

## Star power

Fort Worth designer rocks the house with lasting impressions

By Betty Dillard  
Photos by Glen E. Ellman

Room by room, David Carpenter is designing his way across the Lone Star State. From contemporary to traditional to transitional, his sought-after orchestrations pop in a harmonious blend of crisp, clean lines, warmth and timeless beauty.

His signature style – “I try to think outside the box,” he says – is inspired by his clients’ dreams and needs. Clients who go to Carpenter expect their surroundings to be surprising and entertaining. When it comes time for the reveal, customers are rarely disappointed.

Backed by degrees and training in the arts and interior design and by a repertoire that includes custom furniture, accessories, artwork and window treatments, Carpenter says he succeeds because he listens to his clients.

“The challenge with any designer is to implement new ideas but at the same time feel the heartbeat of the client,” he says. “It’s my job as a designer to pull out not only what their needs are but also what their desires are and then somehow give them all of that without it looking like a designer did it.

“When people come to your home, I don’t want them to say, ‘Oh my gosh! You must have had an incredible designer.’ I don’t want that,” he adds. “I want them to say, ‘Wow, this looks just like you.’ That to me is the greatest compliment.”

Since founding his own design company in 1991, Carpenter has seen his client list explode with TV personalities, professional athletes and high-profile businesspeople, whose interiors range from a scaled-down but upscale pied-a-terre to castle-sized homes of 10,000 square feet and larger. ➤





Carpenter's commercial-design calling card is showcased in the Dallas and Arlington branch offices of Capital Title Co.; Haddock Law Firm LLP and Investments in Fort Worth; the offices of Lineberger, Goggan, Blair and Sampson LLP in the newly-redesigned Two City Place; national and boutique hotels, including the recently transformed Sheraton Fort Worth Hotel and Spa; and Cowtown's Ashton Hotel, where Carpenter – also a professional pianist and singer – performed every weekend for the past five years.

Now the 43-year-old Texas native is spreading his design style to Hollywood.

His current West Coast project – the restoration and redesign of the historic Santa Monica Community Church in Santa Monica, Calif. – caught the eye of some executives at HGTV. A film crew is documenting Carpenter, step-by-step, for a 2009 premiere of a design show called Rags to Riches. As host, Carpenter will highlight commercial designs throughout California and, he hopes, across America.

"It's a twist on Extreme Makeover but will affect the whole community, not just one family," he explains.

Carpenter is three months into the project, and says, "I'm absolutely loving it. I've never had so much fun. But I'm not going Hollywood, even though they highlighted my hair and sent me to a tanning salon. That's just show biz. Don't worry. I'm going to stay in Fort Worth because there's no better place to be. I could live anywhere, but Fort Worth is my home."

With a current caseload of 21 clients, including a once-a-month dash to Los Angeles, Carpenter barely has time to take a breath. But he isn't complaining.

"When you're passionate about something, you just have to dive in and do it. I've found my passion. I love what I do," Carpenter says. "Someone once told me if you love what you do you'll never go to work a day in your life. I never go to work," he laughs. "I feel so blessed." [HS](#)

*Carpenter recently redesigned an East Texas lake house for Dr. Karry Barnes and his wife, Marian. During the past 15 years, he's designed both their primary and secondary homes.*

*"He's the greatest there is," Marian Barnes said. "I've worked with a lot of designers over the years. He's the only one who will talk to you and find out your desires, what you really need and what should be kept. So many designers have tunnel vision and want to do what they want to do. David listens. He figures out your personality and listens to what you like and want. Not everyone has an eye for design. David really has a God-given talent."*

*Bottom two photos by Tom Thompson*