

# Residential Building Designer

By Lalaena Gonzalez-Figueroa

With degrees and experience in both interior design and architecture, Sherry Braun has cultivated a highly specialized business that caters specifically to her clients' residential design needs. It has been, she explains, a calculated career plan. "I'm offering something unique," observes Sherry. "By focusing on residential design and opting not to expand my office, I'm giving all of my attention to each of my clients' projects." In order to accomplish this, she has assembled a strong team of professionals, ranging from consultants to contractors, tailoring groups for each project she handles.

A veteran with nearly three decades' experience in the design industry, Sherry recalls the early challenges posed to her as a woman in a male-dominated field. "I was never going to let that get to me," she recalls. "In fact, when I started my own business nine years ago, I saw my perspective as an advantage. In my experience, when a couple embarks upon the process of purchasing a home, the wife is typically the one making the final decision. To that end, understanding what women want in a finished home is quite important to being a successful designer."

Sherry's unique background allows her to connect with builders and developers as well. "I worked in production during the first part of my career, so I have a solid understanding of how a building goes together," she remarks. Seems pretty important, but she notes that it's not uncommon for designers to move from college to a design department with no on-the-board experience. "Because I understand how the components of a home must work together, I'm able to be more flexible in my design ideas, to push the limits of how our homes are constructed, while considering budget," she adds. The results can be spectacular, as in the case of a San Clemente residence whose whimsical structure evokes an Old World charm while featuring all of the amenities a modern-day homeowner desires.

Braun Residential Building Design, Ltd. specializes in design development and

interior architecture, conceptual single-family residential building design and the selection of colors and materials for interior and exterior finishes. Sherry's team approach enables her to work well with consultants and construction personnel, and she maintains strong communication with colleagues as well as homeowners. In fact, her desire to connect with others was one key factor in her move from a corporate position with a large architectural office to opening her design firm.

"I wanted to work directly with homeowners and boutique builders because this allows me to connect with others, to make a visible difference in their lives," Sherry offers. "There's more satisfaction in expressing my design approach when I'm working with clients because I know that I'm meeting their needs and helping to create their vision. Working with a big builder, I often thought, 'Are we creating something our customers want or are they simply accepting what we present?'" She also appreciates the challenges that accompany custom-home work. "Homeowners bring their design ideas, and my role is to show them a unique twist on those ideas. It's an exciting process for everyone involved."

While her preferred style is Contemporary, Sherry notes that the majority of her homes feature more traditional design elements. "In Orange County, homeowners tend to prefer timeless architecture such as Spanish Colonial,



Tuscan, Craftsman and East Coast styles," she observes. Most of her projects are situated in Orange County, though she has also designed homes in Northern California and Florida. The firm's projects typically range within \$3-7 million. Although she primarily works with new-home builders on custom and spec designs, Sherry also handles major renovation and remodeling projects. Every project she handles is marked by clean lines, an integration with the home's natural surroundings and incredible attention to detail.

For Sherry, communication is an essential part of the design process; not only does she strive to understand and meet the wants and needs of builders and homeowners, but she also works tirelessly to create a style that makes a statement. And the message is always delivered with exceptional taste. ■

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