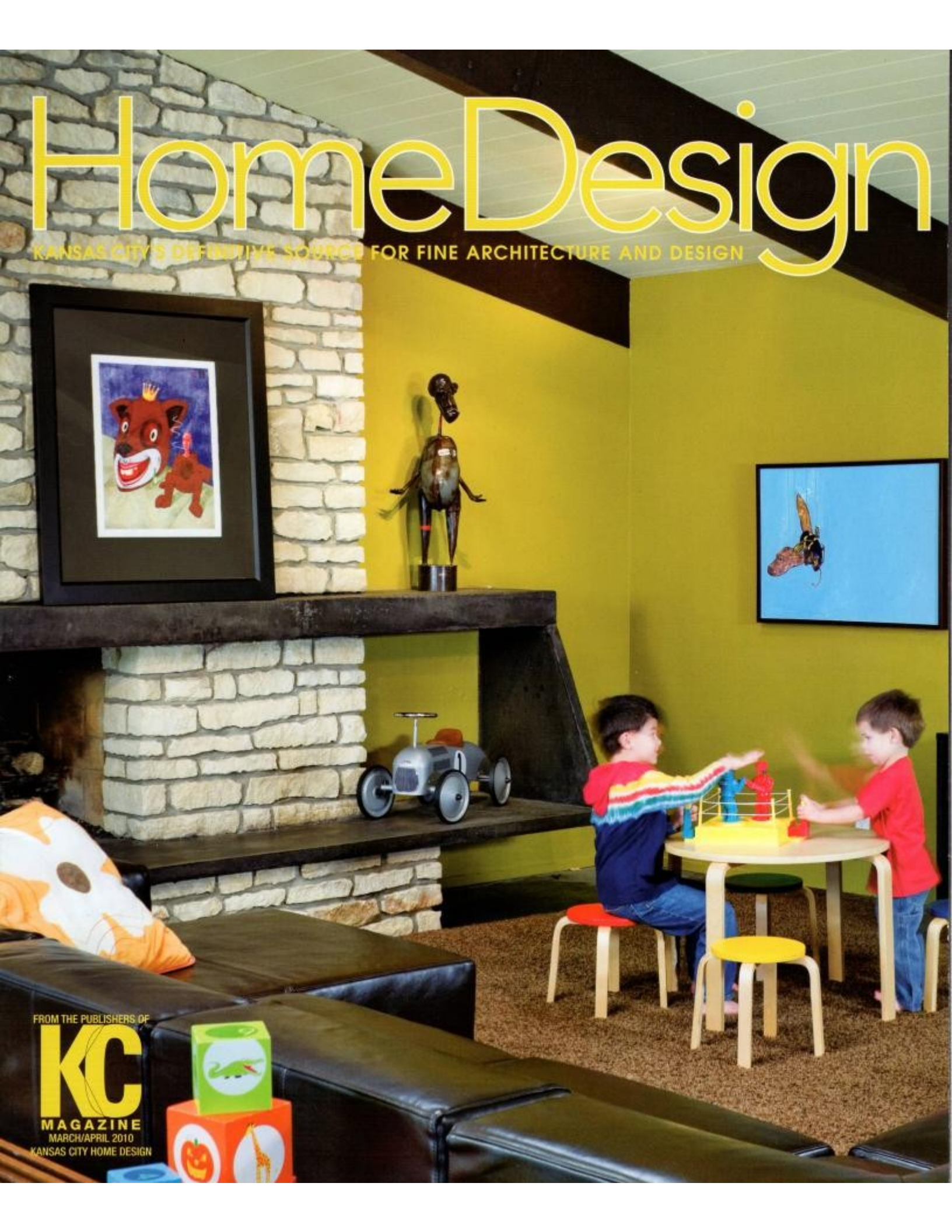


# HomeDesign

KANSAS CITY'S DEFINITIVE SOURCE FOR FINE ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN



FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF

**KC**

MAGAZINE

MARCH/APRIL 2010

KANSAS CITY HOME DESIGN

# design sense



**story by** betsy lee-frye

One of the most-used room in a home, the bathroom is a place where tranquility should meet utility. Achieving this goal can be an exercise in self-discovery. According to Geri Higgins, President and CEO of Portfolio Kitchen & Home (the firm that designed the space above), the bathroom isn't functional unless it fits your needs. And it isn't beautiful unless you love being in it.

"It's all about you," she says. "People should focus on creating the bathroom that serves them well. It's about personality and taste." The tub, for example—while a luxurious necessity for some—is definitely negotiable. If you don't use it, why include it? Save the space for something else that you *will* use, like a larger vanity (D, designed by Portfolio) or dressing area.

This philosophy is especially applicable in the master suite. There, two separate vanities can maximize function while creating more space for other amenities, Higgins says. An installation just for the lady of the house can hold a makeup mirror and multiple drawers for toiletry items, for example. "She might even have a small safe in which to store her jewelry," Higgins notes. Men's vanities can be taller, with cubbies to hold items like wallets and change. "We're also installing a lot of PDA docking stations in men's vanities," she says.

But storage isn't the only substitute for a tub. "Showers can be very unique and practical, with beautiful glass enclosures, multiple heads and music systems," Higgins says. "We've even seen tanning showers."

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**RESOURCE GUIDE:** *Jill Tran Interior Design*,  
By appointment, 913-268-9595. *Portfolio*  
*Kitchen & Home*, 8027 State Line Road,  
816-363-5300. *Steve Nuss Interiors*, 4722  
Rainbow Blvd., Westwood, 913-362-2912.



Jill Tran of Jill Tran Interior Design, who designed the spaces shown in photos B, C and E, agrees: "I know tubs are thought of as the place to relax, but so are showers, (as long as they are) designed well, have a nice interior bench and keep the person (who is) showering warm."

For some, however—especially young families—a tub is a necessity. In those cases, a balance of relaxation and function is key. Local interior designer Steve Nuss says soaker tubs use less water than giant Jacuzzis and provide classy, quiet comfort. He also recommends thinking about appearance when installing technology in the bathroom. Instead of a huge television mounted on the wall, what about a subtle screen hidden behind the mirror? Higgins agrees: "It's perfect for a couple who wants a spa-like environment but also wants to use the TV. People can be brushing their teeth and watching the news. But when they want to relax, there's no TV in there as a distraction."

According to Tran, hidden televisions are just the beginning of bathroom technology offerings. From the PDA docking stations mentioned earlier to separate, remote-activated music systems, technology is everywhere in the powder room. Tran's favorite new technology is the Kohler touchless faucet. "(It is) fantastic, especially in a utility bath when dirty hands enter the home," she says.

But Nuss advises homeowners to also think about another facet of technology—lighting. This is key in this space where the majority of a morning grooming routine takes place, and Nuss recommends using natural light whenever possible. "I just redid my bathroom and installed a skylight," he says. "I love that during the day I can shower and get ready without ever turning on a light." If that isn't an option, he prefers dimmers.

In addition to adding beauty, skylights and other windows offer energy savings, which attracts fastidious consumers. Tran recommends that savings-conscious homeowners also consider toilets that require less water to flush, tankless water heaters and products like Kohler's DTV Interface with water-conserving functionality, which allows digital control over shower times, flow rates, lighting, temperature and sound. It's the ultimate in function and ease—and an especially smart investment for a growing family. ▲