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Volume 23, Issue 12

A.W. Viohl

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INSIDE:
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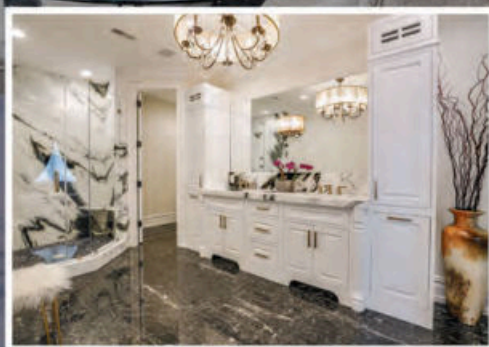
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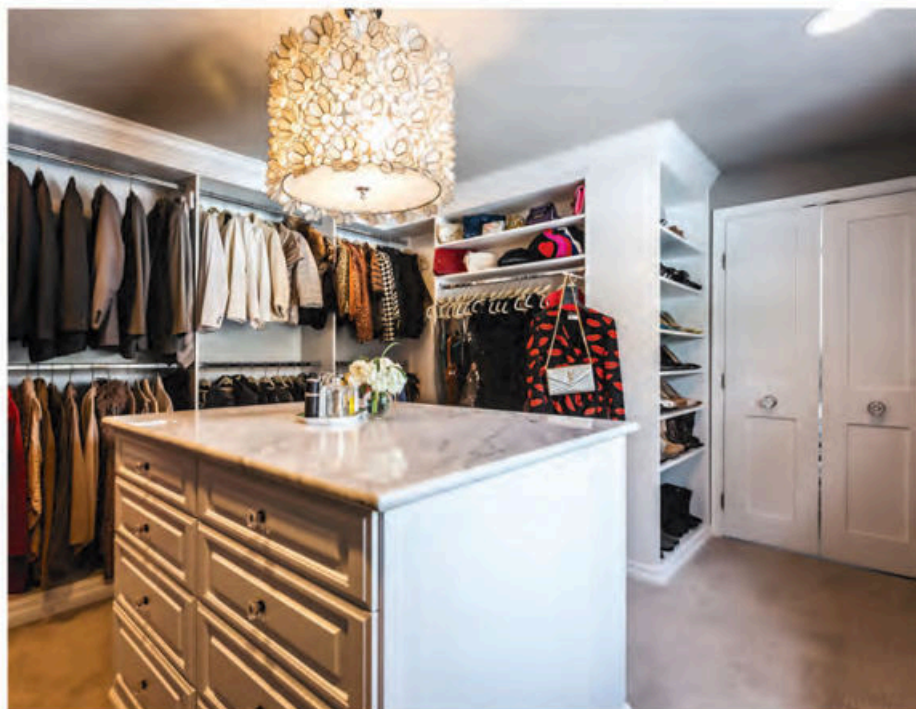
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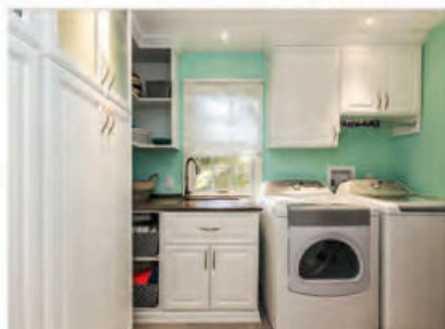
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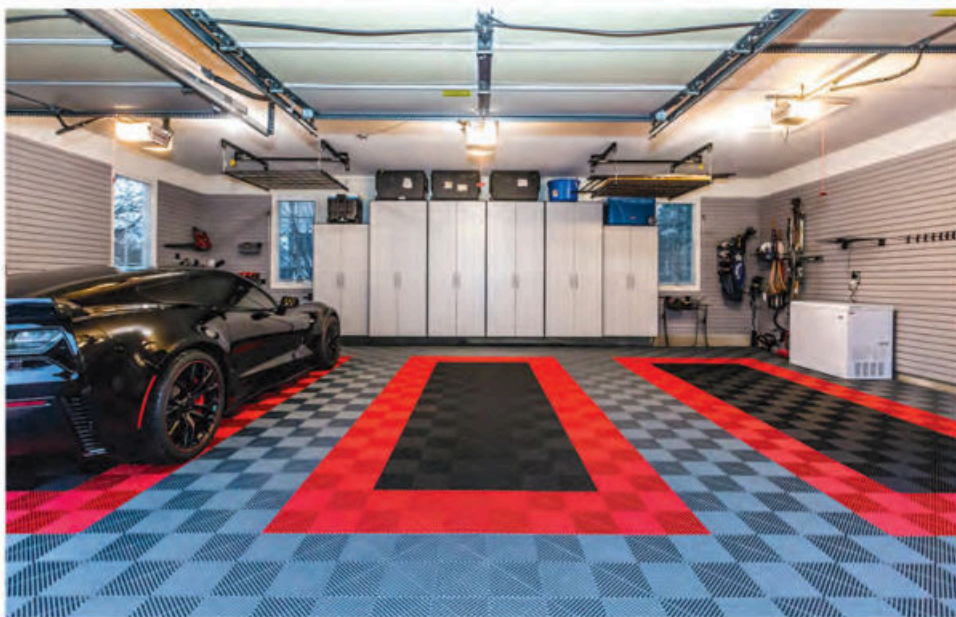
