



# Crafted to Impress

BY **BILL DONAHUE** | PHOTOS BY **LINDA MCMANUS**

**Master Design Cabinetry** builds every new custom-cabinetry project on a foundation of empathy, honesty, and trust with the homeowner.

**A**udrey Ulishney took a rather circuitous route—one might even say a globe-trotting one—to become a designer for one of the Philadelphia area’s premier crafters of custom cabinetry.

Audrey, the daughter of missionary parents, grew up in Hong Kong and attended boarding school in Malaysia. Her family moved back to the United States after she graduated high school, after which she began forging her career as a pediatric nurse. Although she loved the work, she came to a crossroads approximately 20 years ago. She then embarked on a career change by working as a bathroom remodeler. In the process, she discovered her talent for design, adeptness at finding solutions to challenges, and how she enjoyed working directly with homeowners.

A growing chorus of satisfied clients drew the interest of East Earl, Pennsylvania-based Master Design Cabinetry, which Audrey joined as a design professional in 2021.

“There are some elements of what I’m doing now that have some similarities to nursing,” says Audrey. “I’m here to be understanding and empathetic and to make people happy. I’m not shy, so if someone wants to pick a color that might not be the best choice or if they want to do something that could potentially compromise the final outcome,



I’m fully prepared to suggest, ‘We might need to rethink this approach.’”

After all, custom cabinetry is the focal point of kitchens, bedrooms, bathrooms, wine cellars, home offices, etc.—some of the most intimate areas of the home. Custom cabinetry also requires a significant investment, so Audrey sees her role not only as a designer but also as a facilitator of informed decisions. While she enjoys the technical aspects of cabinetry design, she gets the most satisfaction from spending time with clients.

“Every project begins with information gathering, such as collecting Instagram or Pinterest pictures [from the client], so they can show me what they like but also what they don’t like,” she adds. “I also ask them to make a list of must-haves. My job is to

listen, consider all the options, and bring everything together. ... You never want to finish a project and have the client say, ‘Why did I do this?’ or ‘Why didn’t I do that?’”

Master Design Cabinetry has earned a sterling reputation for its bespoke creations, all of which are constructed from high-quality materials—namely, North American plywood, with solid-wood sides, doors, and drawer fronts—designed to produce refined, long-lasting results. Audrey draws inspiration from her fellow team members and craftspeople who share her devotion to creating thoughtful designs that blend aesthetics and functionality.

“Every Monday morning, our company reviews our core values,” she says. “The one I most connect with relates to being a good steward. My goal is to be a good steward of my clients’ time, trust, and ideas. I don’t take that responsibility lightly.”

In fact, she has a sign in her workspace that reads, “Are you being a good steward?” It serves as a constant reminder of her purpose—a North Star, of sorts—every time she picks up the phone, drafts an email, or prepares to meet with a client to make design decisions.

Audrey’s prior life experience—living abroad and traveling throughout Africa, Asia, and Europe—has shaped her worldview and her approach to her work. Adaptable, focused, and perseverant, she strives to understand each client’s unique vision and does not stop until she believes the project has realized its full potential.

She cites a client from Greenville, Delaware, who hired Master Design Cabinetry to complete a far-reaching cabinetry project. The client had a very specific color in mind for the stain on the kitchen cabinets to match the fabric on the bar stools and furniture. The color was so specific, in fact, it matched nothing in Master Design Cabinetry’s extensive library. Audrey worked tirelessly to perfect custom colors for the project, including the kitchen cabinet stain. In honor of the client who helped bring it to life, the color is named after her, and it’s now part of the company’s library.

“My clients trust me to create an atmosphere for them to live and function, so no detail is too small,” Audrey says. “I want them to be so satisfied with what we do for them that they can’t help but tell their friends. When someone contacts me and says, ‘A past client of yours told me to call you,’ that’s the hugest compliment I can receive.” ■

## Master Design Cabinetry

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