

GET THE LOOK **LOCALLY**

DESIGNER Q&A



K&H CUSTOM WINDOW TREATMENTS

by daisy willis

photography by donovan roberts witmer

Sandy Kuhns continues to helm a family business that has spanned generations of window treatment and drapery experts, equally attuned to the practical needs of business and institutional settings and to the personalized decor of the home. Since Kuhns and her mother started the business in 1986, K&H Custom Window Treatments has used industry expertise and their Upper Macungie workroom to handcraft just the right window covering for any occasion.

What does your workroom of professional seamstresses allow you to do for clients?

I think that's what truly allows us to be custom. We can say, 'make that an inch longer, put an extra fold in it, put a different size button on it.' A lot of draperies or window treatments are bought from big workrooms that sell to all kinds of interior designers who never see them until they're done. Our designers can actually come here and see their work in process. That sets us apart completely from anybody in this business.

Fabric patterns play a huge role in your work. Are you noticing any new trends in that area?

There are a lot of geometrics, a lot of bold, lined patterns, shaped patterns, not the florals that we saw years ago. If there are florals, they're very muted and sort of watercolor-y and mottled.



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K&H does a lot of commercial and institutional spaces, like businesses and schools. How does your approach differ in a public vs. residential setting?

For public spaces, we have to make sure we're appealing to a broader audience, not too feminine or masculine, more neutral with little pops of color here and there rather than bold colors. Residential is where people express themselves. I try to get to know my clients and how they live, how they use their homes.

What is it about the niche of window coverings that intrigued you, rather than general interior design?

My family background has always been in window coverings and draperies. My father worked for Automatic Devices in Allentown making stage motors and tracks for theatres in schools and auditoriums for over 40 years, and my mother sewed curtains for the same company, so it was a natural choice when I wanted to start a business.

Even if it's a contemporary look, you can have a more **MODERN FABRIC** but a softer treatment, something that's got folds or pleats in it, or you can have a traditional fabric in a more modern style.

What are the most common window covering mistakes you see?

One thing that always bothers me is when people install the window coverings right on top of the window, especially in new houses with nine-foot ceilings, instead of putting it up above, making the space taller. Also they'll either overdo it or underdo it when it comes to the right amount of fabric. There's a huge number of choices, so people make mistakes just because they don't know what their choices are.

You've been around for 25 years. How has interior design evolved in that time?

No more heavy, carved wood traditional furniture and heavy fabrics. It's lightness, clean lines, neutral colors with a bright accent color, wood that might be dark but has no heaviness to it. And that's across generations, even among people moving into 55 and older communities. They've



had the traditional, heavy look and they don't want to go there anymore. Less is more.

Can you comment on the most challenging window you've had to deal with?

We did a huge window in a PPL conference room, a half circle, 12 feet or bigger. It was awful because the morning sun would glare in to the point where they didn't hold conferences in that room. So we used a screen shade fabric which has little holes in it to let light through but cuts it dramatically. We made a pattern of the window, made a frame, fit it into place and stretched the fabric over it. It's a permanent shade but you can still see out and see the mullioned architecture of the window.

How have window treatments changed since you've been in business?

When my mom and I first started it was all pinch pleat drapes and sheers, white traverse rods, pull the cord and the drapes open. We do very little of that now. We do a lot of panels with a nice rod and most of the time people don't close them. They'll put a blind or shade underneath. It's less fabric, less fuss, less maintenance.

Any advice on keeping contemporary windows at home from looking too much like an office?

Even if it's a contemporary look, you can have a more modern fabric but a softer treatment, something that's got folds or pleats in it, or you can have a traditional fabric in a more modern style. Even in contemporary homes you still want it to feel comfortable and warm.

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