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She goes with the flow  
Interior designer Sam Jernigan melds style with function  
By Gloria Young, Home & Garden



Interior designer S.A. "Sam" Jernigan has a flair for the artistic but she enjoys the practical side of home improvement, too.

"I really love design," she said recently. "I love actually making things. I'm a very hands-on person with my own home. I love to saw and lay tile. I've learned upholstery and refinishing. I do a lot of that type of work. I'm a DIYer."

The Grass Valley resident started her career in visual display in Southern California, then moved into home decorating at the age of 30. After relocating to Sonoma County for several years, she and her late husband fell in love with the foothills during trips for wine tasting and sightseeing and moved to the area four years ago.

courtesy redfern photography  
Interior Designer Sam Jernigan shares a laugh with client Christine Kirks in the kitchen of the Kirks' new home. Jernigan worked with the Kirks to redesign the kitchen to make it more family friendly.

For Jernigan, decorating someone's home is not about her taste — it's about theirs.

"I want people to live in a home that makes them happy," she said. "No matter how good it looks, if they aren't happy there, how can you call it a success?"

She frequently works with clients who are designing and building new homes. A 3D computer-generated space-planning program brings state-of-the-art focus to the tasks. She also turned to the 3D program when it was time to build her own home.

"I designed my house first and then had it built," Jernigan said. "It was designed with all the furniture in place."

That experience helps her clients avoid some of the more common pitfalls, she said.

"The credo of interior design is form follows function — things like walkways and having enough space to have good traffic flow," she said. "One thing in home design that is really critical is to have nice wide staircases and walkways."

A mistake she sees frequently is choosing furniture that is too large or too small for the space.

"American furniture is bigger and people don't realize that a chair is 42 inches deep," she said. "So the next

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thing you know, you've waited for something to be made only to find it is too big."

Jernigan charges by the hour and finds she is asked about almost everything to do with the home.

"I do lighting, plans, kitchen design, remodels, selecting paint colors — virtually any type of design including exteriors," she said.

During a recent appointment, she and a client spent the entire time planning a wall unit, she said.

Among Jernigan's clients are Wendy and Nick Browning, who are building a house in Grass Valley.

"She helped us with planning some structural layout — ceilings coffers, design elements," Wendy Browning said. "We're also doing some special arches and columns."

For the Brownings, Jernigan's color sense proved really helpful.

"She helped us repaint our current house — inside and outside," Browning said. "It was pulling different design features and creating a picture that works and looks really good."

Recently, Jernigan began writing a home decorating column, There's no Place Like Home, for the Web site www.Reviewboard.com, owned by Random House.

"I'm hoping eventually it will be a question and answer (format)," she said. "I would love that, having people send in their photos. Otherwise I'll be an educator, bringing clients into the process."

Looking ahead, what does she see as the next big thing in home decorating?

The rage for granite countertops and stainless steel appliances is arcing and will make way for green design, she said.

"There are wonderful countertops being made out of recycled glass and paper," she explained. "There's bamboo and cork flooring."

Even linoleum is making a comeback — an offshoot anyway. Called Marmoleum, it is eco-friendly and can be used for flooring and a variety of other surfaces.

"It incorporates a lot of the benefits of linoleum and is available in cost-efficient ways for installation," Jernigan said. "You can install it yourself."

And don't rule out concrete.

"There's going to be more and more concrete being used for everything," she said.

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Sam Jernigan's business is Renaissance Design Consultations. For more information and to view her library of decorating articles as well as other helpful information for homeowners, see www.RdesignConsultations.com.



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