



Tailor Made

WHEN IT COMES TO OFFICE DESIGN, SOME LEADING NAMES IN FASHION—TOMMY HILFGER, TIBI'S AMY SMLOVIC AND BILL BLASS'S MICHAEL VOLLBRACHT—HAVE CREATED WELL-DRESSED SPACES THAT REFLECT THEIR DISTINCTIVE STYLES. CTC&G SPENT A DAY IN NEW YORK WITH THIS TRIO OF CREATIVES, ALL WITH CONNECTICUT ROOTS, TO SEE THE SURROUNDINGS THAT INSPIRE THEM

By Jayne Chase | Photographs By Tom McWilliam

Paper Muses: *Undiscovered talent in* **Tibi** *comes to the fore with clothing,* **plum and white** *that inspired the Fall 2007 collection. In the center is an archive* **the illustration by Tibi designer Amy** *Smolov for the runway show. In the* **Works:** *By Bill Blass, the designer* **Michael Vollbracht** *has cut his teeth on* **Michael's** *work. See page 50.*

Amy Smilovic Tibi

Q. What about your office space inspires you?

A. My books are key. I have a shelf full of them, and they're my constant resource. Each season it's a different mood and a whole new set of books.

Q. Do you design in this space?

A. Absolutely. This is my design haven. I take inspiration from both the outside and inside. The streets of SoHo are the focal point of all of my collections. The girls outside of Balducci are the starting point for my designs. My team inside the office is always great for new ideas. Our employees dress in a range—we always end every season with a great Traci dress or Erica top (my designer and my salesperson, respectively).

Q. What means the most to you?

A. My wall! I love the custom Cole & Son wallpaper I did. It's green, vibrant and puts me in a great mood the minute I walk in. I mean, who could be sour sitting next to that wall every day?

Q. What's in your design future?

A. A home line, a shoe license and more stores. I'd like to see myself ending up one day with a small art gallery somewhere and just painting.



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Bold on Bold: A Thelma Tunic from the Tibi Spring 2007 collection hangs above a graphic floral rug (see p. 102), part of Tibi's collection of rug. **Finished Off:** Tibi designer Amy Smilovic (left) wears a dress of her own design. **Artist's Eye:** In the Tibi showroom in SoHo (see p. 102), the staff often gathers around the kitchen table (an illustration by Smilovic lies on the counter, and a painting by Smilovic's father, Kim Wallin, is propped against the window). **Pattern Play:** Smilovic's knack for mixing bold prints is apparent in her choice of office chair (see p. 102). A green and white Cole & Son wallpaper and a Shabby Chic sofa covered in a canary yellow delight the eye. Colored markers are always within reach on her desk. See *Smilovic*.





cutting crew

A good knife is a chef's workhorse, and when cooking with meat, blade selection is particularly important. Your choice can affect the meal—use the wrong knife, tear the meat, and alter the outcome of your chop. We share a few top performers known for their reliability and precision on the cutting board.

1 Italian producer SANELLI prides itself on its long-lasting knives. Its PREMANA collection features an ergonomic handle. Chef's knife, 10", \$64, kitcherama.com. 2 This CULINAR stainless steel carving knife, by WUSTHOF, works well for larger cuts of meat. 8", \$290, williams-sonoma.com. 3 The innovative blades on GLOBAL knives are sharpened on both sides to a point, rather than beveled. Chef's knife, 11", \$240, williams-sonoma.com. 4 SHUN'S CLASSIC line boasts a blade of Damascus steel that reduces sticking. Cleaver, 7 3/4", \$226, chopontheblock.com. 5 Steak knives by French producer FORGE DE LAGUIOLE are known for their precision. Galbe knife, \$900 for a set of six, (800) 706-0383.

6 J.A. HENCKELS' TWIN CUISINE knives are constructed from a single piece of steel, resulting in a heavy and balanced blade. Chef's knife, 8", \$134, bedbathandbeyond.com. 7 KEN ONION designed this line for SHUN, which makes precision cuts with the brand's unique, non-stick surface. Chef's knife, 8", \$243, chopontheblock.com. 8 This flexible boning knife by VIKING is designed to maneuver easily around bones. 5", \$92, vikingrange.com. 9 COITELLIERIE BERTI is well-known in Italy for its high-quality, hand-forged knives. Chef's knife, 10", \$252, match999.com. 10 WUSTHOP'S flexible fillet knife has an extra-thin blade that makes exacting cuts. 6", \$200, williams-sonoma.com.

