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# DESIGN

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# Space and fabric

In the worlds  
of interior and  
fashion design,  
each fabric,  
textile, line,  
and color tell  
a story.



**I**f observant, the individual aesthetics—whether it is leopard printing on a shirt or the rich wooden paneling on a wall—reveal facets of the overall personality belonging to the person who lives either in the clothes or the interior space.

If nothing else, both fashion design and interior design provide a valuable outlet for self-expression; and it is this interwoven relationship between fashion and interior design that has inspired a new venture for Deidre Remtema of Deidre Interiors and Shannon M. Williams of Sunrise Studio GR, LLC.

Remtema, founder of the Grand Rapids-based firm, is a member of the International Interior Design Association, an accredited LEED professional, and NCIDQ certified. She has spent more than 14 years working in the interior design field and is a graduate of Kendall College of Art and Design. Now she has connected with Williams, fashion designer and founder of Sunrise Studio GR, to share their passion of their respective fields.

Williams is also a 12-year paramedic veteran and has a degree in microbiology. While she has spent time working in a research lab, is in a band, and has spun records on the side, her love of fashion led her to launch her own custom-work firm nearly two years ago.

Great Lakes By Design had a chance to sit down and speak with them last fall to learn more about their work and their collaboration.

#### Tell me about yourself and your work.

**Remtema:** I always knew I wanted to be an interior designer. I did commercial interiors for almost ten years. It felt more comfortable to me...but deep down I had this little seed that I was always fantasizing about the residential side of it. I spent a lot of time thinking about what I really wanted to do. So I started taking on clients, building a website, building a portfolio, and it started small, but then through word-of-mouth, things grew.

I would say my style is a mix of modern and classic with natural elements. I love the juxtaposition of the curve and the straight, the fancy and the casual, and really mixing up a home in a way that feels personal to that client. Each project is very specific to that client's personality, their heritage, their travels, their philanthropy, and what they care about. I take pride in being very personal and having a one-on-one approach. When my clients hire me, they get me.

**Williams:** My mother and my grandmother always sewed. [My mother] taught me how to get my bearings on the sewing machine years ago, because it wasn't the first time I had dabbled with it. This time I set out and said I have this great wool pencil skirt and it didn't fit me anymore and I need to take it in for this event. I had this vision for this outfit.

It was a learning process and I was so engaged. I thought if after a year I'm still really into this, then I'll start thinking about where it can go. I will be two years in November and I became an LLC last December.

I just set out with these ideas—a goal or a vision. You picture it and things start to emerge that way if you are patient and/or they emerge the way they are supposed to. What has come out if it is the custom work. I can read people really well and I get a good sense of their light inside, or how they picture their best self and from there a design emerges because it is a story.

I usually write up an aesthetic, because I think another part of style and shopping that is difficult for people is not knowing their style. I can really put that into word—a series of words—and then design something that is specially made for you, that is going to make you feel perfect in it, and unique.

**Remtema:** That is one thing I loved about connecting with Shannon on this, because I feel the same way about interiors. Each room or home is really a custom creation for that client. When people come over, when they entertain and their friends walk in the space, they should feel like it's the best version of their friend.





They may walk through another one of my projects and there might be some design choices that feel somewhat similar to how I work, but the overall look and feel is going to be really customized to that person. They feel like they can have people over and they haven't seen the same home all over town. It's personal to them.

**Can you talk more about how you decided to collaborate?**

**Remtema:** I love the bridge from interiors to fashion. I think when you are a good designer, you are very intuitive and you are very observant.

If they are a fashion lover, going through a client's closet is perfect to start a project. Sometimes their closet does tell the story of who they are, but sometimes they actually aren't telling their own story. It is an opportunity to say with this new interior, what do you love? We are going to start bringing that out, we are going to start bringing out the colors and textures.

Shannon and I got together, because I really wanted to show that connection in either blogs or articles and different social media about our passions and about how these are so connected to each other. They are both very intimate things: you have your clothes and your home. It is the next thing, outside of yourself, of how you express who you are. It is that closest thing to you.

I think it is fun for people to learn more about themselves by connecting those two things.

