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GREEN BUILDING & DESIGN
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GREEN MUSEUMS SERIES

EXHIBITION

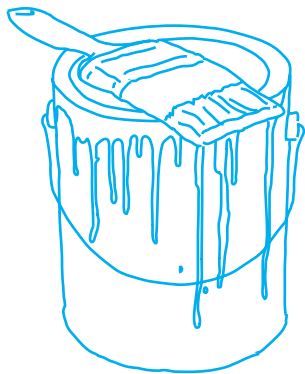
PART I: LIGHT, P. 48

THE SUSTAINABLE WAY TO STAGE A HOME

Home stagers have perfected the art of preparing a home for sale. They are hired to modify a home's appearance so that it makes a positive impression on potential homebuyers. Design It! found a way to stand out from other home stagers and redesigners in the Boulder, Colorado, area by incorporating sustainable materials into their projects. "I recommend eco-friendly products and materials to my clients," says Lisa Darrah, owner. "The community here is environmentally aware—it is almost a standard of living—but to date, Design It! is the only home stager in the area that has adopted this green way of thinking."

Darrah was introduced to home staging by watching the ever-popular HGTV. She experimented on the homes of family and friends. Once she discovered her gift for design, Darrah turned her passion into a business. She founded Design It! in 2007 and soon earned her Accredited Staging Professional (ASP) accreditation, the gold standard recognized by the National Association of Realtors (NAR).

FACT/ Statistics show a well-staged home spends 50% less time on the market. Professional home staging speeds up sales in a sluggish market and can bump up prices 2–10%.



RIGHT: By adding color, furniture, art-work, and accessories, any space "becomes alive," says Lisa Darrah, owner of Design It! The company uses an eco-friendly paint labeled Harmony and reuses furniture and other items during its staging process.



backgrounder/

Design It! stages an average of five to six homes a year. These homes range from 2,000 square feet to more than 5,000 square feet; styles vary from 1960s Bungalow to sleek modern infill. Darrah now offers three distinct services to clients—home staging for clients in need of depersonalizing a space, redesign for individuals hoping to personalize their home, and event planning—both social and corporate events. It is a one-woman operation. Subcontractors are used but are first screened to guarantee that Darrah's green philosophy is maintained.

Boulder is a tough housing market. Design It! is one of many home stagers in the area trained to prepare a home for sale. The owner's environmental awareness prompted the company to integrate reusable, sustainable, and energy-efficient products into the homes of their clients.

challenge/

The one-woman company was charged with staging a home for a quick sale in the Boulder area.

solution/

Green materials—from the paint to the furniture to the fixtures—were incorporated into the home staging. Darrah often works with a local company to acquire rented furniture pieces and accessories. "They lease out furniture that is used over and over," she says of the practice. "There are pieces I've used nearly a dozen times. This way the homeowner doesn't have to go out and buy new pieces just to stage their house."

Staging requires neutralizing the home. Painting is almost always required, so Design It! uses Sherwin Williams Harmony

line, which offers no- and low-VOC paints. Most homeowners jump on board, but occasionally Darrah needs to educate them on the importance of this paint. "I talk about the science behind using a quality paint, especially one that doesn't contain VOCs," she says. "I'm able to offer a reasonable price and match color swatches which helps convince wary homeowners."

More than an advocate for eco-friendly materials, Darrah also ensures that contractors follow sustainable practices. Electricians recycle the fixtures taken out, donating the unwanted but functional pieces to Habitat for Humanity. Copper wiring is salvaged. A recycled glass/concrete mixture often recovers outdated or worn laminate countertops.

Wood pieces once used in factories or farming are given new life on mantels that are begging for an upgrade. Whether the project is a home staging or redesign, Design It! recommends floors of bamboo, cork, or rapidly renewable wood species. "Most projects have bits and pieces of these elements," explains Darrah, who says these updates are an added benefit to the homeowner and leverage for realtors. "The realtors are able to bring prospective homeowners into a home that has been upgraded and announce that all the products are sustainable. This helps sell the home, especially in a progressive area like Boulder County." Many homeowners looking to sell or remodel their home are also open to the idea of incorporating green materials. "Most people are becoming educated," she says. "Green home design isn't a fad—we know it is good for the environment and it is good for the home."

—by Jennifer Hogeland