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LAURIE INTERIORS

P.O. BOX 3100

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JACKSON, WYOMING 83001

Interior designer

Laurie Waterhouse

is on a mission to make
Jackson Hole homes
into beautiful
sanctuaries.

By Sally Wadyka
Photos by Todd Huff

It's no surprise that Laurie Waterhouse gravitated to interior design. She's the kind of woman who naturally and automatically makes everyone she meets feel completely at home. Sitting in her cozy and inviting shop in downtown Jackson, it's easy to forget that you're not curled up on the couch in your own living room. Of course, without Laurie's help and incredibly tasteful eye for detail, most of us will never have living rooms anywhere near as lovely as her showroom.

You could say that this business is in Laurie's blood. Long before she began decorating people's homes, she spent several years helping to run her mother's antique business back East. She found that she really enjoyed working with customers to help them find just the right piece, and from there it was a natural

Inner SPACE





"I love using color to create warmth," says Laurie about her decorating techniques.

progression to begin thinking about guiding customers' with their bigger decorating decisions. So in early 2001, after moving from Connecticut to Wyoming, she opened her eponymous shop, Laurie Interiors. And business has been brisk ever since.

Dream clients, dreamy projects

"I feel blessed that we've been so lucky to work with such lovely people," says Laurie. "We're still doing projects for our very first client, and they've become like family." So much so, that after Laurie finished decorating their entire house from the ground up, the clients offered Laurie their newly completed home for her wedding in 2002. "Now, they've just bought a teepee to use

as a fun little guest room, and we're decorating it with log beds, bear rugs and coyote throws. It's definitely the most obscure job we've done so far!" says Laurie.

About 75 percent of her company's clients come to them for full-scale interior design projects. That often means starting to work with the client, as well as the architect, long before the house is even built. "That's the ideal because we can sit down as a team, look at floor plans, pick out finishes, tiles, granite, fixtures and lighting," says Laurie. Of course, some clients are more hands-on than others. "I met with some people recently who just gave me some direction and want me to run with it," she recalls. "When I'm done with the place they literally want to be able to move in with just a toothbrush." And that's not uncommon considering that many of Laurie's clients' Jackson



homes are not their primary residences. And the busier the clients are, the freer reign Laurie and her team often have to realize their design vision.

But Laurie is careful to note that her business does not cater only to wealthy. "I'm just as happy to help someone who doesn't have three houses; someone who just needs a new couch," she says. And chances are, whatever you walk into Laurie Interiors seeking, you will find it either in the chockfull town shop or the vast 3,800 square foot warehouse showroom just opened south of town. Even though the majority of the furniture Laurie sells is special ordered (there are well over a thousand fabric samples in the back room to choose from), many customers are loath to order furniture they can't actually try out. The new showroom will house dozens of couches and chairs so you can be sure something's comfy before you commit.

It's all about the details

Although most of the people who walk through the doors of Laurie's shop have entire houses to fill from scratch, the store is also a treasure trove for anyone looking for a little immediate gratification. "We do get a lot of retail traffic," says Laurie. "People will wander in, buy one candle, an end table or a lamp." On a recent Saturday, one of those walk-ins just happened to be local resident Harrison Ford, shopping for tissue box holders.



About ninety percent of Laurie's client are referrals from other clients.

As you would expect, the store is as exquisitely decorated as any of Laurie's other projects. "When you walk into the store you get a quick sense of my style," she says. "The way I buy, it all tends to go together. I can't help it." That means a store that's an eclectic, but well-chosen, mix of furniture and accessories—rich red paisley upholsteries, warm wool throws, buttery leather ottomans, bright Italian pottery, and candles of all shapes, sizes and scents.

While no one would ever accuse Laurie of doing cowboy kitsch, she does make a point of staying true to her Rocky Mountain location. Her shop is filled with furniture that's hand-hewn or custom-painted by Western artisans and on the walls are paintings by Jackson artists Kay Northrop and Bart Walker. "I like to

acknowledge that we live in the West, but I think of my designs as more mountain than Western," says Laurie. Think old-world Bavarian charm, not cowboys and Indians. And always, lots and lots of rich color. "I love using color to create warmth," says Laurie. "After all, we have very long, cold winters here!"

Showcasing her talents

The best evidence of Laurie's success as a decorator is her reputation: About 90 percent of her clients are referrals from other clients. But even more indicative of Laurie's warmth and talent is that most of her clients continue to work with her year after year, and they are quick to call her, not just their decorator, but their friend. "I wanted to be very involved in the project," says one client who worked with Laurie to decorate a house that had been remodeled down to the bare walls. "Laurie got to know me, know what I liked, and then we became partners in the process." The two worked together to create a home that reflected the client's desire for a comfortable Tuscan look—warm colors and rugged, "but not too rugged" plaster walls. The home is a constant evolution of new pieces and new arrangements, but one thing remains the same: Her favorite spot is the family room in which her family and friends routinely gather for dinner and movies. "I knew I wanted the kind of home where my friends would feel comfortable throwing the pillows on the floor and relaxing on the couch," says the client. "If a room is beautiful but not functional, then you need a new designer!"

In a completely opposite approach, Laurie decorated a Granite Ridge home from top to bottom in just three days, with at least 50 percent of the furnishings bought right off her showroom floor. "We arrived in Jackson, and by the end of the first day we already had furniture in place in our home," raved the client. "From the dishes to the linens, Laurie helped us organize it all. We could not have asked for anything more."

With close to fifty active clients—some with full-scale projects, others just repainting a few rooms or redoing a couch—Laurie and her team are keeping busy. But Laurie maintains that she'll never take on anything that doesn't make her feel good or that she might not enjoy. "My daughter always says to me, 'If the thought of it gives you a tummy ache, then don't do it,'" says Laurie. "And she's right. If I don't have chemistry with the

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Laurie's clients are quick to call her, not just their decorator, but their friend.

clients, we shouldn't work together. This is supposed to be fun!"

For more information, contact Laurie Waterhouse by mail at Laurie Interiors, P.O. Box 3100, Jackson, WY 83001; by phone at 307-732-0130; on the Web at www.laurieinteriors.com or stop by the store at 90 East Pearl Avenue in Jackson.

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