



# ART YOU CAN LIVE IN

*A local contractor who thinks outside the box and defies the stereotypes. His job is to interpret the architect's vision for a project and bring it to life.*

My first experience of Don Tankersley was before I moved to Portland. My partner and I were searching Craigslist for a rental and ran across a project he completed for Lair Condominiums in conjunction with architect Rick Potestio. The condos were nothing short of stunning with clean contemporary lines and an inspired use of space with defined areas for furniture and traffic. The rooms had windows in the right locations and the finishes were stunning.

The next time I ran into Don was through his work as the contractor for Blue Hour, a restaurant in the Pearl District. I am one of those geeks that look at everything architecturally, and Blue Hour is a feast for the eyes. Not only is the space innovative architecturally, the craftsmanship is what truly grabbed my interest. An architect or designer is only as good as the contractor that executes their vision – and in that regard the restaurant is a smashing success.

More recently, while driving in the Southwest hills, I pulled up in front of an amazing contemporary house that was under construction to admire the building and daydream about the view the future residents would have. As before, I studied the massing of the various planes of the house and the exterior transitions of building materials. I also pondered the ways one would build in such a difficult location. The detailing was completed beautifully, and I could tell that the contractor had quite the task in making this dream home a reality. Naturally I smiled as I read the sign for the contractor – it was another DTC (Don Tankersley Construction) project.

I've said you can get a feel for people by the spaces they inhabit, and DTC occupies a loft-style office space on Northwest Kearney. I've met many contractors over the years, and this is not your usual contractor's office. The occupant clearly loves open spaces. The modern room displayed everything from vintage lithographs and photos to antique cameras. The conference area holds a Duncan Phyfe dining table and chairs (from Don's grandparents) where they live comfortably integrated with the classic Barcelona chair and a mid-century inspired sofa. A more typical builder's office has stacks of building samples, blue prints over-running the desks, tattered office furniture and out of control clutter. DTC's office looks like a comfortable and organized place to work, confident in its style and furnishings, and suitable for a design magazine. I could tell this contractor didn't just build spaces; he designed them.

Trained in architecture and business at Portland State University, Don started his own company 20 years ago and builds dream homes. A list of projects includes lofts, multi-unit condos and single-family residences. What is exciting about his projects (speaking as a total design geek) is the level of skill in construction. Architects and designers rely on a quality builder to interpret their dreams and drawings to make them a reality.

In each and every project of Don's that I've been to visit there is an attention to detail that might easily be overlooked. There is an art to building a home and a qualified contractor can make an architect or a designer look like a rock star. DTC does just that. To put it another way – a great contractor easily makes or breaks a project.

Sitting down to speak with Don, I am struck that he doesn't fit the contractor stereotype. A slender, handsome and thoughtful man in a button-down shirt and blue jeans, he more resembles a young college professor or an architect than a builder. While he doesn't fit my contractor stereotype, there is a sense of quiet confidence that comes through during the interview. He thoughtfully answers each question, and his passion for his work comes through in his responses.

While he works on high-end home projects in Portland and Northwest Oregon, he is quick to point out, "Comparing apples to apples, if anyone did the same work it would cost as much or more than our budgets do." He is able to do this because he has cultivated relationships with architects and clients because of his quality of work. Ultimately he delivers the best in project management and he has cultivated the finest trade resources to complete his projects.

"The best training I've received is working with architects. In my career, I've been lucky to work with some very talented world-class architects. It's given me a healthy respect for architects and architecture. Our interactions, while trying to please them and deliver what they've drawn, has been a great education for me."

For anyone who has built a home, remodeled a room, or completed an addition, they know the importance of a great contractor. Don told me a story, that made me admire him all the more, about a time when he took a stand for a client and made suggestions to the architect that might improve the design of the project. He went so far as to suggest making an architectural change. You can't accuse him for being shy... and he admits that it didn't work out well (he didn't get the job).

"Contractors are one of the most important elements of a project. When I work with an architect I try to understand the theme. What is their intention? Then when making the ten thousand decisions along the way, it's likely to be something they approve of. As I start a project, I get to know the architect to build trust so that my opinion means more. That's where I have my influence. After I've gained the trust of the client and architect,

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