



# DESIGNERS' JOURNAL

## THE BEAUTIFUL BASICS

The mere thought of decorating sends some people into a spin. One room or an entire house; city, suburb or beach — doesn't seem to matter. With so many issues to address, the ordinary mortal has every reason to find it overwhelming. One way to avoid the angst is to hire a trained, experienced professional interior designer who has the knowledge, resources and ability to guide you from beginning to end. But before you start asking friends for recommendations, hear what three top designers — Angela Grande, Benjamin Huntington and Doug Wilson — have to say. Known for the beautiful residences they've done for clients throughout the country, each has provided highlights of different aspects of the design process. Use their insights as a guide, and you'll be on your way to the home you've always wanted.





Courtesy of Angela Grande Design, Inc.



### ANGELA GRANDE

Angela Grande, principal of Angela Grande Design Inc., has worked her magic on suburban houses, townhouses and beachfront mansions. Her projects include a 1940s-inspired residence, a glass-walled contemporary, a ski-in-ski-out villa, and cottages in high-end golf club communities from Long Island to Florida to Utah.

"The most important thing a client should know," says Grande, "is that the design process is a journey, not always smooth and clear-cut. The best way to make it successful is with frequent communication and feedback."

"My start-up process," she explains, "is directed to making sure the client and I are on the same page from the get-go." These range from big-picture considerations, such as budget and timeframe, to small details like types of faucets. To do this, she asks a broad range of questions, from clients' ideas about color, style and degree of formality to their stage of life, allergies and regional weather conditions. "Getting all this down and knowing their concerns can focus that angst and begin to ease the process for many people about to embark on the decorating journey," she says.

Once the scope of the project is defined, Grande creates a presentation of well-researched images of

design elements, color and fabric swatches, and timing and budget outlines on poster board.

Then comes the crucial back-and-forth with the client to finalize the plan: things might be added or subtracted, a spouse might suggest new ideas, there could be a change in color.

As to spurring and selecting new acquisitions, some clients want to leave it all up to the designer; others want to be glued to their hip. Grande suggests a middle ground. She says designers see the latest in the marketplace, so allow them to narrow down the possibilities and present the best choices. "We want you to touch and test before purchasing so that you like the feel of a cushion, the height of a counter, the shine of a finish," she says.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR SUBURBAN HOMES

- Create a mudroom out of a small, unused space; turn a garage's second story into a guest suite or office; add an outdoor dining area or pool cabana.
- Personalize with his-and-her master baths; a wine cellar; even a putting green.
- Maximize large rooms by multi-purposing: use the dining room as a library; establish work and entertaining areas in the kitchen; organize a homework area for the kids in the living room.