

# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

YOUR HOME ON THE WEB

## Designer Secrets

### Campion Platt

**The designers and architects featured in this issue talk about how they deal with problems and offer advice on designing your own home.**

**Photography by Ken Hayden Published September 2009**



#### **What's your favorite room to design for yourself and why?**

I like the challenge of smaller spaces, so I guess I'd say the den. It's not as big as a living room, can have many functions—TV room, library, office and bedroom—and usually requires some special planning to come out well. In my own den, I incorporated all of these functions and more, yet still managed to make it comfortable and inviting.

#### **What's the most difficult part about designing for yourself? What's the best part?**

I love the experimentation process in design, so what better guinea pig than myself? The best part is finding that magic between what's in the mind's eye and the end result—making the art and function sing.

#### **Did you use the Internet? What is your favorite online shopping site?**

I like 1stdibs, Phillipsdeputy.com, Sothebys.com, Christies.com, Artnet.com and DWR.com, but more for the practical than for the aesthetics of the design. I usually have to see things before I buy. If I can, I design chairs, sofas and the like.

#### **Did you stay within your budget? Or did you have a budget?**

We did not stay within budget, but the overruns were more for the construction and preservation of the landmark house than for the interiors.

### **How does designing your own home change the way you work with clients?**

I can't say it changed my methods, but I did realize some of the painful decisions clients have to go through during the life of a project; they are usually the surprises.

### **How did the current economy affect your design choices, or did it?**

The house was primarily completed in 2008, before the current economic situation, but we were very frugal when we could be and spent more when it really made a difference. In Florida, you need hurricane windows, and I had to provide an impact-proof solution. We were very selective about where to put hurricane-impact windows; in other areas, we got shutters. The inexpensive aluminum shutters look the same as a wood shutter. It was a combination of different expenses to get the same look throughout the house. Then we searched a long time for what would become the dining table and spent more than we would normally because it was a unique and exotic wood.

### **Did you incorporate changing technology into your home? If so, what were the challenges and benefits?**

My wife, Tatiana, said she wanted a house system where she could go to each room, select a source, turn the volume up or down—that's it, no more! Now, most guys want more out of their home technology, but I soon realized the wisdom of this (as my technological savvy has diminished over the years). In New York, we had two floors but no integrated system—frustrating. We worked with a vendor in Palm Beach, and he did exactly what Tatiana wanted—volume up or down, power on and off. In each room you had a volume control to listen to a TV in one room and a radio in another. We did install an outdoor movie theater, though, and that took some serious calculations and an extra projection lens to get just right. Luckily, our neighbors like us despite the noisy action movies!

### **Were you finally able to try out something your clients were not adventurous enough to allow?**

No, my clients are very trusting and enjoy pushing the envelope.

### **Did you arrange your schedule so that you could work exclusively on your home, or did you work on your home between other projects?**

The one thing I learned is that you can't orphan your own home project. In my office, we dedicated the same kind of staff necessary for client projects, conducted regular meetings with my wife—and the only luxury afforded was we could just decide not to decide until we were sure. Sometimes it's better to sleep on an idea.

### **What advice would you give those designing their own home for the first time?**

Don't lose sight of the magic you first feel when you embark on the process, and make sure to have fun during the journey. There is no problem-free project until you are done, but you can create the perfect house!

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