

# LUXE LIVING

MAY 2015

THE NAPLES LUXURY HOME REDEFINED



Clive Daniel Home, Diamond Custom Homes pair up for first time in Quail West project

PAGE 11

# Model of teamwork

### Designer Q&A

Laverne Gehman is a fresh new design mind in town. **3-4** ▶



### Shop Talk

Where dreams grow: Williams Magical Garden Center. **16-17** ▶



### Design Society

Clive Daniel Home says thanks to real estate friends. **19** ▶



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DESIGNER Q & A

# LAVERNE GEHMAN

... is a fresh new design mind in town

By **KELLY MERRITT**  
Florida Weekly Correspondent

While Laverne S. Gehman is new to Southwest Florida, he is a veteran of the design world. After his first visit to Naples just more than a year ago to work on a design project for a longtime client who purchased a home in Fiddler's Creek, he and his wife both fell in love with the area and made plans to live here.

Having been in the interior design and home furnishings industry for three decades — including operating a 30,000-square-foot showroom — Mr. Gehman has had access to the finest décor and home products anywhere. But this personable designer says he derives the biggest rewards from the relationships he establishes with his clients. Mr. Gehman enjoys listening to clients, and says learning where they are in life and what they want their home to reflect allows him to design a space that fits. For him, the design process is a team effort. Mr. Gehman loves nothing more than hearing his clients say that their home is everything they envisioned and “watching them light up with a huge smile” when they see the final project.

Mr. Gehman will be working out of



COURTESY PHOTOS

Laverne Gehman

the Norris Home Furnishings showroom in Naples. We caught up with him to ask about his favorite designs, most

memorable challenges and best advice.

**Q: What's your favorite home design trend right now?**

**A:** While I prefer to create spaces that are timeless and not limited to any current trend, I like to use a variety of shapes and styles in a room, mixing old and new interior-design ideas. Comfort should be the driving force in any design, plus incorporating a mixture of textures and colors in building a room and an entire home will make for the most inviting spaces. With many of the large window areas in many homes today, I like also to consider the exterior setting when planning the interior spaces.

**Q: What trends are you glad have gone by the wayside?**

**A:** I believe the trend of having every element in a home or room be matched has sailed. While continuity of color and basic flair of a design are important, having everything match is at best predictable and at worst boring. A number of years ago, there was a significant move away from wallpapered space to faux finishes, which I see us moving away from in lieu of well-chosen plain wall colors. When it comes to walls, I feel the overuse of accent walls is for the



Mr. Gehman had to hire a crane to install furnishings in this condo.



most part a passing trend. Large, patterned sofas are a thing of the past, too. And when it comes to windows, heavy treatments have gone by the wayside

SEE DESIGNER, 4 ►

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# DESIGNER

From page 3

in favor of simple shading for function, while simple valences and side panels bring softness and color to a room.

**Q: What architecture/design-build books or magazines do you recommend?**

A: "Beauty at Home" by Aerin Lauder is a fun-to-read coffee table book with generous amounts of photography. "Inspired Styles" features current leading designers, again with copious amounts of photography.

**Q: If you could have another designer — celebrity or local — design your house, who would that be?**

A: Two designers who I have had the pleasure to meet on numerous occasions are Michael Weiss and Raymond Waites. It would be a fun experience to work with either one of these entirely different designers, who have a vastly different approach to design. Michael Weiss is a second-generation interior designer who got his start at a very young age collaborating with his mother, Lillian August, an accomplished artist and designer. He works in simple, new-modern styles, while Raymond has a flair for the elegant and vintage styles.

**Q: What type of decor would you most like to have in your home?**

A: I already have it. While eclectic is a somewhat overused term, that is the prevailing look in my own home. My wife and I have included many classic pieces that we had in our home



made the six o'clock news.

**Q: Please share any advice you have for a homeowner embarking on new-home construction.**

A: Know and trust your interior designer. Find a qualified designer with whom you feel comfortable working together on your project and communicate with each other. Your designer must be a person with whom you can establish mutual trust and confidence who should take time to learn your lifestyle and daily living patterns. Within reason, any interior-design project can be adjusted to what you are able or willing to spend. Always know what you are paying for ahead of time. If you have a realistic budget, don't be afraid to share that with your designer of choice up front. ■

Laverne S. Gehman, Allied ASID  
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for many years while adding simple, contemporary pieces to create a livable space. We always include many spaces for our collection of books, and florals and accessories to complement comfortable seating in every room, which is a must.

**Q: What was the most difficult project or home you've ever done, and why?**

A: In my memory, it would probably be a penthouse condo project outside

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, overlooking the Susquehanna River. It was a fun space to design using custom-built Italian cabinetry and hand-painted finishes throughout, but the project was wrought with many challenges. One regarded a 22-foot wall on which I specified a 12-foot long, 3-inch thick stone top console table that weighed over 1,000 pounds. I had to engage a crane service to lift the table as well as several other pieces up to the outside deck and then finally into the condo. We should have

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