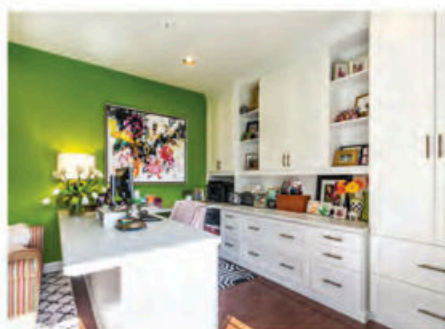
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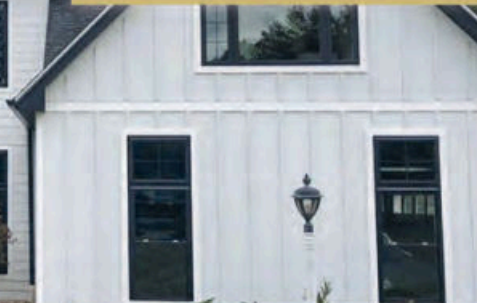
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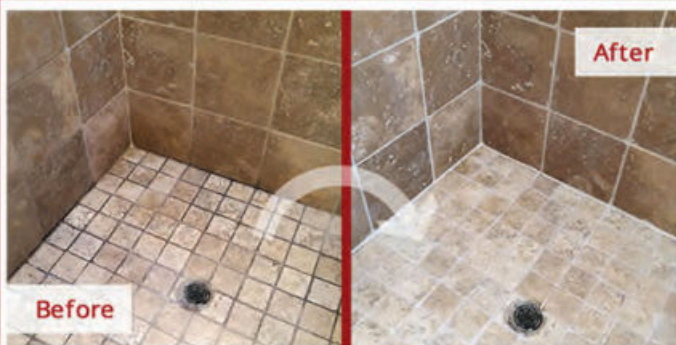
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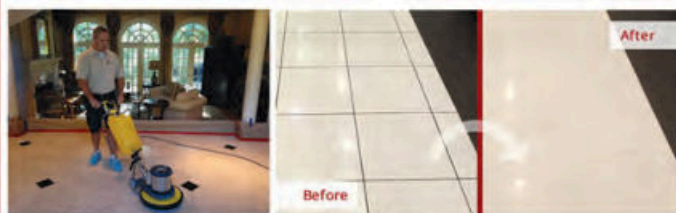
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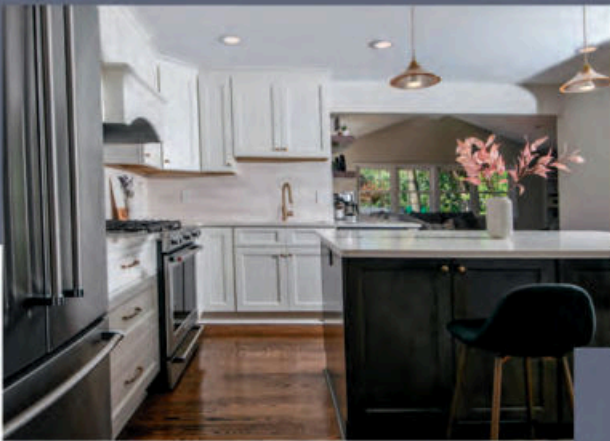
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A CONTRACTOR FOR *All Seasons*

