



trading spaces

by suzy feine

Gorder, also known as the Barefoot Contessa, "funkifies" home design with a flair all her own.

Genevieve Gorder, home designer on TLC's highest rated show, *Trading Spaces*, guides yet another couple in the "funkification" of their neighbor's home. At 28, this Minneapolis-born and internationally trained designer works her decorating whimsy wherever she goes. Her passion for design ranges from funky and free-spirited to modern and over-the-edge. And she does it all – without shoes. Her trademark style is nothing more than a means of preserving her footwear.

European Homes & Gardens magazine caught up with Gen just as she returned from her most recent escapade to Italy. >



Gorder's motto for success on *Trading Spaces*: "Stay flexible but keep to what I do best."

EH&G: *We know all about your work as a designer on the popular TLC show Trading Spaces. What do you do when you're not on the show? I understand you own your own design firm in NYC?*

GG: I do own a design firm incorporated under the name GG Studios. But, since the increasing popularity of *Trading Spaces*, I haven't had much time to do anything else. I work with a few private clients through my design firm and I love to take on exciting and different projects. When I'm not working, I love to travel, especially to Sardinia, Spain, which I do every summer. Since I lived there for a year, I still have many friends there I like to visit.

EH&G: *Describe the similarities between TLC's Trading Spaces and BBC's Changing Rooms. Describe the differences.*

GG: The two shows have the same basic formula: neighbor vs. neighbor, reconstructing rooms in any US location. The main difference is the reactions of the homeowners. In TV-cultured America, the homeowners are more hesitant to give an honest reaction for fear of looking bad. If they don't like the room, most will never admit it until later. In England, the homeowners give honest, often tragic reactions to their re-designed rooms. I think *Trading Spaces* needs to be more like the English version in this respect. That's what viewers want to see.

EH&G: *With only two days to completely transform a room, how do you come up with your design ideas?*

GG: We are given two weeks to prepare before actually doing the work. During those two weeks, we preview the room and also the other rooms in the house to get a sense of their design style. My decorating ideas are based on my travels – texture, color, smell and music all play a part in my designs.

EH&G: *Do you allow homeowners to change your design ideas based on their knowledge of their neighbor's taste?*

GG: It's funny, people never tell a plumber how to do their job but many feel they know more about design than a designer. The neighbors know the personality of the homeowner but they can't envision the end product as I can. I develop a main design concept and stick to that concept from beginning to end. Changing that in a two-day time frame would equal disaster. But, I try to stay flexible with minor changes and listen to their ideas.

EH&G: *Trading Spaces is TLC's highest rated show. What's your take on its popularity?*

GG: We inherited a good formula from England. They did this show successfully for a few years before we took on an American version. The producers asked the designers if they were ready to become celebrities and we all laughed! The show is wildly successful and I attribute it to people like Martha Stewart. Martha paved the way with her mass-marketing design. We've taken design one step further and funkified it, creating easy-to-do ideas that homeowners can recreate in their own homes.

EH&G: *What design style is your favorite? How is your own home decorated?*

GG: Danish-modern is one of my favorite styles but it's difficult for me to pick just one style. I like the more eclectic look. I'm into the earthy tones, and styles that fuse culture and time.

My home is a reflection of my travels – I have a variety of masks and door-knockers; photography taken by my father, friends and me; and colors inspired by a Moroccan palette. I like my rooms light, textural, sensual and most of all comfortable.

EH&G: *You recently traveled to Italy. What new design trends did you discover there?*

GG: I always keep an eye on fashion. Clothing dictates what will happen in the home in terms of fabric. Linens are hot in Italy right now. So is chunky, gold jewelry, which translates to the home as bold accents. Store window displays don't inspire me, landscape does. I get great inspiration from the lavender and wheat fields of Europe.

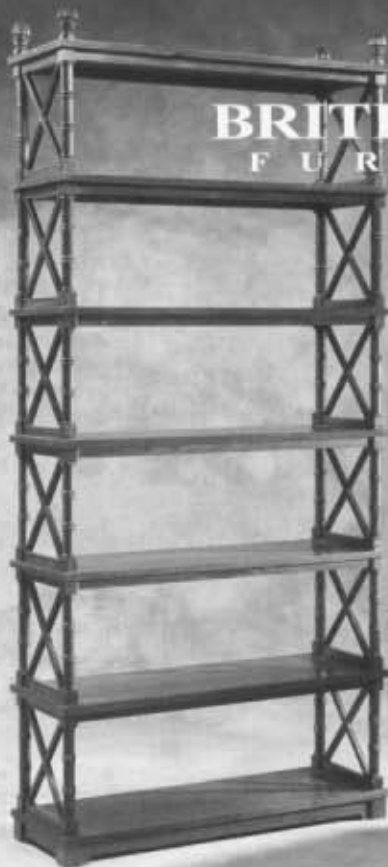
EH&G: *What's the easiest way for homeowners to incorporate the design trends of Europe into their surroundings?*

GG: Travel. Traveling opens the mind and reawakens different parts of the brain that are asleep. When you travel, find sensual items that give you a feeling of other places, listen to different music, get the essence of other countries. This will allow your paintbrush to move easier.

Americans have a tendency to be afraid of bold design. People don't go all the way with their designs. Design doesn't discriminate; color is forgivable. Don't be afraid to try something new, experiment with new colors, and if you're going to redecorate do it all the way.

EH&G: *Besides a new line of blue jeans and greeting cards, what great things can consumers expect from you in the next year?*

GG: I would really like to create a new line of home decorating fabrics. I'd also like to start branding a line of home furnishing products, starting with textiles. These are the areas I'll be focusing on in the immediate future.



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