**Williams:** I love that aspect. I love feeling like my home is me in every way. I love design in that way: it really talks about where you are and who you are in the same way fashion does.

They are so tied together. One is an interior and one is an exterior: it is our presentation and I think the intuitive part of what we do for other people is bring to light things they are not aware of, especially with interior design. It's not just pretty, presentable things, but where things are disorganized or cluttered; it says a certain thing about a part of their lives.

I think the same thing with fashion. There is an entire show 'What Not To Wear' based around when you don't feel great or you are figuring things out that is bringing you discomfort. It can seem like superficial things, but it is so much more than that.

I think there is an old element of what we used to do in society back in the days that were ripped down in the '60s—for good reason—but I really miss dressing for travel and lady gloves.

**Remtema:** Design—fashion, interiors—can

have such a powerful impact on our mental, spiritual, and physical health and I really am saying that, because I have seen it with my clients. They have an opportunity to live in a space that is like an extension of their personality and it completely changes the way you see yourself and the way you see what your opportunities are.

I feel very passionate about how your home is designed can help you be healthier and help you reach goals, whether it is to lose weight, read more, or spend more time with your family. Enjoy the nooks and crannies, and enjoy your closet and how your clothes are laid out: there is no reason not to delight in all of the little things throughout the day in your home.

**Williams:** Life's too short for white walls: that is the way I look at it.

**How have you collaborated already and what are you planning to do moving forward?**

**Remtema:** Shannon has designed an outfit for me, and she is working on another one, which I'm very excited about.

**Williams:** Me too.

**Remtema:** It is for a "Couture for a Cure" event. We sat down and starting talking about what this could be and it's interesting how you live out your own style without even realizing it sometimes. She has designed this jumpsuit and we talked about the fabric and the jewelry. My style is very modern and classic with natural elements and that is exactly what it turned out to be without even thinking 'this needs to be that;' it just was, because that is who I am.

What we are going to start doing next is taking sketches from Shannon, some of my interiors, and writing stories; pairing them side-by-side: here is an outfit, here is the room, and look at how they connect, how you can have gold hardware in the kitchen and a gold bracelet on your arm and it all flows.

**Williams:** But not being too literal either. I think that is where we connected the most. I think a lot of advice of 'being inspired by this room' is there is a blue couch and now you are wearing blue pants. Instead, what we are focusing on is how we look at design in general, which is the whole system.

I did a mock-up of what it would look like, so I took one of her rooms—it's one of my favorites—the Vergennes and it has these rich teal blues, it's earthy yet sleek and classic. For me when I look at a room, words start emerging and then the person does. The way that translates to me in terms of fashion is textiles, textures, lines and shapes.

With the kitchen and gold, there are a lot of sleek lines, and there are not a lot of soft

lines in terms of the foundation or structure. It is a crispness to me and it's edgy, so I see something that is more angular or has that unexpected collar that is asymmetric. It doesn't have to be the exact color scheme. There is so much freedom, but it is also telling a story.

**What does design mean to you, and how do you use it to tell a story?**

**Williams:** Design means freedom in a lot of ways. I have had many interests in my life. There are always some really foundational ones and then I have a to-do list like: I will learn three languages at some point and play the piano well again. Design-wise, I will be a woodworker and I will create furniture, and I know these things about myself because it all becomes about translation of one's voice.

It is a translation of your life, of your point of view in so many ways and I think that is the fundamental connection. I love being unapologetic about my own freedom and that is what design is for me. It is a craft and I like to build and I like to construct and I like to think for hours sometimes on how to get what I want in an unconventional way.

**Remtema:** For me, design is about being a fearless curator for my clients and helping them again tell their story through their home. I received a pretty awesome compliment from a client last year and she said 'you're like a design doula: you are more than a coach, you push for what's right, what needs to be done, and bringing out the best version of us, but you are bringing us along.'

Sometimes it is painful: people learn a lot about themselves in the process and they change their minds a lot, not because they are fickle, but because they are learning as they go. I'm willing to stick by as they go through it, because I enjoy that personal relationships and bringing people through it.