

LUXURY HOME

quarterly



GUNKELMAN FLESHER INTERIOR DESIGN *Partners combine two design styles to create incredible living spaces* p.82

THE ARRABELLE AT VAIL SQUARE
Vail's newest condo development is a hot commodity p.78

THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN *A melting pot of ethnic design influences has resulted in a region full of amazing residences* p.102

DESIGNERS

CREATIVE MINDS IN INTERIORS, LANDSCAPE, AND ARCHITECTURE



Michelle's Interiors Design Group

CHICAGO-BASED FIRM UTILIZES ITS DESIGN VERSATILITY AND NETWORKING SKILLS TO GROW IN THE INDUSTRY

by Megy Karydes

By her own admission, Michelle Rohrer-Lauer is intense. As principal of her Chicago-based namesake interior-design firm, Michelle's Interior Design Group, she doesn't do anything in a small, dispassionate way.

Fresh out of interior-design school in 1983, Rohrer-Lauer noticed a lack of high-quality children's furniture, so she opened up an upscale children's boutique. In addition to offering finished and custom-designed furniture, she also completed one to two interior-design residential projects a year. "I love doing children's rooms," she says. "As an interior designer, you have more leeway with the design. A child's life is so short and whimsical, and we want to enhance it and allow them to be creative."

Despite the satisfaction of designing children's rooms, Rohrer-Lauer did not want to be pigeonholed as a children's-room designer. Understanding the significance that solid practices have on a successful business, she decided to meld her creative and business skill sets into a thriving interior-design business. And so, after 11 years of focusing on children's rooms, she closed the shop and decided to return to designing full interiors. Michelle's Interior Design Group now works with middle- and upper-end clients in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana.

"Project management is very important in this business," Rohrer-Lauer says. "Our clients hire us not only to create great living spaces, but they also want to make sure that our contractors show up on time and that the work is completed correctly and in a timely manner. I enjoy the creative process, but I also love the business side, too."

To keep up with industry trends, Rohrer-Lauer attends countless industry events, from manufacturer parties to new-product introductions. And living near a large city like Chicago allows her easy access to the Merchandise Mart, the Art Institute, and other cultural institutions that help her stay in tune with new and upcoming trends in interior design. In addition, her daily routine of reading industry trade magazines helps her to keep up with the latest design developments.



BUSINESS NAMESAKE
Michelle Rohrer-Lauer, principal.

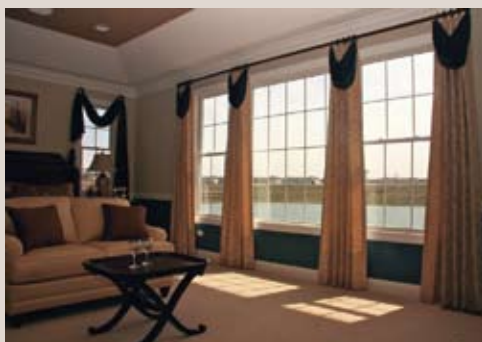
But while some see this as all work and no play, Rohrer-Lauer will be the first to admit it's all about doing great work and having fun. "We really get into our designs," she says. "Right now, we're doing a lot of entertainment-friendly spaces, such as man caves and theater rooms. More families are entertaining within the home, and one of the things I've been designing a lot of lately is booths. Booths are very versatile, they are cozy, intimate, and fully upholstered, which creates an ambiance that works well for busy families."

The firm's services—which include designing custom furniture, rugs, and cabinetry, among other things—are so versatile that some prospective clients don't always realize every available option. "Some people may think interior designers pick paint colors and pillows," Rohrer-Lauer says. "When

PRAIRIE-STYLE RESIDENCE
Offering a Prairie-style design, this Long Grove, IL home's living area hosts a family of six, providing function without compromising style.



EDCO Drapery Workroom has been exclusively serving the design trade since 1961. EDCO's mission is to provide our customers with the finest of custom window and bed treatments. From measuring and estimating through fabrication and installation we pride ourselves in attention to detail while providing our designer customers with an end product they will be proud to have designed.



DINING ROOM: CUSTOM TABLE

- Designed by: Michelle Rohrer-Lauer
- Fabricated by: Johansen Woodworks of Grayslake, IL
- Size: 11'6" x 4' x 30", with two interlocking-styled bases
- Material: Fabricated in wenge-wood veneer and solid woods with a satin finish featuring mild distressing and a satin varnish topcoat

we first meet with clients, they don't always understand how broad and diversified we can be in our services. We're experienced space planners, and I don't have a problem moving walls or designing custom furniture to fit a space."

