

# Interior Designer Creates "The Home Project File" For Do-It-Yourselfers And Home Renovators

by Robin R. Mueller

"After seeing my clients and students bring me their home decorating ideas, magazine pages, fabric swatches, paint chips, tile samples and furniture photos in paper sacks, zip lock bags and shoeboxes, I knew there was a market for this product," says Patrice Barge-Munden, the owner/principal designer of Patrice Munden Interior Design, a full-service residential interior design firm.

Barge-Munden created "The Home Project File," a durable, heavy-duty three-ring binder that allows do-it-yourself decorators and home renovators, dreamers collecting ideas for their decorators, and/or professional interior designers to collect and organize all their ideas, samples, materials, product information, measurements and costs (for up to six rooms or projects) in one convenient binder.

"The key is to carry this easy-to-use tool with you in your car, so you can shop with confidence and save time, money and frustration," explains Barge-Munden.

"How many times have you not had what

## Going Solo

you needed to make a good buying decision? You find some discontinued blinds, but you don't have your window measurements. Or, you see some potential tile for your bathroom, but your paint chips are at home," she recounts.

"Or, you stumble on the perfect fabric for your old chair, but only six yards are left. If you don't have your upholsterer's phone number, you can't call to ask if he or she can squeeze out what's needed to refinish your chair. Now, when you take your binder in your car, you'll have all your information at your fingertips."

The Home Project File Contains:

- Six blank "Room or Project Pages," to record ideas, notes, progress and important product and store information, and to track costs and budgets.
- Graph paper to draw up room, window and door measurements to scale and to record exact measurements.
- Six large acid-free, transparent pockets to hold photographs, wood and tile

samples, fabric swatches, product info, receipts, etc.

- A contractors' page to list names, phone numbers, hourly charges/bids of electricians, plumbers, painters, installers, etc.
- Six pages of her own designer tips.

"I believe that every person has his or her own style and taste; they just have to be encouraged to develop it," says Barge-Munden. "I like to serve as a facilitator for my clients, to help them reach their dreams and continue to beautify their home themselves."

Having taught design courses at St. Louis Community College, "my goal is to encourage do-it-yourselfers to trust their instincts and to love the home they're in now, to make it their dream home."

Barge-Munden doesn't want to make her clients dependant on her. In fact, in this age of decorating and do-it-yourself television shows and magazines, she encourages clients to "celebrate their taste."

"I tell people that their home or rooms should appear as though they were put together over time," she explains. "Don't be afraid to buy things you like, or worry if they'll fit in. I always say 'Buy something that really speaks to you and the things you own will always go together.'"

Barge-Munden began creating and sewing her own window treatments while her husband served in the military in Italy. A Virginia native, she opened Windows and More, in Williamsburg, Va., in 1989. After various moves and motherhood, Barge-Munden earned her interior design degree and worked at a St. Louis design firm.

In 2002, she began her own business, Patrice Munden Interior Design, and has taught interior design classes at St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley. She updates older homes and transforms homes of all types for new uses. One of her current commissions includes the multi-phased renovation of a historic home at Westminster Place.

Barge-Munden stresses that her business has succeeded because "I listen. I ask questions and talk to spouses about how both of them really live, and what their end-goals really are. If people can't describe their taste to me, I look in their closets and immediately get a sense of their style and colors. A car tells you a lot about a person's personality!"

She jokes, "I really thought about calling my business 'The Finisher' for a while, because it seems that a lot of my jobs are finishing up what people have started, helping them to complete the last 25% of a room to make it look polished—accessorizing or adding window treatments."

A member of the American Society of Interior Designers, she served as education committee chairperson for the Missouri East chapter and was featured in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in 2004. In 2007, she founded Innerspace Publishing Company and published "The Home Project File: A Decorating and Remodeling Organizer."

She only half-jokes, "After self-publishing this book, my next book is going to be a book teaching people how to self-publish!"

The Home Project File is available for \$24.95 at [www.thehomeprojectfile.com](http://www.thehomeprojectfile.com). "I also want to encourage users of my product to email me or to send photos of the rooms they've created," she adds. "I'm eager to see their creations, and I welcome



Patrice Barge-Munden

their input and ideas to make this resource even better as we expand our production into national markets."

Barge-Munden's enthusiastic and energetic personality has served her well as she has marketed her book locally and nationally. A feature in *West Newsmagazine* in early June prompted more sales than ever before through her website. Her feature also will run in *Mid Rivers Newsmagazine* and *Central Newsmagazine*, reaching more than 180,000 homes.

She has sent press kits to regional newspapers and magazines, as well as locally produced television shows. She has advertised through the Google network, and her text ads appear on several home websites.

Barge-Munden has also contacted local and national bookstores, asking them to stock her book and offer signings. She has applied to become a vendor to a national crafts store. She also has promoted the book as a great "closing" gift to realtors and brokers for their clients.

Barge-Munden sends out a monthly marketing letter to her contacts, urging them to visit her website and to purchase her product. In June, for example, she pointed out the product benefits for a newly married couple, new homeowners or a graduate "setting up house" for the first time.

Considering her thriving business, busy family life and ongoing book promotion, this summer will be anything but relaxing for Barge-Munden. But that's the way she likes it. "I always feel energized when I have a project—and I think everyone should pursue their dreams. I'm thankful for how far I've already come, but I want to get this resource to the people who need it—homeowners who want to transform their homes into their own dream home!"

One new homeowner, Asia Sharif-Clark, who was trying to juggle room projects in her old and new home at the same time, bought *The Home Project File*. "It was so easy just to keep the binder on the front seat of my car and slip things in," she says. "I feel like I finally have some organization in my life."

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