



A DESIGNER AT WORK

Mercedes Courland designs with color, attention to details

BY REGINA MARCAZZO

When Mercedes Courland contemplates designing a room or the interior of an entire home, she thinks about more than just window treatments and furniture.

The president of Courland Design Inc. is not only trained in interior design, she's also an artist, lighting expert and a lover of detail.

"I try to create timeless interiors. I just love all these architectural details," Courland said. "I keep a notebook of details. I spend a lot of time in Paris."

Trained at the Parsons School of Design, the interior designer does most of her work on the North Shore of Long Island and in Manhattan.

Courland considers herself an interior architect and believes the most valuable service she offers her clients is steering them clear of expensive mistakes and leading them to the environments of their dreams.

To better take advantage of her talents, the design expert recommends getting her on board from the beginning. "I do prefer when I do a whole house with an architect. You get the continuity. It's a whole statement," Courland said.

"The earlier I start the better," she added, noting one of her many design strengths as "creating interestingly shaped walls."

Courland's love for design and detail goes back to her roots since her father, grandfather and a number of other relatives were architects by profession.

"I started doing floor plans in my father's office at seven," said Courland, who

has been designing professionally for over 20 years.

One of her current projects is a Manhattan loft renovation. "You just take a giant rectangle and you carve out these beautiful places," she said.

In addition, Courland is working on five residential homes on Long Island. She is often asked to "warm up" the contemporaries of the 1970s and 1980s. "I do it with colors and details," she said, confiding her love for working with color. "A lot of people are afraid of color."

She enjoys blending the natural colors of stone, brick or marble with others to mimic combinations from the greatest color master of all, "mother nature."

Courland also gets pleasure out of combining the old and the new. "I find outrageous antiques and I put them in the most perfect background. It's very exciting to mix things to the warmest and most satisfying," she said.

It was in 1987 after working for over a decade in the field that Courland opened her own firm, Courland Design Inc. of Glen Head.

She designs both commercial and residential spaces and business clients have often become residential ones. Courland actually designed three complete, separate homes for one client alone.

She also enjoys participating in design showhouses. This past summer she created a master bathroom and powder room at a showhouse in Quogue. "I find it wonderful to get your work shown," she said, adding, "It's really hard work but hard work always pays off. I love working hard

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and playing hard and I think it reflects in my work."

Just out of design school, Courland was offered a position as the interior designer for Blum & Nerzig Architects of Great Neck where she worked on commercial projects including Bally Shoe Stores and Zale Jewelers.

As head of interior design at Chelsea Design Associates, Inc. of Douglaston, Courland worked on numerous commercial projects including her designing of the Georgette Klinger Facial Salon's trademark doors featuring stainless steel with stamped Lilly of the Valley flowers.

An artist who has shown her paintings on Madison Avenue and in Soho, Courland has taught color to architectural students at the New York Institute of Technology in Old Westbury.

One of her most exciting jobs was the one she did while pregnant with her first daughter. The job took her to a resort in the Bahamas where she did an ocean club renovation and worked on a condominium complex. "That was just a dream job," she said.

Winthur, the daughter she was carrying during the design adventure is now following in her mother's footsteps by studying at the Rhode Island School of Design. "I think it's very exciting. I see how talented she is," said the proud mother.

Courland has two daughters, Courtney, 16, and Winthur, 19.

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