



Jessica Helgerson (left) and associate Penny Herring

hip and green

Interior designer
Jessica Helgerson
respects the environment
without sacrificing aesthetics

by Leslie A. Westbrook

Like all kinds of projects, I'm super democratic," laughs Jessica Helgerson, interior designer to not only the rich and famous, but regular folk and businesses as well. Jessica, and her associate Penny Herring, work with like-minded clients who "think green" and believe in the firm's philosophy of creating environmentally sensitive and sustainable interiors using natural, recycled and non-toxic materials.

Whether working with architect Jim Hill on a straw bale house in Santa Ynez for Eileen Pritikin, sprucing up Sue Grafton's Montecito pad, finding treasures for director Andrew Davis's adobe hacienda, decorating the Montecito home of a dot.com client or designing and installing a Coleta kitchen remodel, the 32 year-old stresses the importance of using organic cottons, hemp, antiques and furnishings made from sustainably harvested woods as well as non-toxic paints and finishes. Projects include both commercial (about 30%) and residential (approximately 70%) buildings. Current commercial projects include the Donald Bren School of Environmental Studies at UCSB.

Helgerson's office is a prime example of her design philosophy. The first thing one notices upon entering is the sweet smell of sea grass floor covering. Each room has been designed using tested green materials including lime paint in one office, marmormio (a natural plaster finish) in another, and sheving made of recycled concrete form boards in the library—all enhanced by bamboo furniture and antiques. Her extensive files on green resources (ranging from recycled wood flooring to lemp fabric suppliers) are neatly organized in recycled vintage filing cabinets, while her Rolodex is filled with the phone numbers of trade people, builders and fabricators who share her firm's sensibilities.

"I want to inspire other designers and architects to do the same," says Jessica, who is actively involved in environmental non-profit organizations such as the Community Environmental Council, The Sustainability Project and the Green Building Alliance. "This is not a trend, but a lasting change that all of us need to be aware of."

For further information contact Jessica Helgerson Interior Design at 232 Anacapa Street. Phone: (805) 560-0691 or on the web at jessicah@silcom.com. The firm handles projects from start to finish including drawing plans, additions and remodels drafted on their computers, specifying finishes and building materials and purchasing fabrics, fixtures and furnishings.



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