



photos by DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Barbie Goodman Krass takes a chic, creative, cosmopolitan approach to interior design with her Colorworks firm.

By Shirlee Rose Iden
staff writer

Designer chic

Decorator gives color the works



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Chic, creative, cosmopolitan. It's both a description of the work and the fragile brunet interior designer who built a business literally from the ground up.

Barbi Goodman Krass established Colorworks Studio of Design in the lower level of her Southfield home back in 1977. Growing fast, the business emerged from the depths and into a Krass-designed studio on Northwestern Highway in 1985.

"I worked from the house for more than six years," Krass said. "And when time came to go into the real world, I was terrified."

"All my jobs came from personal referrals. Colorworks grew slowly while I gained control of the resources and got to know the reps. It was kind of a tier-by-tier way to build a business."

Krass had already done wall murals, designed textiles, and had her own company marketing personalized clothing.

"I started that business in 1974 and sold it later," she said.

Given her druthers, she'd rather do residential work than office, medical or commercial jobs, which are also part of her bag of tricks.

"I really love doing new construction."

PUTTING IN the hours, the miles, and the energy it takes to make Colorworks hum means using every tool she can, from eating three square meals every day and turning to a car phone to save time and keep on top of jobs in progress.

Helping clients visualize a total concept rather than get stuck on details is a priority with her.

"Barbi doesn't try to put her imprint indelibly on the homes she designs," a client said. "She lets the clients' ideas be paramount."

The designer contends her challenge is to know the market, be aware of what's available, and know how to use all the resources.

"You can design anything on paper, but you have to be able to utilize the resources to make it happen," she said.

HER FAVORITE part of any interior design job is doing the initial presentation.

"When I'm all by myself working out a presentation, I can get lost in it," she said. "The variety and challenge of this work is very stimulating."

Born in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., Krass lived there until age 5, then in Germany for eight months with her mother and serviceman father. Later they lived in Scranton, Pa., until she went to college in Boston.

"I took a lot of art classes, but decided I would teach," she said.

After earning degrees in fine arts and English literature at Boston University, Krass taught English literature to gifted students.

MARRIED TO a medical student, she moved with him first to Brooklyn, then to Detroit when her son, Gary, was 2 weeks old.

"I gave up teaching to stay home with the baby but I always did something: design, dance work or sewing," she said.

When her husband was drafted, they moved to North Carolina, where she coordinated fashion shows and did free-lance design work.

BACK IN this area, she continued to do free-lance textile designs. A daughter, Lisa, was born in 1974 "on my birthday," Krass said. After 14 years of marriage, Krass was divorced in 1981.

As one of legions of single parents, she was faced with the need to make a home and earn a living for herself and the children.

Gary is now 17 years old and a senior at Southfield-Lathrup High School. Proudly, his mother relates that he has a flair for, and interest in, architectural design, and that Lisa loves art.

LISA, GARY and their mom have expanded their family since her 1985 marriage to Ed Krass, a physical education teacher at Leonhard Elementary School in Southfield.

They still live in the Southfield home she bought when her first marriage ended. Ed's daughter, Andrea, lives with them. Both hope his other daughter will join their household one day.

Krass met her husband when he was her child's teacher.

"We became good friends. But the relationship grew gradually. We were cautious, dating for more than three years," she said.

"Marrying Ed was the best decision I ever made."

RELATIONSHIPS OF all kinds are vital to her career, and she works well with some 15 tradesmen on homes, condos, commercial work, offices and medical space.

"My workmen have been with me a long time. They know what I want and what my standards are," she said. "I also have terrific backup from Linda Bruder, the designer who works with me, and from Randi Bensman, my officer manager."

Bensman has known Krass since she baby-sat Gary and Lisa when she was 11.

WATCHING HER, toe to toe with fabricators, painters, wallpaper hangers and such, it's apparent they respect her approach to design and her integrity.

And walking into an interior-designer-created room, it isn't difficult to tell when the space works. The designer's challenge is to make it work long before all the elements have finally come together.

Krass contends design elements will fly only when scale, color, detail, and texture all work together harmoniously and produce a sense of ease along with an undercurrent of emotion.