The Delaware-based **A. W. Viohl Contracting** delivers high-quality remodeling and maintenance every month of the year, which means it's always the right time to get started on the interior or exterior project of your dreams. *by Madeleine Maccar*

Anyone who loves what they do will tell you that they don't do it for the awards and accolades: They do it for the personal satisfaction, like knowing that they made a difference, finding the work rewarding and fostering strong relationships along the way.

"By the time a project's over, our clients have become part of our family," says Andrew Viohl of A. W. Viohl Contracting.

Viohl founded the company that bears his name in 2008 and, since then, has diligently amassed a team of in-house professionals whose dedication to clients and a job well-done mirror his own, and whose talents come together to make the Delaware-based contractor a truly versatile, trustworthy indoor and outdoor service that can do it all.

"The guys who work with me are good buddies, we've been working together for a long time. We're like a family and we're family-oriented," Viohl explains. "We know what we're doing, and we know how to work to-

gether. We've been doing this for 20-some years, so we've pretty much seen it all."

And while Viohl appreciates the talent on his team and knows they're absolute professionals who can navigate any challenges that may arise along the way, the awards are a nice confirmation that the A. W. Viohl team is on the right track. Having been recognized as one of *House & Home* magazine's Best of the Best is one of the contractor's most recent honors.

"We're out there working as hard as we can, so it means a lot to all of us," Viohl says.

But Viohl and his team are never content to rest on their laurels. Whether it's renovating a basement, creating an addition, updating a kitchen or bathroom, repairing a deck or boosting the longevity of a roof, they aim for nothing less than the best for the homeowners who trust them with their interior and exterior remodeling goals.

"We're not rushing from one project to the next," Viohl promises. "Our focus is on you and your home, including finishing the job right."

And there's never an offseason for the year-round operation, which means they're not only scheduling projects for the spring but also breaking ground on a few now. It often comes as a pleasant surprise for clients who are planning ahead for the warmer months—or aren't about to let winter stand in the way of their renovation projects.

"I don't think you should react to a customer by saying 'Why do you want to do a deck now?' and I don't like turning down work: Whatever job people need done, we'll do it regardless of season," Viohl says. "We're always doing projects, even in January and February. On the other hand, we also have calls now to get on the books to start work three months out. That gives us time to get the production going, to get all the permits we need so come March, April or May, we're ready to go for them."

With the pandemic entering its third year and people still spending more time at home than usual, Viohl says that renovations and updates are just as in-demand as ever.

"People have these old wood decks with the boards falling through and loose railings, or they've had the deck for 15, 20 years and they're just tired of the maintenance for staining and sanding, so they want them updated with materials to achieve a maintenance-free result," he explains. "You still have to clean it because it's going to get dirty, but it's not like you'll have to power-wash it every two years or watch out for splitting wood and handrails splintering."

Viohl adds that features like composite decking boards and vinyl railings will ultimately save homeowners some money. "You won't have that extra yearly fee or every two years because you're paying someone to stain it or pressure-wash it."

The pandemic's influence on the supply chain is still causing some lingering delays, affecting the immediate availability of some materials, like grout in certain colors, cabinetry options and particularly windows. "Some windows can still take up to three months to be delivered," Viohl notes. But he says that A. W. Viohl's clients are generally understanding and realize the delays are just a part of construction right now.

Viohl diligently encourages open lines of communication, both with the homeowner and among his team. It ensures everyone is on the same page at every stage of the project while managing clients' expectations—because it is, no matter the project, always about making sure a customer is completely satisfied.

"A lot of the jobs we do are for repeat customers, so they've been there and know what to expect," he says. "They know that they're getting the quality work they're paying for. It's an honor when they hire us for repeat work, and we want to make sure they'll call us for their next job." **H&H**

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By STAFF

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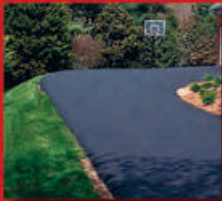
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Timeless Modernization

by Carly Murray

While advancements in home improvement progress rapidly with each year, the trends of today are reminiscent of classic aesthetics revitalized with a contemporary flair.





