

The Profile

JOURNEY IN DESIGN

Catching up with Ron Wolz



Ron Wolz, Vice President, Bittners
Photographer: Josh Merideth
Hair design: Stephen Lewis
Makeup: Jill Higginbotham
Stylist: Janice Carter Levitch

By **FRANNY CORRIGAN GUENTHNER**
 Special to The Voice-Tribune

As I enter Bittners, activity is booming. Derby and all its parties have just finished up, but the afterglow of Derby’s excitement still looms in the air. Ron Wolz walks into the showroom and warmly greets me. We talk as we enter the magnificent, warm, butternut wood-paneled library with intricate crown moldings, custom-made by Bittners master craftsmen.

As I sit down on a comfortable linen armless chair, I notice the beautiful handmade pillows, which Ron explains were made in Uzbekistan. Behind Ron is an antique German Biedermeier mahogany and rosewood secretary. On the adjoining wall, is an abstract landscape by Paule Marrot, which sets the tone for the room.

His energy is magnetic as we begin to talk. I can tell immediately that he is devoted to his profession as well as committed to his clients.

“Design is so important. Your home is like a journey and should reflect the path that has brought you to where you are today,” says Wolz. “You want your home to reflect who you are in a blended, beautiful, comfortable space.”

We start to talk more about his life, passion for design and his impressive portfolio of work.

How did you get started as a designer?

It is in my blood. As a young boy, I was always rearranging furniture at home or changing room colors because I had a desire to improve the space. Learning about fabrics, furniture, design trends, antiques and space planning began my journey into the design world. I truly feel like I have been blessed with a special gift for design.

What drives you everyday?

It’s simple, my clients. My desire is to help them create the home of their dreams, and I pay attention to every detail of their project. I will go above and beyond to make sure that they are pleased with the end result. I want them to be extremely happy, even to the point where I will tweak every minute detail of a room. As a result, I have developed many long-term friendships that are very important to me.

What trends do you see in design today?

First, I see an easier, more relaxed way of living filled with a person’s own unique history. Life is a journey, and your home should tell your story. Many of my clients want to reflect their own journey in their homes from handed-down furniture to pieces they may pick up on their travels. Their homes reflect where they have come from and where they are going in their life, across the generations.

Second, I am seeing a return to our roots of following the “American Dream” with the rugged individual-

ism and raw determination that laid the footprint of our country. We are taking design themes where we interpret European and English traditions and combine it with an American aesthetic. For example, we are creating design elements of the American West, interpreted in a modern way. Chairs may feature a hand-stitched leather that reminds you of a saddle or a beautiful sterling silver box may have a turquoise embellishment. Such elements pay homage to the American West as we reflect back on the history of our ancestors.

Third, the green movement is strong. Reclaimed wood tables are becoming popular. Colors are going lighter and more eco-friendly. Pale blues and greens with gray, as the neutral, are being seen in more homes. Even wood tones are taking a lighter turn.

Who has inspired you over the years?

It is always the simple things in life that are so inspiring – from my close family and friends to the people who help those less fortunate than ourselves.

My partner, David Beuligmann is a creative director at WHAS-TV. He has been an important part of my life the last 20 years and always inspires me with his gift of creativity.

I was very fortunate to be raised by wonderful parents and a great family with four brothers and now 10 nieces and nephews. We are very close and still get together for breakfast at my mother’s home every Sunday.

What are your career highlights?

By far, joining Bittners has been the highlight of my career. This type of design environment does not exist anywhere else in our area and probably not in the country. Bittners has the best, talented pool of design professionals, bar none, and unsurpassed support that we are so blessed to have here in Louisville.

The Bittners difference is huge. Since opening in 1854, our rich tradition lives on today. Bittners offers true “full-service” design, from design concepts and architecture to Bittners-made custom furniture and accessories. Our master craftsmen can create any furniture piece from any era including tables, desks, chairs and beds to custom wood wall paneling and crown moldings.

Our showroom boasts over 10,000 square feet of beautiful furniture, lamps, chandeliers, pillows and gifts set up in vignettes to make it easy to visualize the piece in your own home. We have the latest trends in fabrics, the best “finds” in Louisville and architectural support from the area’s well-known architect, Frank Pierce.

It is interesting, when I bring a client into Bittners, they are always pleasantly surprised by the showroom. We offer very modern, contemporary pieces blended with European and English traditional furniture. So many people have told me that Bittners is a true “jewel,” and we are so fortunate to have such a full-service design firm here in Louisville.

What is the one aspect of Bittners that people may not know?

Bittners is constantly on the cutting edge of design. We are always challenging ourselves to create “out of the box.” We want to always improve and change to reflect the changing lifestyles of our clients. For example, our showroom is constantly being updated. You may visit us and then a few weeks later, it has completely been refurnished. We love to have our clients come down and see the newest pieces that arrive daily.

That drive to be a leader in design comes from our President Douglas Riddle. His years of European travel, from the boutiques of Italy to the Parisian flea markets, along with his background in fashion and design are reflected in the Bittners showroom. His knowledge and perspective on design and furniture have challenged us to create the finest in design. He continues to set the bar high for himself and then for all of us.

Do you live by any design philosophies?

First, you should use all the rooms in your home. Simply make every room comfortable so you can relax, live and enjoy your complete home.

Second, my clients come first. Every detail of design is so important that I will go the distance with my clients to guarantee that their home is exactly the way they envisioned it.

Third, when in doubt, edit! Less is more. A simplified, clutter-free approach has emerged in design.

What type of community service are you involved in?

I am on the Board of Directors at Whitehall, Historic Homes Foundation and am on the steering committee with the Patron Circle, which is involved in fundraising for the Speed Art Museum. I have also volunteered with Habitat for Humanity, Kentucky Derby Museum and Kentucky Opera.

What is one thing that people are surprised to know about you?

I have a twin brother, Don.

Q&A WITH RON WOLZ

Favorite restaurant: Scalinatella in New York City.

Favorite book: “Catcher in the Rye.”

Hobbies: Exercising and gardening.

Favorite movie: “Room with a View.”

Memorable vacation spot: Laguna Beach, Calif.

Favorite artists: Steven Irwin, Sarah Lyon (photographer), Letitia Quesenberry (painter).

Best Broadway show: “Les Miserables.”

Philosophy: “Life is so short; enjoy every minute.”