

AROUND TOWN

Designing Madame

When Caroline and Steve Thompson—owners of local shelter store Cabana Home—were asked by the board of Lotusland if they would be interested in furnishing the historic 37-acre estate's Pavilion, they jumped at the chance. >

Lotusland's Pavilion arcade.

Style Within

"I've been fascinated by living spaces all my life," says local interior designer Susan Wennerstrom of **W Designs**. "Doll houses, tents made with blankets hung from clotheslines in the yard, my own room..." Starting her company in 1994, this self-taught decorator has become a hot commodity, growing her business solely by word-of-mouth. From revamping a modest first home to a complete renovation of a 7,000-square-foot property, there's nothing too small or too big for Wennerstrom, who emanates a passion for helping and connecting with people. "My favorite part is the 'A-ha!' moment, when the space itself comes together with clarity," says the designer, who has also worked on homes in Texas, Massachusetts, and Colorado. Her signature look of simple spaces with vintage pieces and objects used in creative ways is something she discovered while working on her own home, which she admits to rearranging constantly. "It's my laboratory," she says. Drawing inspiration from nature and her travels, Wennerstrom helps clients incorporate new pieces—from some of her favorite local shops, including Rooms & Gardens, Porch, and Pine Trader Antiques—and repurpose old ones, encouraging them to think outside the box. For 2010, Wennerstrom predicts a surge in "natural fabrics and batik patterns, the use of eco-friendly products and toxin-free paints, and orange—it's the new red." -S.B.

W DESIGNS 805-683-2614, w-interiordesigns.com.

SUSAN SAYS... **1** Don't overdecorate by matching. **2** Change accent colors (walls, pillows, accessories) regularly—color trends change more rapidly than style trends. **3** Buy basic, high-quality pieces that can become good "bones" of a home and serve a lifetime. **4** Decorate with things you love. **5** Invest in neutrals for overlaying colorful objects and art on. **6** Bring in color with items such as ornamental fruit, vegetables, dried grasses, shells, and objects like ironstone, silver, and antique linen tablecloths.

TOP TO BOTTOM: Wennerstrom's cozy creations; Madera del Mar driftwood wreath (\$100) from Porch, 805-684-0300, porchsb.com.

HISTORY *on* DISPLAY

Who knew that 100-year-old grain sacks could be spun into beautiful artwork and comfortable upholstery? Interior designer Kymberley Fraser did,

and she proves it with her **3 Fine Grains** collection of furniture and accessories. The mother of three creates one-of-a-kind items using original handmade hemp linen grain sacks discovered under farmhouses and in old dowry chests in France and Germany. The sacks are artistically stenciled with the names of the farmers, their city of origin, and often the year they were used—with some dating back to the 1800s. "My inspiration," says Fraser, "came from my longtime love of antiques and my desire to bring something old alive again." She does just that with her products—ranging from framed antique textiles to reupholstered aged furniture and custom-made ottomans, chairs, and stools. Her favorite pieces include the signature wing-back chairs (from \$4,350, pictured), featuring the rarest grain sacks, and her lush down-filled pillows (from \$285)—sought after by clients as far away as South Africa. "It's amazing how warm a grain sack will keep you," Fraser says of her new throw blankets (from \$800), which are backed with rich chenille or heavy antique linen. "My dream to have my own line is coming to life," she adds, "a dream I share not only with my family, but with the families that owned these pieces so many years ago." -SARA KENNA

3 FINE GRAINS 805-630-3727, 3finegrains.com.



PHOTOGRAPH: BOTTOM, THOMAS PLOCH