dominick thinks it is fun to be different and to not have just one depicted style. "It pushes me," she confesses.

"MY GOAL IN ANY PROJECT IS TO MAKE CLIENTS HAPPY WITH THEIR SPACE," DOMINICK SAYS. SHE DOES THIS BY TAKING THE TIME TO GET TO KNOW THEM, THEIR LIFESTYLES AND WHAT THEIR FINAL EXPECTATIONS ARE BEFORE BEGINNING A JOB.

As with fashion, where a designer must consider who is likely to wear a garment and the situations in which it will be worn, interior design must factor in the uses of a room and then select from a wide range and combinations of materials, colors, patterns and styles to bring it to life. Dominick believes your home should be an expression of you, your family and your lifestyle.

"It is easy to pick out individual pieces, but my job is to help clients see the big picture and to envision the end product of what we are trying to create. To me, it doesn't so much matter what the style is—be it rustic elegance to contemporary—but if the client is making a wrong decision, I'll be the first to say so."

Dominick loves to travel and often draws inspiration from places she has visited, such as the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, The Louvre in Paris, New York's SoHo or from architectural







elements throughout her journeys. As an avid hiker and outdoor enthusiast, Dominick also takes a cue from nature, where all is in harmony. She connects the exterior to the interior through a variety of textures to shape a soothing space and infuse it with interest. Put to imaginative use, every day materials can become provocative additions. A collection of glass bottles, stacks of old books, a pewter teapot, smooth river rocks or dried botanicals can contribute to the sensory elements of a room or simply become conversation pieces. She adds that it is important in any space to have a focal point and utilize color to wake up the decor.

"People are often scared to use color," Dominick says, "but it can make a huge impact." A strong color seems to highlight everything it surrounds.

While growing up in an interior design family, surrounded by furniture makers in Roanoke, Virginia,

one of the most exciting trends Dominick sees is the return of regionalism—the interior design equivalent of the local food movement.

"PEOPLE ARE MUCH MORE INTERESTED IN OUR LOCAL RESOURCES ON A LOT OF DIFFERENT LEVELS," SHE EXPLAINS, MENTIONING NATURAL MATERIALS SUCH AS TIMBER AND ROCK AND THE TALENTS OF LOCAL CRAFTS PEOPLE AROUND THE VALLEY FOR CREATING UNIQUE PIECES.

"In the past, where furniture came from and who provided the services were never much of a priority," Dominick adds. "But as people notice that the old mom and pop stores are disappearing and manufacturing jobs are moving overseas, they are suddenly paying attention to the origin of the piece." Gone are the days where people just want to buy the cheap "throw-away" furniture from dis-



count stores because they don't want to see it end up in landfills. Despite tough economic times, Dominick says clients are just making smarter decisions about their purchases by asking, "Is this the right piece?"

Even if someone couldn't afford a complete remodel right now, there are still ways to make a big impact on a budget. "You can do so much with color and texture," Dominick says, suggesting upholstering an existing piece of furniture in a fresh pattern, repainting a room or adding a new rug or throw as just a few of the many options available to update a look without spending much money.

Located on 200 Wisconsin Avenue in Whitefish, Hunter & Company's own 3500sq/ft showroom offers unique gifts, bedding, furniture, lighting and accessories from some of the country's best manufactures to help cre-

ate spaces that are distinctly personal. She also sells wonderful items for the holidays, house warming presents or hostess gifts.

"PEOPLE DON'T KNOW THAT YOU CAN COME IN TO HUNTER & COMPANY JUST TO SHOP. YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A CLIENT," DOMINICK SAYS.

Watch out grand foyer or delicate sitting room, it's Cinderella's turn to attend the ball—and this time, she might upstage you. After all, she can cook!

For more information or to view Hunter & Company's projects gallery, visit hunter@hunterinterior.com online or call for an appointment at 406.862.1402.



Photo of Hunter by 406 Staff