

WE'RE BACK

GROUNDING IN GRATITUDE

Interior designer Diane Barber finds Zen during this stressful time—and shares it with her clients.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY LAUREN PRESSEY

For interior designer and equestrian Diane Barber, sheltering in place has also meant sheltering within on a soulful level. The economic impact of current affairs is not all that has been at the forefront of day-to-day business for Diane, who specializes in construction design and home redesign. She is equally attuned to the toll it is taking on the human spirit in her professional and personal worlds, as well as globally.

"Everyone is coping in their own unique way. I personally have been navigating these challenging times by grounding myself in gratitude and faith with meditation. I also immerse myself in nature daily with my horse, which reminds me of the power of being in the moment. A calm and centered essence is as contagious as a smile, which I strive for in the workplace and with family and friends regardless of what is happening. Life is easier that way."

Since construction has been deemed essential in the state of California during the crisis, Diane and her talented team of subcontractors and vendors were able to complete remodeling projects that were underway at the beginning of the pandemic. One large project in particular was critical to finish for a family that was temporarily living with elderly parents during the complete remodel of their Palos Verdes home.

"Keeping their senior family members healthy was more stressful for them than

completing the project so they could move back home. Fortunately, the entire team that was on board was compassionate and mindful of adhering to all of the necessary safety precautions while making the project a top priority. My clients and I limited masked and gloved on-site visits, and I worked remotely as much as possible. Thank goodness for FaceTime, Zoom meetings and conference calls! The owners and I were also careful to stagger the workers' schedules to minimize the number of people on-site at one time—all of which has become the new normal for my business."

According to Diane, interior design and remodeling projects are on the rise. She credits the American Society of Interior Designers for helping her keep her finger on the pulse of the industry's national practices, procedures and trends with webinars, research and other resources in response to these uncertain times. She also is an advocate for repurposing and environmentally friendly specifying, which is currently a priority for many homeowners.

"I think people appreciate more than ever the importance of our homes as personal sanctuaries. Life has certainly slowed down, and home is no longer just a soft landing place after chasing the clock all day. With more time for family and friends and in consideration of shutdowns, people are looking forward to entertaining more. And, of course, working and schooling at home have

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substantially shifted the use of living spaces. With all of that in mind, there is a lot of attention on redesigning with great enthusiasm for change, self-nurturance and functionality. New kitchens, spa-like bathrooms and home offices currently top the list of my client inquiries. Touchless faucets, toilet washlets, voice-activated appliances, motion-sensor lighting, antimicrobial surfaces and cabinet touch latches are among some of the many design considerations that are currently trending."

As a longtime resident of the South Bay, Diane cannot imagine living anywhere else as the world transitions to a new normal. "We are all very fortunate to call this wonderful community home. Regardless of what is going on in the world, the South Bay always feels like a safe harbor and is tonic for the soul."

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