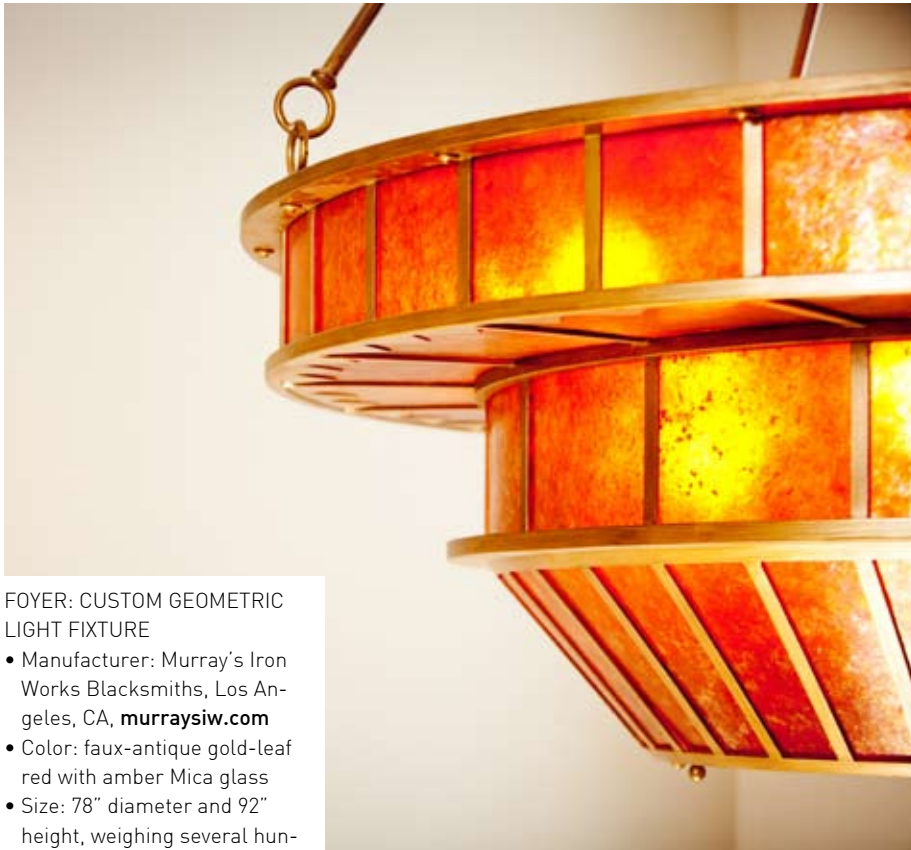
In order to keep track of the firm's projects—which often number as many as 20 per year—Rohrer-Lauer relies on her two full-time staff members. "My administrative assistant runs the office and is in charge of all the vendors, time management, ordering, and building relationships with the vendors, making sure everyone follows through," she says. "My project designer imple-

P: 847-455-8600

F: 847-455-8700

10929 Franklin Avenue, Suite P
Franklin Park, IL 60131

www.edcodrapery.com
edco@edcodrapery.com



FOYER: CUSTOM GEOMETRIC LIGHT FIXTURE

- Manufacturer: Murray's Iron Works Blacksmiths, Los Angeles, CA, murraysiw.com
- Color: faux-antique gold-leaf red with amber Mica glass
- Size: 78" diameter and 92" height, weighing several hundred pounds (it took six men to bring it into the home and set it on a lift kit for two men to finish the installation)

“When we first meet with clients, they don’t always understand how broad and diversified we can be in our services. We’re experienced space planners, and I don’t have a problem moving walls or designing custom furniture to fit a space.”

MICHELLE ROHRER-LAUER, PRINCIPAL

ments all of the drafting, from the projects I design to keeping track of all the builders and architectural schedules.” In addition to their respective roles, Rohrer-Lauer insists that she and her staff attend at least two networking events each month. “Networking is extremely important to me,” she says. “And if our goal is to grow our business, we all need to be out there, talking with people.”

And networking isn’t limited to face-to-face meetings. Social networking is an important part of Rohrer-Lauer’s business strategy (her firm has accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn). She also posts regularly on her firm’s blog. “Networking and social networking are excellent tools to market your business,” Rohrer-Lauer says. “Sites like Facebook and Twitter have defi-

nately opened doors for me and, if used correctly, can be phenomenal tools. Part of the goal in any business is to be heard, and when people start hearing you through different places, you begin to get noticed.”

At the end of the day, though, what drives Rohrer-Lauer are her clients and the belief that her firm’s goals in design can be reached. “We’re totally enthusiastic about our clients and our projects,” she says. “And I think a client feels that enthusiasm and the fact that you’re excited about their project.” That may be the reason that Rohrer-Lauer has many repeat clients who ask her to do more rooms years later. “It’s all about relationships,” she admits. “We’re ethical and people trust us. We love what we do, and it shows.” ■

eCharles

Integrated Technologies

illinois | indiana | michigan | minnesota | wisconsin



Since 2000, the highly creative team at eCharles, combining over 50 years of industry experience, has excelled in providing the highest level of performance, simplicity, value and exceptional service to our clients, with innovative entertainment, automation and professional technology solutions, surpassing the most demanding aesthetic and design challenges.



847.878.8778 info@echarles.com
www.echarles.com

lighting design & control | automation
energy conservation | remote monitoring
networking | communication
security and great audio & video