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dM *Serendipity* DESIGN MARKET SYMPOSIUM

Serendipity's Home Editor Stephanie Horton moderated a panel of heavyweights from the home design industry. Here are some highlights from that lively conversation.

(left to right) Serendipity Home Editor Stephanie Horton with the Symposium panelists: Douglas VanderHorn, Lynne Scalo, Peter Deane and Jeremi Jablonski

PANELISTS
Douglas VanderHorn, VanderHorn Architects
Jeremi Jablonski, Jablonski Associates
Peter Deane, Deane Inc.
Lynne Scalo, Lynne Scalo Design

What does your firm focus on?

Douglas VanderHorn: We do site or project evaluation, site planning, as well as architectural and interior finishes design.

Jeremi Jablonski: We provide construction services with tailored programs for new construction and renovation projects.

Lynne Scalo: We provide complete interior design services, art consulting, architecture and building referrals with oversight.

Peter Deane: We provide custom cabinetry and interior design, specializing in kitchens and baths, library and media rooms, and wardrobes/closets.

How would you describe your aesthetic?

DV: I aim for a timeless design aesthetic. I like to work in many classic styles—Shingle Style, Tudor, Georgian, etc.

LS: I love to blend the new with the classical. There are reasons that certain looks and pieces stand the test of time. One of my secrets is to design objects that combine high/low elements.

What inspires you?

PD: My dining and travel experiences. It could be something as simple as an edge profile at a restaurant bar top to walking down a main street and admiring the variety of architectural details in the surrounding structures.

What qualities make a good client?

JJ: A good client is a great communicator, trusts the people that he or she hires and is comfortable delegating decisions.

What advice do you give prospective clients?

LS: Breathe, breathe, breathe! Relax and enjoy the process! I love when a client can give me hints to their aesthetic but also look to me and my artistic ability to create their dream home.

How do you get to know and understand your clients needs and lifestyles before starting on a project?

PD: We get to understand them by meeting with them in their homes. This gives us the opportunity to see the style of their home and their interior design palette. We also invite them to our showrooms in Stamford, CT, or New Canaan, CT, to show them our displays, and get feedback from them as to what inspires them. I always like my clients to feel empowered.

LS: I work with my clients to help them visualize themselves within their new designs. I want to know who will be in the space and how it will be used. The space within the home needs to be one that fosters time together, as well as providing a retreat for each family member.

How do you determine the time frame of a particular project?

DV: Besides the scale of a project, timing now has more to do with regulatory hurdles. A basic house plan and exterior can happen quickly, so we produce that and begin the approvals process. In many

A Ridgefield, CT, living room by Lynne Scalo Design combines classic architecture with modern materials like white patent leather, Lucite and a geometric rug.

> PRIORITIES FOR ME RELATE TO A FUNCTIONAL AND EFFICIENT LAYOUT AND AN ELEGANT EXTERIOR FAÇADE.
>
> —DOUGLAS VANDERHORN

cases that takes months—we use the time to develop the details and the interiors.

What are the first steps you undertake when starting a new project? How do you establish priorities?

DV: The first step is to gather background info. That could be site, regulatory or existing house drawings. Also, write a program. Ask the client to gather images. I like to start with as much applicable information as I can then narrow things and distill it. Priorities for me relate to a functional and efficient layout and an elegant exterior façade.

JJ: Communication, scheduling and reporting are the basic steps to getting a project running. The priorities may be different with each client, but listening to your client is always a productive and important place to start.

For clients who have trouble visualizing end results, what tools do you use?

PD: We provide hand renderings and AutoCAD drawings (plans and elevations).

> I APPRECIATE EACH ARCHITECTURAL STYLE FOR ITS TRADITION AND ORIGINS, BUT AT THE END, WHAT I LIKE THE MOST IS A CLEAN, ELEGANT LOOK WITH A FEW EXQUISITE DETAILS.
> —JEREMI JABLONSKI

How often and how closely do you see architects, builders and designers working together from beginning to end of a project?

DV: I prefer to set the design direction before the interior designer is involved. Once the scheme is set, the interior designer should jump in to make sure they can achieve their goals within the framework. Once the team is set, I find it essential to work closely and present a unified vision to the client. I always explain to the team that the client won't remember who was at fault. They will just remember if the process went poorly or if it went smoothly. We rise and fall together.

JJ: The team approach with early input from all professionals saves time and money. So, before you start building your project, build your team!

How have you seen architecture and construction change in Fairfield County over the years? Are you seeing more renovations and additions, or new builds today?