"I caution clients against too much design. If you have custom doors in a foyer that will be lovely, you should go slow on adding etched glass until you're sure the space can carry it. Being overdesigned can be bad news," she said. "More's not always better."

The artist holds her own with electricians, plumbers and carpenters. Builders and building supervisors have learned to respect her instincts and advice.

Every morning, dressed for comfort and style, she sits down to juice, a carton of coffee yogurt, cereal and toast. When she turns the key in her telephone-equipped car, the chic, creative designer is ready for anything.

Bootsey X: Soul with a sense of humor

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Bootsey X no longer hangs with the masters, deciding instead to add a new tone to his rock 'n' roll act.

Bootsey X, a.k.a. Bob Mulrooney of Livonia, is currently billed as Bootsey X and the Lovetones instead of Bootsey X and the Lovemasters. Before that, it was Bootsey X and the Banshees.

But what's in a name? They could be Bootsey X and the Lovhandles or Bootsey X and the Lugnuts, the sound would be the same: strip music for the subdivisions.

"It's not very far from '60s music," Bootsey said before a recent performance at Paycheck's in Hamtramck. "Any Bruce Springsteen fan with an open mind can dig the massive beat of Bootsey X."

Anyone who didn't move during Bootsey's performance at Paycheck's in Hamtramck must've had a date with a mortician. The music is fast, furious and very danceable.

INCLUDED IN the 60-minute set were covers of "Eve of Destruction," the O'Jays' "Love Train," and

James Brown's "The Big Payback." The covers, though, only provide breaks between an assortment of original "message" material.

Included are a couch potato anthem, "I Wanna Watch TV," and the anti-drug song, "Pony Down."

"Yeah, U2 and Bootsey X," Bootsey said, warming to the notion. "An action man with a message... Just pushing love here."

Much of Bootsey's music has a soulful edge to it. Yet this Ric Ocasek/Peter Wolf look-alike doesn't yearn to be a reincarnation of Otis Redding.

"We do some soul tunes, but we do them our way," said Bootsey, a Livonia Bentley High School graduate. "We rock them up."

Why aren't they authentic renditions of the soul classics?

"I sound like a white dude from Livonia."

It's an affliction he makes up for in energy and stage presence. No wonder he was picked "Best Male New Music Vocalist" in 1985 and 1986 by Detroit Metro Times. Also in 1985, Bootsey was picked as "Best New Music Songwriter" and the band received "Best New Music

Band" accolades.

Surrounded by the Sugarbabies of Soul, Valerie Moore and Joanne X, Bootsey and the band burn through a set like kerosene.

THE RECENT addition of three members of the Buzztones (hence the name Lovetones) doesn't hurt, either. Roscoe Paradise and Gary Indiana, both on guitar, join Buzztone luminary Reggie Mocombo on drums.

Don Jones is on saxophone and Mark Kern is on bass to round out the relatively new band.

The Lovemasters split up after philosophical differences with Bootsey.

"We had a weapons sweep," Bootsey said jokingly. "Everyone was packing a weapon to tell Bootsey what they thought of him."

Whatever ammunition led to the breakup, changing band personnel is hardly new to Bootsey. Since he was 12 he has been involved in an assortment of bands, ranging from the Mutants to the Surfing Burglars.

IN THOSE BANDS, he was a drummer. But he wanted to march to his own beat.

"I just got sick of all the people and started my own band," he said. "I wanted to express my own ideas."

Ideas that he communicates in many ways. Flyers promoting upcoming shows depict Bootsey as a mojo rapper, in the arms of Elvis and in the company of armed senior citizens.

"I just hope somebody notices, and someday I'll get paid for doing this," Bootsey said.

One flyer even calls for dressing one's mother in leather. But don't send out an SOS to the Parents' Music Resource Center (PMRC) just yet.

Bootsey is quick to assure that his flyers and songs are in the name of clean fun.

"There's some weird lyrics," he said. "There's some ambiguous lyrics. Remember, my parents are going to read this."

Bootsey X & the Lovetones will appear Friday, June 5, at 3rd Avenue Club, 112 E. Third St., Royal Oak, 547-4473; and Saturday, June 20, at Lili's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck, 875-6555.

Bootsey X — also known as Bob Mulrooney of Livonia — describes himself as "an action man with a message... Just pushing love here."



JOHN AARNOIS