

Perchance to Dream

Susan Thompson

Dreams most often elude us, particularly when it comes to following a career path. But after nine years of travel and innumerable homes of her own, Susan Thompson's ambition to apply her passion for interior design to a career in the field was realised through establishing Dream Interior Designs.

Susan, her husband, Stephen and two children were living in Melbourne when a corporate move took them to Singapore and kept them there for three years. "We were so fortunate to travel extensively in the region during this time, to countries such as China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia," says Susan "I was exposed to very different design and decorating styles. The use of colour and natural materials was instinctive. It taught me a lot about creating a sense of place incorporating beauty and function."

During her time in Singapore, Susan became involved in a business specialising in recycled teak wood furniture, artifacts and decorator items. "It was a thriving business," she recalls. "I found I had an eye for picking just the right thing for the customers, many of whom were ex-pats. It really reinforced my love of decorating and seeking out interesting pieces to give an interior its individual style."

In fact, Susan began her own journey of finding collectable pieces to decorate the family home, creating wonderful memories of where they had travelled and what they had experienced.

After an inspiring stint in Asia, it was time to move on again, this time to London. The family uprooted once more and began what was to become a six-year period in the heart of West London. "Europe was a huge contrast to what we had experienced in Asia," she says. "The history is incredible and it gave me a renewed respect for tradition. We traveled widely which provided a fantastic education in life and culture."

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Susan soaked up the history and rich style of decorating seen throughout England and Europe, compared with the earthy, spiritual ethos of Asia. "Coming from Australia, one is struck by the subdued light in England and how different it is from home. I was conscious of the creative styles and decorating approach taken there in response to the environment."

She became inspired to pursue a future career in Interior Design and enrolled in a comprehensive Interior Design and Decoration course, graduating with Distinction.

While still in London, Susan began the process of designing her family's new future home in Mosman, Sydney with the help of Virginia Kerridge Architect. The old house on the block was to be demolished and a new house built. Although challenging from such a great distance, relying on email and the Internet, they were able to develop a design together. Susan's brief to Virginia was to create a home with an abundance of natural light after living through long London winters and the sense of light deprivation they exerted. Fortunately, the north facing aspect of the block made this an easy task. The design incorporated large expanses of north facing glass doors and windows. Ponds and tropical features were also incorporated throughout the landscaping, as Susan wanted the feel of an Asian resort inspired from their many wonderful holidays.

Then the call came to once more move the family, this time back to their home country, Australia. Susan and the family began another journey of discovery, settling into their new life in Sydney. They instantly appreciated the warmth, sunshine and dazzling light. The move also brought more urgency to complete the building of their new house, now under construction.

With that project on the go, Susan decided it was time to fulfill her dream of working in interior design and she established Dream Interior Designs.

"I am very fortunate to have clients who are open to new ideas and suggestions and it is a great joy to help them put together living spaces they love," Susan explains "I love working with colour and materials – it's a great creative outlet for me. Every project is different, from a complete design for a new home from the slab up, to a single consultation for a bit of direction and how to remodel a room that perhaps isn't working to its best potential."

Susan's interior design qualifications, coupled with having lived in 11 different homes over the years, equip Susan with a kind of hands-on experience that few practitioners comprehend.

"I had to make do a lot and create a new home every time we moved," she says. "Sometimes we shifted into rental homes, so I often had to do a lot with a little. For that reason, I am adept at working with what a client already has to realize their vision."

Dream Interior Designs provides a wide range of interior design services for all property types and to meet customer's requirements and budgets. "I am involved in all aspects of the project from the initial brief, developing concept boards, access to specialist suppliers, space planning, colour consultation, furniture selection, accessories and lighting," she explains.

"I can also help people to maximize the value of their property for to prepare for selling with pre-sale makeovers."

It is important to Susan that, when a job is completed, every customer is delighted with the result. "It's my role to guide their vision to reality. There are no rules – generally, you can create whatever you like, your dream interior. What it comes down to is budget and creating a space that meets your needs."

Susan's edge is her willingness to immerse herself in her client's requirements. "I listen carefully and observe the needs of my clients. It's not a matter of imposing a style or trend on people – what I would like or what's current in the market. After many discussions and asking the right questions, I am able to read them well enough to understand their family's needs and deliver what they would like to do if they had the skills, or the time, or the resources.

"The process is complex, like a jigsaw, with a lot of consultation, then the pieces fall in to place. The end result is a happy client."

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