DV: Within my clientele we are seeing more new construction to replace old. Renovation is expensive and harder to budget. Also, land is such a huge investment that the cost of a new home is a smaller proportion of the total budget than in the past.

JJ: Today we are seeing more new builds than five years ago, when the market shifted almost entirely to maintenance work during the recession. Over the three decades I have worked in the area, I have seen the trend for interior finishes become more modern as exterior finishes remain mostly traditional. While site and permitting requirements have made construction more challenging, we are still building homes of ever-higher quality within tighter timelines thanks to advances in technology and materials.

What materials do you like to work with?

PD: I enjoy working with materials that are suitable to the desired outcome. For example, if a client likes to cook, then I will discuss the opportunity to integrate an oiled butcher block top. Change is constant in our industry—that is what keeps my team energized and our clients inspired to work with us.

Do you incorporate environmentally friendly designs and products or energy-saving features in your homes?

DV: We do a lot in the area of energy savings. We utilize: high-/low-density foam, (which improves insulation values by 50%), LED lighting (which uses one-fifth the energy), geothermal well systems as primary cooling and heating, and sometimes natural-gas-powered co-generation systems by Yanmar for electricity, with all systems connected to Savant [smart home universal control app].

JJ: Recently, all of our projects incorporate energy-efficient design. Geothermal heating and cooling systems and foam insulation have become the new norm. For new construction and whole-home renovations, we often offer Energy Star Rating Certification that ranks a home's energy consumption performance similar to ratings given to household appliances.

Where do you most like to see clients invest on a project? How do you guide your clients when getting started or laying out a budget?

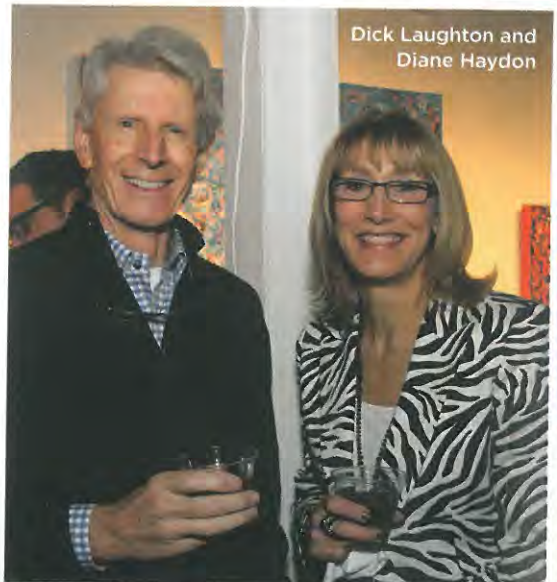
PD: Budget is a very important discussion to have early on in the process. As a designer I always want to be sensitive to my clients' desired budget. A budget provides me with a guideline when creating a design, selecting materials and cabinet specifications, as well as determining appliance options.

What is one of the most unusual requests you've been asked to incorporate into a plan, build or interior?

DV: I've had so many unusual requests that nothing seems unusual now. I've created hidden stairs, safe rooms, tunnels, basement swimming pools, basement regulation basketball courts, an attic with a hitting wall for tennis, urinals in the home, showers with windows, and a 60,000-volume personal library. Recently, we incorporated the favorite design elements into a bedroom suite for someone who had already passed away.

JJ: I'm unable to share the specific details, but for one particular client we installed security elements in the home that rivaled systems at almost any bank.

Kimberly Higgins, Susan Nolte and Jeannie Lawson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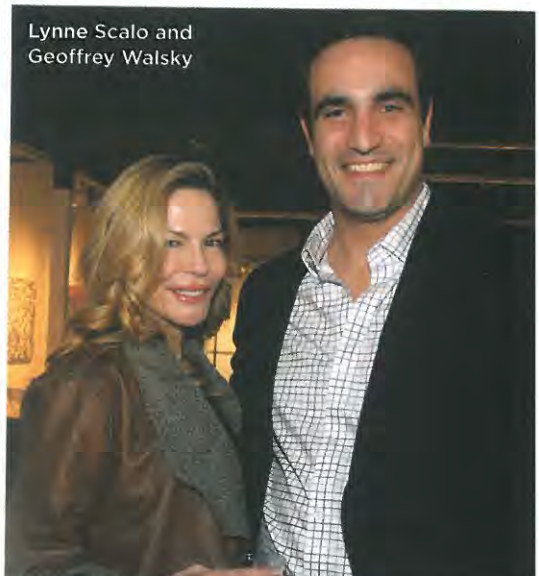
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