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Dialogue with a Designer

John R Taylor, Allied ASID, CAPS - Designer at Eklektik Interiors

Houston-based Carrara Italian Marble Import is the market's "go to" source of authentic Grade A marble, a natural mountain stone imported directly from the city of Carrara, which is located in the northern tip of Tuscany. While most companies offer Grades B and C marble, mainly originating from China, India or Pakistan, Carrara Italian Marble Import deals solely with Grade A marble.

Carrara Italian Marble Import oversees the process from start to finish and is able to certify the authenticity of every stone. Using special machinery manufactured in Italy, Carrara can customize the size of the marble to meet the specific needs of each customer. Slab sizes include 24 x 24-, 18 x 18- and 6 x 12-foot lengths. These outstanding stones are shipped from the quarry in Tuscany to the seaport of Verona and on to the Port of Houston. With the elimination of the middle man, Carrara Italian Marble Import customers receive the absolute best marble and granite for an excellent price.

This month Carrara Italian Marble Import, the rising star and "go to" company for natural stone products in Texas, speaks with John R Taylor, Allied ASID, CAPS. Born and raised on the island of Barbados, John worked in the construction industry for a number of years before obtaining his first degree, a BSc in construction science, from Texas A&M University – Commerce. He returned to Barbados to continue working as a project manager, but

after three years he started to feel the pull toward interior design. John obtained his second degree from The Art Institute of Houston in 2015, a BFA in interior design (with honors), and started working at Eklektik Interiors as an intern.

Using his knowledge in construction and his long-standing love for design, John is able to combine these talents to achieve well-planned spaces that exceed each client's desires. He is an Allied ASID member and has recently become a Certified Aging-In-Place Specialist. John also volunteers with the Houston Furniture Bank D.I.V.A.S., an organization that furnishes houses for individuals who are less than fortunate, is an avid foodie, dedicated husband and father to two miniature schnauzers!

Carrara Italian Marble Import: How can an experienced interior designer help custom home builders or remodeling contractors with their building or remodeling projects?

John R Taylor: As an interior designer, I am always looking at house plans, lighting products and RCPs (reflected ceiling plan) and new designs for specific areas in the house, as well as new products and finish materials. Builders have so much on their plates, their mindsets are normally to get the project completed. Because of this mindset, they might not be aware of new design concepts

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for storage in a master bathroom or a better use of space in a kitchen or butler's pantry. As an interior designer, I have as my main goal to work with custom home builders to suggest design elements that will help set them apart from other builders. A well-planned home with all the right trimmings will come across as a more custom experience than one that has fixtures from your local hardware store. Those details are what a buyer will notice.

Carrara Italian Marble Import: *What sets you apart from other designers?*

John R Taylor: In my opinion, my love of construction, from the beginning of a project to the end, is what sets me apart. My background in construction helps to give me a much better understanding of what can and should be done in a space, and this pairs with interior design like hand and glove. I have had the opportunity to work on several new builds and remodels, and it is always so rewarding to have

a client become excited by my design, to have them say "I would have never thought of that," and to love the end result. This process doesn't happen overnight. It can take weeks of planning and research, but it is all time well spent when the ultimate reward is a happy client, and one that will refer you to all of their colleagues!

Carrara Italian Marble Import: *How do you begin the materials selection process when working with builders' and remodelers' clients?*

John R Taylor: Know the budget! Builders are great with giving a budgetary number for the finish selections. My task as a designer is to try and find products that look great and that are within or under budget, a task that is not always easy. I have found that having a great relationship with your vendor and reps will help make the selections process much easier. I also like to meet with the clients to get their input on how they plan to use specific spaces. If I can find a product that comes in under budget that the clients love, then I'm able to increase the budget for another application in another area of the house.

Carrara Italian Marble Import: *What are some common mistakes made by builders and homeowners?*

John R Taylor: Underestimating the importance of great lighting and door hardware has to be the main mistake. These products don't have to be tremendously expensive to make a huge impact. Having overhead lighting in common areas on dimmers is also something that is often overlooked.

Carrara Italian Marble Import: *What would be your recommendation for "what to do first" in a decorating project when working with the builders and/or homeowners?*

John R Taylor: Figure out how the homeowners will use each space and design accordingly. There's no use in designing a space that won't be functional. If a homeowner can have long-lasting functionality in their home, they will be able to enjoy it much more.

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Carrara Italian Marble Import: What fascinates you and how have you incorporated that into your designs?

John R Taylor: Lighting, bars and wine rooms, these are a few of my favorite things! LED lighting continues to improve in leaps and bounds, and I always enjoy figuring out new ways to incorporate it into designs. Both wet and dry bars have been showing up in quite a few projects, along with dedicated wine rooms or beautiful wine displays. Combining LED in these areas can give a look that is totally unique and will help to accentuate each space.

Carrara Italian Marble Import: What has been your most challenging project and why?

John R Taylor: My most challenging project to date would be a remodel I did for a husband and wife who needed to make their home ADA-compliant and -accessible. It was a remodel of necessity, as the wife had suffered a stroke and was partially paralyzed and needed assistance from her husband to navigate their home. This project started just as I had earned my Certified Aging-In-Place designation, so there was a lot of research that had to be done to ensure everything was perfect for the clients. The biggest part of the process was ensuring that every area of the house was accessible to her, with the correct turning radiuses, counter heights, switch locations and door openings. We also had to remove all the different types of flooring and install one flooring product, an LVP, that ran through the entire ground floor, eliminating transition points. It was a labor of love, getting to know the clients and seeing how happy they both were once the project was completed.

Carrara Italian Marble Import: What motivated you to go into the interior design field?

John R Taylor: I think at some point in time everyone fancies themselves a designer. I had always loved the idea of using items to create a beautiful space, personalized to my tastes, and limited only by my imagination. While I was working as a project manager in Barbados, I had the chance to interact with the interior designer on a large villa I was working on. I had to help her place furniture in the villa, including CAD drawings for her, to help verify that furniture would fit correctly! Normally, my contract ended once the construction was completed, but the clients had asked us to help the interior designer install furniture. Seeing this side of the coin helped to open my eyes to a whole new aspect of the design world and was enough to whet my appetite and entice me to pursue this career.

Carrara Italian Marble Import: What is your favorite design style?

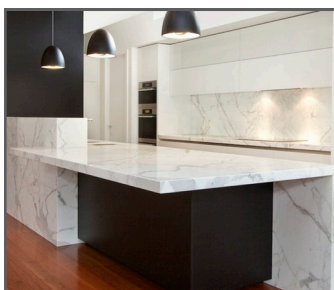
John R Taylor: I don't have any one favorite. I love the challenge of designing per the specific taste of each of my clients. I have had quite a few clients that have a transitional style, but they all have that one thing that sets them apart. Maybe they want to incorporate an edgy light fixture, or they like the industrial look, but don't want it used throughout the entire house.

Carrara Italian Marble Import: How to you keep yourself up to date with current design trends in the market?

John R Taylor: The internet is a great tool for this. I also glean information and inspiration any time I travel.



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