With the influx of home improvement television shows, products and services in the past decade, homeowners have subsequently elevated standards—from the latest technology to fine-tuned details, to customization options that make a space simultaneously coordinated and one-of-a-kind. Local renovation professionals who specialize in different niches and have cultivated specialties within their expertise regularly observe the latest trends, and *House & Home* spoke with a few to gauge the latest and most popular in home renovation.

Trends in the Industry

It has been noted time and again that the pandemic resulted in more do-it-yourself home improvement projects. With an indeterminate amount of time spent indoors to take up a new hobby or to watch hours of renovation videos and shows, people became overnight experts with ambitions that heavily outweighed the capability of an untrained, solo non-professional. Now that the days of zero-contact are limited, industry professionals are eager to actually achieve that once-abandoned project—up to the standards envisioned. That's not to say that it isn't a highly collaborative effort between a client and a professional: After all, additions or changes to a home come with an expectation of longevity, for the residents of a home to look at on an everyday basis. Cecelia Mullen, the owner of Upstyle Chique, began her company with a focus on stone and brick for home exteriors and interiors.

"People are opting for stain, especially for exteriors. The reason being that stain is a mineral-based product and it calcifies with the exterior, brick or any type of masonry," she explains. "It's increased because the likes of HGTV are promoting it and are using it more, so people are becoming more knowledgeable."

While customers are thoroughly aware of their idealized finished product, they also have service expectations newly aligned with a both fast-paced and cautious society, which area professionals have noticed and strive to accommodate. Remaining conscious of the comfortability of a client alongside the renovation services and product demands appear to have invaluable results.

"[A client] really built a really nice relationship with the guys, because we were

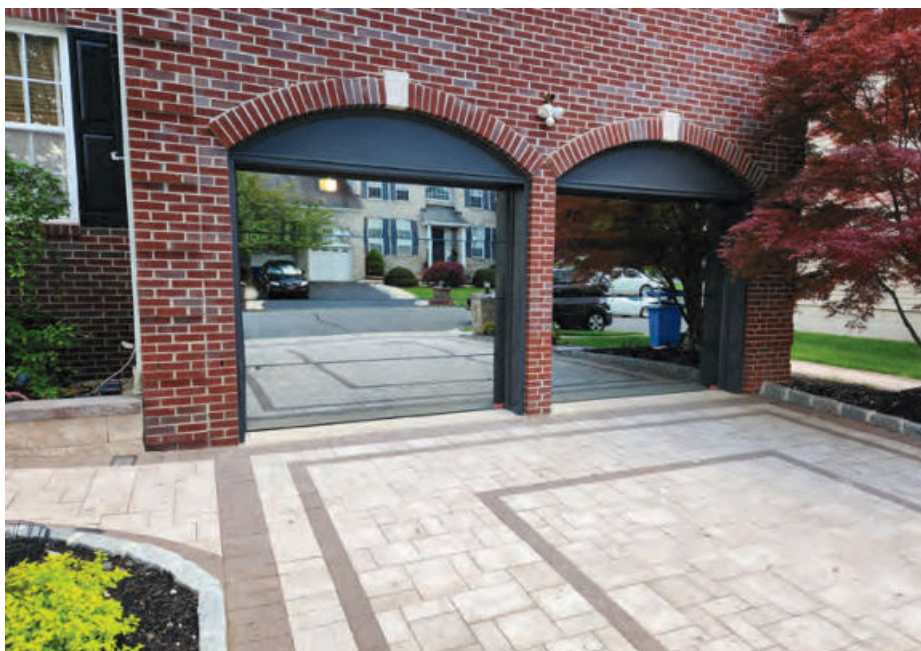
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there for four or five weeks doing this extensive project and when it came time to leave, I was speaking with her on the phone on the last day of the project and she actually got teary ... she was crying and hugging them when they left. She really enjoyed having them in their home. She was very concerned, as most people are, about 'The men that are coming to my home. Are they conscientious? Are they respectful? Can I trust them? Do they really know what they are doing? Do they have my best interest in heart?' All the things that every customer is concerned about," says Mark Ollivier, design sales manager at Home Trimwork. "When she realized that we are who we say we are and the men that were in her home are really looking out for her best interest and tweaking things along the way, she started to share more about her style."

