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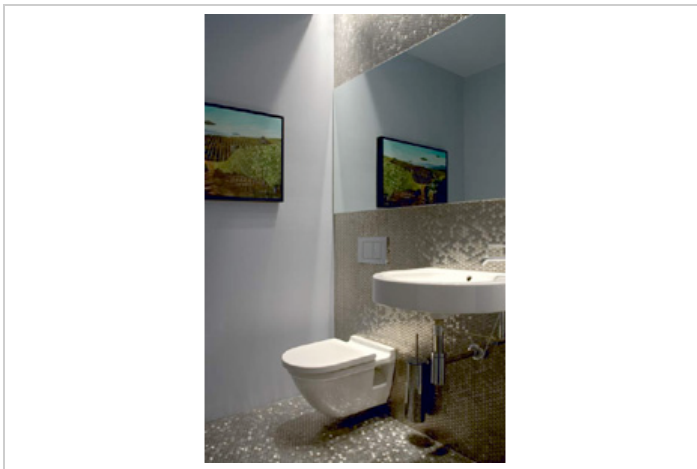
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Five Questions With... Lili Wright

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In today's Five Questions With..., I wrap up our Earth Week blogs by talking with Lili Wright, owner of Wright Design in Philadelphia. Wright has been working in art and design for over 20 years, and she currently focuses on sustainable design. She is a member of the editorial advisory board of GreenHomeGuide.com, and her work has been featured in interior design magazines such as Atlanta Homes and Lifestyles, Style, Atlanta Magazine, and Veranda, and is showcased in many prestigious

residences across the country. Wright's eco-effective approach to interior design won her the 2004 Watershed Hero Award for Innovation.

1: You've worked on the West Coast and East Coast. What are the differences in attitudes towards the green design movement in each area?

Very generally, I'd say that the West Coast seems to value innovation, the latest trends, and new materials. The East Coast tends to value conservation, preservation, and the use of long lasting, traditional materials. The differences are also driven by climate conditions. On the West Coast, water is a big issue, so for example water-conservation fixtures, appliances and drought tolerant landscaping take a higher priority. On the East Coast, especially here in the Northeast, the focus is more likely to be on energy conservation, good insulation, good windows, heating systems, etc.

2. Green design is often associated with high initial costs (even if there are long-term, cost saving benefits). Are you and anyone else

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in the green community worried that the current economic problems will set back the green movement? If anything I think the current economic situation is going to help the green movement. People are moving away from waste and excess. Going "green" is all about optimizing performance and getting the most out of your resources (natural and financial) in way that doesn't compromise the health of people or the planet. I think people are increasingly associating green with value, quality and integrity. They will go as green as they can afford to go and will continue to demand a greater array of green options. The price of green materials has already come into alignment with "conventional" materials of comparable quality. But remember too that going green is just as much about strategy as it is about materials. It's about how materials are used, re-used or disposed of; how a space is designed, functions and is maintained—it's not just about using "green" materials or systems. Green design is better accomplished by applying principals and common sense as opposed to spending money.

3. More and more large kitchen and bath manufacturers have been marketing green products. While this points to progress for the green movement, is there any worry in the green community that companies are just slapping the term "green" on their products without actually living up to very high green standards? Of course, consumers have to be as demanding and discriminating with green products as with anything. Part of being green and buying green is being informed and having standards. There will always be companies that will try to exploit an opportunity to capitalize on a wave of demand like this. Especially as long as there are consumers who will settle for a slapped-on green label. It goes both ways. But I also think that there are plenty of manufacturers who are seeing the value of genuinely greening up their act. They understand that it is simply good business to create products that generate economic, health and environmental benefits for the people who make and use them. We're all in this together. We've figured out that we all live on the same planet and we had better figure out how to make it work.

4. What areas in bathroom are easy to apply green principles to?

Just about every green principal can be applied to a bathroom. Water conservation can be achieved with low-flow fixtures, fixing leaks, or simply by taking shorter showers. Energy efficiency can be enhanced by use of on-demand water heaters, towel warmers that double as extra heaters, florescent light fixtures, and well placed windows that allow for natural light and ventilation. If you are remodeling try to use natural, renewable and non-toxic materials like recycled glass tiles, sustainable harvested or reclaimed wood for vanities. Maintain good air quality with no-VOC paints, vent fans, operable windows and non-toxic cleaning products. Something as simple as switching to non-toxic cleaning products and body care products can enhance the green quality of your bathroom and the water system in general. It doesn't require a whole bathroom remodel. When it's time to replace your towels, simply consider buying some made from organic cotton or a renewable fibers like bamboo which allow for a luxurious splash of green in any color!

5. What are some of the most unique green products that have caught your eye in the last few years?

I think the most important development over the last few years is simply the number and range of products that have flooded the marketplace. Virtually every product category

now has a green version and even the larger more conventional manufacturers are offering green lines within their conventional lines—from fixtures and appliances to cabinets, fabrics and furniture. Even Clorox now has a line of green cleaning products (Clorox Green Works). Some of the most interesting areas still in development (though perhaps still pretty far "out there") are in the plumbing field, like composting toilets. Developments there could change residential plumbing as we know it, so that all the waste water in a house could be used for irrigation. It may take a while for people to wrap their brains around it, but it's a very interesting concept. Also there are some amazing innovations happening in the LED lighting area that could transform lighting as we know it. As for more accessible and currently available stuff, there is just too much.

Posted by The Bathonista at 04/24/2009 12:38:47 PM |

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