



THIS EMERALD-HUED MASTER SUITE LAURA BRITT DESIGNED FOR AN AUSTIN SHOWHOUSE IS EVERY BIT AS GREEN AS ITS VIBRANT PALETTE.

FROM CAREFULLY-SELECTED SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS DOWN TO THE RAPIDLY-RENEWABLE CORK FLOORING, THE AUSTIN-BASED DESIGNER SHARES SOME OF THE ECO-FRIENDLY ELEMENTS

IN THIS SPACE AS WELL AS SOME OF HER THOUGHTS ON GREEN DESIGN.



**A look at this recreated space is inspiring in itself. What were the design goals of this master suite project?**

**Laura Britt:** The goal of this showhouse, located in Villa Montana near Lake Travis and close to the Oasis, was to provide a modern, eco-friendly space filled with local artisans.

**How did you create such cohesion, without repetition, transitioning from the bathroom to the bedroom?**

**Laura Britt:** The bold color did the trick. The safer route would be painting one wall, but the vibrant color used throughout with the high contrasting white elements is what I think brings both spaces together seamlessly.

WHY THIS SPACE  
**works**

Designer Spotlight:  
**Laura Britt, RID, ASID**

By MAURI ELBEL | Photography by CASEY DUNN



**It seems you were ahead of the times when you embarked on this project, as Pantone has selected emerald green as 2013's color of the year. What made you select this lush and vivid shade, and what does this color do for the mood of this space?**

**Laura Britt:** Collaboration amongst the designers generated "green" as our theme as well as our unifying color. I don't think anyone expected us to be this bold. But it was a showhouse

to raise funds for children so we wanted to generate buzz and support the cause.

**Knowing your work, green is more than a shade of paint. What is your philosophy when it comes to green design?**

**Laura Britt:** Sustainability is an important principle to me in my personal life as well as my professional one. There

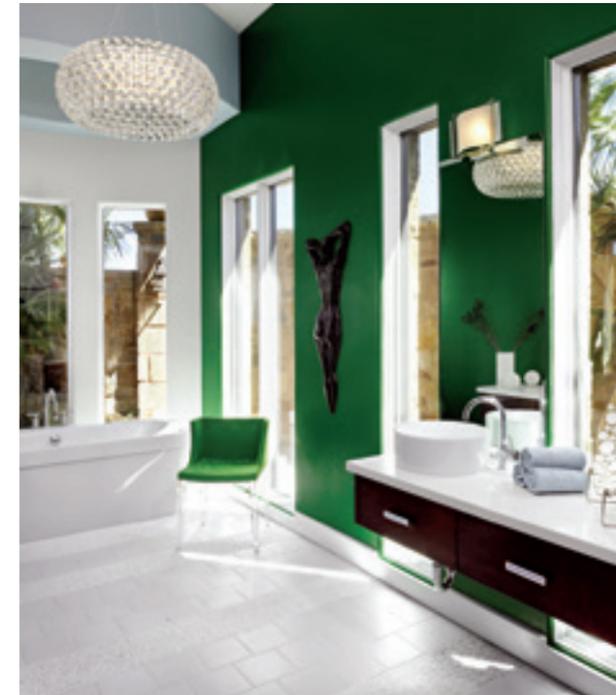
are so many different aspects of sustainability, so I'll just hit on a few here. These principles apply to sustainable interiors as well as to sustainable furnishings, like our VERVANO line of furnishings. Our furnishings line was born out of a need for quality, U.S.-made, healthy alternatives. The underlying goals were to create heirloom-quality furniture that is easy on the natural environment as well as on our indoor-built environment. We are working with U.S. builders and many Austin-based folks to make this dream a reality. And the principle here is twofold: we want to keep the transportation footprint to a minimum and we want to keep our resources here in the U.S. We also focus on materials that are "rapidly renewable" which means that the woods and plants we use can regenerate themselves and be self-sustaining. The last principle I'll focus on here is about indoor air quality. We use finishes and adhesives that are healthy in our homes and offices, meaning they are not toxic. We also want our furnishings to be durable as well as beautiful and last through the generations — we call that "heirloom quality." This keeps the pieces in use and out of a landfill where temporary furnishings usually end up.

**What eco-friendly choices did you integrate into the space?**

**Laura Britt:** The materials and choices we made to make this space more eco-friendly all fall in line with what I call "gradients of green." Anything you can do to contribute to the healthy green movement counts. Not everyone is going to build a rammed-earth home and cover it in solar panels, but choosing a low-VOC (volatile organic compound) paint or using organic cotton for your bedding are small steps we all can take. Here, several natural materials are used where possible: beach wood fiber bed linens, a natural wool and silk rug, and reuse of existing chairs that were reupholstered for this project. The bathroom boasts light materials which reflect off of the surfaces and reduce the need for electric lighting. In the bathroom, we used a quartz material for the countertops, which is a better alternative to granite because it uses smaller particles of stone rather than a large slab and it is naturally antimicrobial, or bacteria resistant, meaning it doesn't require additional chemical sealants. All the designers in this project collectively decided to use a dark-stained cork flooring throughout the entire showhouse because it's one of those naturally occurring materials that enables you to actually peel the bark off the tree without killing it. The idea is that even these small steps — opting to use a rapidly renewable material or avoiding putting chemicals in your environment — can have a positive impact.

**What do you consider the most important elements of green design?**

**Laura Britt:** There are two things to consider when designing green. One, the outside environment. What's the bigger impact of your choices? And two, the inside environment. What are you bringing into your home?



**What key advice can you give to those looking to make their homes greener or design with the environment in mind?**

**Laura Britt:** It's easy to choose a zero- or low-VOC paint. Look for naturally occurring products or those with recycled content. Also, pay attention to long-term durability. It's better to use a product you love and will stand the test of time than to use one that's supposedly "greener" but doesn't stand up to daily use. It's not only about considering the materials you put into your home, but also what you clean your home with on a daily basis. You can easily buy cleaners without parabens and harsh chemicals. For flooring, you can opt for cork or bamboo if they pass the durability test for your household. And finally, start locally

— maybe you can find what you need close at hand. Keep in mind the carbon footprint that results from transportation, production and manufacturing.

**How did you make such a vibrant space feel so luxurious?**

**Laura Britt:** The mix of natural and luxurious materials, such as the wool and silk fiber rug that grounds the space, really helps develop the depth and sense of luxury in this modern setting. The unusual mix of pattern and color also serves to create a more custom look and feel. Again, natural fiber options like wool or silk are rapidly renewable materials and have a pretty negligible impact on our environment. Honestly, we were on a pretty tight budget for our fixtures and fixed finishes. The basic white floor tile was dressed up with the alternating pebble accent tile, and the beautiful chandelier was an Italian splurge on loan to us for the showhouse.

**What are your favorite features of this imaginative master bed/bath suite?**

**Laura Britt:** I really like the drama the huge bed created. The high contrast of the color as well as the sleek leather gave the room a much-needed punch. I think there are three great things that made people gravitate toward this space: the color, the scale and the patterning. Having creative freedom to be bold was really fabulous — it's a rare client who is willing to be this bold. ♦

**LAURA BRITT DESIGN**

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