What to Wear Instead of Killer Stilettos

SUMMER SHOES THAT MADE US SAY AAAH!

Have you checked out the season's hottest heels? They're the fashion equivalent of forbidden fruit: glossy, candy-colored and seriously tempting. The catch is that the heels are too high: five, six, seven inches—the kind of towering heights that make podiatrists rich.

To help you find chic shoes you can actually wear, I tested all the latest styles. In the Connecticut suburbs, Laurette Kirtle, an artist (shoe size 8½ or 9); Suzanne Frank, a charity event planner (9 narrow); and I (size 6½) teamed up to try on 30 pairs of shoes. In New York City, I tested 30 more with fashion coach Susan Sommers (another 9 narrow), founder of DressZing; and Kim Isaacsohn (size 8), president of Clever Carriage, her own handbag line.

Five outspoken shoe mavens, and yet we all awarded top honores to the same two brands: Aerosoles and Taryn Rose. Read on for details.



BY CHARLA KRUPP

Your most comfortable stylish shoe? E-mail me at charla@more.com.

Flats (right)

CAR SHOE shantung ballerina flats. These were comfortable on everyone—and Suzanne loved the toe cleavage.

GEOR For our testers with wider feet, these were nirvana. Why? The toe box of most fashion

NIRVANA FOR WIDE FEET. Geox python-print flats, \$110. geoxusa.info for stores.

Kate Spade pebbled-leather flats, \$125. Kate Spade, 800-519-3778, katespade.com

RATED BEST FOR COMFORT Car Shoe shantung ballerina flats, \$175. Nordstrom, 800-695-8000, nordstrom.com

Salvatore Ferragamo patent flats, \$450. Salvatore Ferragamo, 800-528-8916.

Faux Finisher \$000
Adrienne van Dooren
48
City, State



Who Knew You Could Get Rich Doing That?

Making your hopes and dreams come true, fifty and above for most women they lived life after their husbands die to face an empty bank account to help them satisfy or aquire a dream.

After retiring from a twenty-year career in the Army, **Adrienne van Dooren**, now 48, decided it was finally time to pursue her passion and become an artist. Her medium? Faux finishing, a technique that creates the illusion of 3-D, textured surfaces using only paint and plaster. She started with small commissions, transforming basic bathroom tile into marble and plain wood flooring into parquet. "I was doing okay, but I kept hearing that you couldn't make any real money as a faux finisher," van Dooren, who is based in Asheville, North Carolina, explains. "I thought, that's fine, I'll work for meaning, not money." She partnered with Habitat for Humanity to launch the House That Faux Built Project, recruiting over 100 artists to renovate a home in New Orleans and raise money for victims of Hurricane Katrina.

To her surprise, a book deal followed (*The House That Faux Built: Transforming Your Home Using Paints, Plasters & Creativity*, East Cambridge Press 2007), and van Dooren realized she had found a platform on which to build a faux art empire. She now earns over \$1 million per year, charging a minimum project fee of \$200,000, and serves as the national marketing director for My Green Cottage, an eco home design firm, teaches faux finishing courses and is a regular on the speaking circuit for art and real estate conferences. "I love turning an ugly house into something beautiful so much I probably would do it for free," she says. "But I realized it's okay to be rich because it gives

you the freedom to do so much more. So I decided to go full force into making money."

Although women start small businesses in the United States at twice the rate of men (nearly 10.4 million in total, reports the Center for Women's Business Research in Washington D.C.), van Dooren is part of a select group: The just 3 percent of these women who achieve an annual revenue of \$1 million or more. What's holding back the other 97 percent? Thinking small. "Women tend to launch businesses for personal reasons," explains Gwen Martin, PhD, director of research for the CWBR. "They're finding a solution to a problem they've encountered, or they're creating a product they're passionate about." And that tends to limit their thinking. Martin's research shows that especially at midlife, when women are contemplating a new business as a second career, the messages they get are to go slow, work part-time, and avoid risks. "This advice might be well-intentioned," Dr. Martin notes. "But we aren't telling women how to think big."

What women really need to hear, van Dooren says, "is how to take your original idea and add on three more zeroes." We talked to business experts and the women who have done it, to hone in on their key strategies for adding these zeroes (as in, cold, hard cash) to any business model.

Know Your Customer

Gigi Stetler, 46, owns two RV dealerships in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.