With all of the options available for companies that specialize in home improvement nowadays, trustworthiness is often one of the most vital assets in making that choice.

Trends in Aesthetics

While industry processes and standards evolve with time, classic colors and styles still dominate the world of interior design. In the context of the beautiful historical architecture characteristic of the region, many homeowners are opting for a similar effect on both the inside and the outside of their house. In a landscape that can so quickly vary from farmland, to oceanside, to metropolitan in one drive, the home designs throughout New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware are a stunning sight to behold.



"We're kind of in the country here, so we still have a bit more rustic style. We do sell some more modern looks as well, but the country-rustic look is still there. And then colors, we see people moving away from the grays and getting back into more beiges," says Elmer Stoltzfus, owner of Heritage Floors.

"Unfortunately, the size of the houses in Pennsylvania are a lot more colonial, so the modern designs don't fit into the design of the house," says Imraan Omar, owner of Door King.

Regional considerations also have an impact in the sense of neighborhood community amalgamation for exteriors. Often, homeowners will consider the resale value and marketability of any changes made to their property.

"A lot of houses are in gated communities, small communities where most of the garage doors look the same," Omar continues.

Therefore, the most commonly seen colors are neutrals modernized by sharp lines and contrasts. If a bolder color is utilized, it is often a shade of blue or green.

"We're definitely doing a lot of cellular honeycombs, Roman shades, more into the warmer grays like your taupes, and those sorts of colors," says Stella Zaffino, showroom manager at Blind Builders. "The color has changed: We started with the warm earth tones and then we went into the grays and the cool tones, and we're seeing more of those earthy taupes, greens, those sort of colors come out now."

Trends in the Process

In harmony with the expectations of streamlined planning and service is the inclusion of a digital design tool for many companies to showcase their abilities in advance, especially as nearly everything in the modern world is technology-driven. This is also something that has become standardized because of models of home improvement in popular culture, once shown only on television but now widely available. Once a consultation is finalized, it's extremely rare that clients stray from the plan. And with high inflation on a majority of Americans' minds, people expect to stick to a budgetary estimate, too.

"People come out of [a virtual consultation] knowing exactly what it's going to look like, exactly what it's going to cost. Yes, it does take the face-to-face, eye-to-eye out of the equation, but ... people want answers now," explains Ollivier, who has been working with the evolutions of virtual planning technology for 12 years. "I don't play the game of getting somebody all fired up on



Timeless Modernization

something so that I can hit them over the head with an \$80,000 number, trying to convince them that it's what they need. I let them know, 'This is the range you're looking at' before we start really getting details."

Despite visual trends appearing to remain evergreen, there has been an increase in homeowners expressing their creativity by transforming rarely used areas or spare rooms. Common projects are home offices and in-law suites, but professionals have also seen workout rooms, rooms for pets and even bars. As residents are eager to make productive use out of all the space their homes have to offer, they also want these installations to be long-lasting. For example, topcoats can be a vital finishing touch to keep floors safe and resistant to damage.

"We're seeing more and more exterior jobs, patios and porches," says Joseph Paul, president of Apex Concrete Coating Solutions.

Protecting floors from scratches and dents is a consideration in the planning process by choosing the right material for one's particular lifestyle and expectations.

"The luxury vinyl plank is very popular because it's very durable, very scratch resistant; it holds up well against pets, families, spills, that kind of thing," says Stoltzfus.

And those considerations are applicable to all areas of the home. With the plethora of options, decisions can truly be catered to a variety of accommodations.

"Shade is going to provide better room darkening than, necessarily, a blind—but we're doing more slatted blinds in living room areas where you can allow more light in without giving up privacy," explains Zaffino.

Experimenting with different products during planning phases can truly achieve an idealized result. It's all about being transparent with one's needs and desires with a knowledgeable professional. **H&H**



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