

Mon December 17, 2007

## Interior decoration tips from Oklahoma City's Lauren Makk

By M.J. Van Deventer  
Staff Writer

Oklahoma native Lauren Makk may have tossed out her graffiti paint, but she's now applying a touch of that tagger attitude to homes across America.

Makk, 25, is a design pro who describes her design sensibility as hip-hop glam. As a new designer on The Learning Channel's "Trading Spaces" program, she is heavily influenced by the street scene.

"I really love street culture," she said. "Something about it is so raw and dirty and grimy but yet beautiful, eclectic and loud and colorful."

Viewers can see the influence of the street as they watch Makk bring her fresh style to contemporary design projects.

"What I bring to my design is a big ol' bunch of eclecticism," she said.

Recently, one of her rooms on the show was singled out for the special features she had designed — many using items drawn from her forays into thrift and vintage shops.

That was reason enough for Lauren to fly home to Oklahoma City and stage a special showing of the TV segment at Remington Park for her family and friends. It was a night of celebration for a young designer who is quickly achieving her dreams.

A graduate of the Classen School of Advanced Studies in Oklahoma City, Makk said she completed her first design job when she was in the seventh grade. She painted her bedroom a jewel-tone turquoise. "I knew when I painted my bedroom turquoise, I had a flair for interior design," she said.

She said her mother applauded the color. If her mother had not approved, Makk would have merely found another shade, another hue and painted over it, she said.

"It's just paint," Makk said with a laugh. "It's just paint. It's removable!"

Makk said she was heavily influenced by her mother, a builder and developer, and her stepfather, a contractor.

"Mother took me often to building sites, which gave me an appreciation for architecture and design," Makk said. "She taught me about space planning, colors, textures, all aspects of building and design."

Makk is following in her parents' footsteps by managing her own Los Angeles design business, which specializes in advising and managing projects for the budget-conscious homeowner.

Makk took a leap of faith at age 18 to move to Los Angeles and immerse herself in the trendy culture and begin to carve out a career in interior design.

"I was an unknown, and it was scary, I will admit," she said. "But I adapted, and I took to it like a fish takes to water."

It didn't hurt that she was a graffiti artist — a tagger — when she was a teenager, which she said may be one reason she loves street culture so much.

### Sponsored Links

**\$50 in free clicks**

She said she loves living in what she calls one of the major design meccas of the country.

"I came to L.A. sight unseen," she said. "To me, it was the inspirational center of design. It represents ethnicity and the various cultures that are so evident here. It is the pinnacle of the design world."

She quickly embraced the professional design community, finding her way through the labyrinth of designers, skilled craftsmen in all of the home trades and antique dealers.

A contemporary, odd-shaped building known as the Blue Whale, in a funky boutique area of Los Angeles, is home to those who work in interior design. It houses incredible resources including wallpaper, tile, furnishings and accessories. It puts resources at the designers' fingertips. This design center represents the best of the Western, Asian and contemporary design motifs, catering to the California lifestyle, making it easy and exciting for designers to access the center's resources to serve their clients.

Makk established professional connections to give her name and talent more cachet in the design community. She is a member of the American Society of Interior Designers.

She received her bachelor of science degree in interior design from California State University in Northridge, which led her to working with builders of model homes.

"I was blessed with these opportunities," she said.

Auditioning for the "Trading Spaces" television show, Makk said, was an "out-of-body experience."

"I think I had been preparing for that experience all my life," she said.

She calls herself a country girl who still loves to play touch football, eat barbecue and share gossip, laughter and tears with Oklahomans.

Her world is vastly different today from the life she enjoyed growing up in Oklahoma City. She is on a first-name basis with some of the most respected names in the West Coast design industry. Among them are Doug Wilson, Ty Pennington, Vernon Yip and Amy Wynn, who has an interior design show, "Wynn on the Weekends."

She said she is looking forward to the return of Paige Davis to the "Trading Spaces" show. Davis, an early star on the show, will make a comeback in January.

Makk's house — her refuge from the bright lights of television — is in the Woodland Hills area. It is a study in black-and-white modernism. Many of its design features have come from thrift stores.

"My passion is furniture," Makk said in a late evening phone interview during the Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

Much of the furniture is found in unusual places as well as her favorite antique and thrift shops, which are prevalent around the Blue Whale.

Where would she like to be five or 10 years from now?

"My style is urban, fresh, modern and cool," she said. "I'd like to have my own television design show. In 10 years, I would like to be a notable person for design. I feel so blessed that I'm fortunate to be a part of 'Trading Spaces' at this time in my career."