

HARTE BROWNLEE INTERIORS



Even though there were no specific client needs to be dealt with in this family room designed by Sheldon Harte for a showcase house in Shady Canyon, Harte nonetheless used the opportunity to address an issue he's come across often lately in his work as a licensed designer.

"So many times I've heard clients say they go to different rooms to watch TV because they don't want to watch the same thing," says Harte, owner of the Harte Brownlee & Associates interior design firm. "That's where the value of a professional designer comes in. Design is a process. There's usually a solution for everything."

A family room, he adds, is a place for people to be together. So in his design, the room included two TV screens, each with its own chaise lounge. With wireless headphones and multiple TVs, he reasoned, a family room can sustain togetherness even when the kids are watching one thing and the adults are watching something else.

The approach worked especially well in the showcase house, where the large room allowed for a number of conversation and seating areas. Harte's idea of a proper family room is "a place that is cozy and nurturing." To that end, he employed a variety of rich textures in soothing neutral tones, from deep brown faux-alligator chairs to soft, nubby cream-colored fabric on a day bed lounge.

"Showcase guests thought it was an approachable room, one they could relate to. It also illustrated how even the most meticulously designed

room can be flexible and timeless. You could take that neutral background and accent it with any type of color, and it would be successful," he says.

While many guests were surprised at the sight of two TV screens, once Harte's concept was explained, "you could see the lights go on in their heads and they'd say, 'Oh, this is cool!'" he recalls.

For nearly 30 years, Harte has relished the role of talking to people who have called on him for everything from designing and furnishing the key rooms in their homes, to full-blown remodeling projects and new construction. Many times he has designed a house from start to finish, working with the architect on the design of the home including the floor plan and materials selections, then creating the entire living scheme for the house and designing the rooms, choosing the paint colors, fabrics, furniture, lighting, and myriad other details in consultation with the client.

Harte prides himself on being as comfortable with traditional design as he is with contemporary. A member of the Board of Trustees of the Laguna Art Museum, he understands and appreciates the significance of the art collections possessed by many of his clients. He has a deep appreciation for antiques, yet is equally knowledgeable about the building process, blueprints, and design mechanics.

With a long roster of qualified consultants to

draw from and huge resources to research ways to meet clients' needs, Harte is confident he can meet any challenge his clients may have for him.

"Really, we're hired to help create a background for our clients to live their lives. It must not only be beautiful, but comfortable and functional. Some people say we're the ultimate luxury. But others say we're the ultimate necessity."

SHELDON HARTE, ASID

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