

Your Home

Living interior design with Bio-Fusion

by Stacey Allen
Saratoga TODAY

Unlike most artists and interior designers who work with color and unchanging surfaces, Eric Czerw works with a moving, living medium. Czerw's paint brushes are fish and flora. His canvases are aquariums and vivariums.

Through his company, Bio-Fusion Designs, Czerw designs and builds custom aquariums, ponds, indoor and outdoor water features, terrariums and vivariums that fit unique dimensions, are made of unique materials and truly are pieces of art.

"I'm involved in with all these different displays and tanks, sort of a living interior design," said Czerw. "It is a fusion of so many different concepts. That is where the name Bio-Fusion comes from."

His passion for the work started in childhood, when he kept a number of tanks with freshwater fish, saltwater fish, reptiles and amphibians. As he got older, he continued his interest through the work he did in landscaping, for fun, he adds — where he learned to work with different plant species and how they would look integrated together. He has a background in the biological



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sciences, including fisheries and aquaculture and has been involved in wetland science and wildlife management. He also served as a

former research assistant and intern at the New England Aquarium.

"I was really put to the test (at the Aquarium) before even thinking of this business," said Czerw. "I got to use all my skills and practical experience throughout my schooling to create a live foods culture setup and an aquaculture exhibit in the Edgerton Research Laboratory in time for a National American Zoo Association conference that was being held there."

Czerw's projects so far have been as unique as his imagination, and clients, will let him. The most recent project he has completed is a 12-gallon exotic seahorse tank using living reef rock, sponges of various colors and macroalgae which not only adds to the design, but allows the seahorses to have a hitching post for the sea horses to wrap their tails around.

The other piece he's been spending his time on is for the upcoming Showcase of Homes, and he considers it to be an absolute masterpiece. The piece is based on one of his favorite habitats, the Amazon rainforest. The eight-foot long tank, which will combine both a

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A pond designed by Czerw.

terrarium and aquarium, will be featured in the Gabryshak Showcase home. The paludarium will basically be a small tropical rainforest.

"This is a way to bring it into the home and replicate it indoors, we will be able to set it up in such a way that it will be virtually self-sustaining and functioning as if you've taken a slice of nature and put it in the house," said Czerw.

The piece will feature special controllers, wiring and specific lights that will allow him to create a natural dawn to dusk sunlight effect that the plants would react to. He notes the lights will display the brilliance of the fish. Also featured in the tank, early morning fog, a mural behind to expand the landscape and randomly occurring rainstorms.

"This particular display really does showcase a multitude of the abilities I have and am able to bring to someone who is looking for a high end aquarium," said Czerw. But, he notes, an aquarium doesn't have to be large to be very intricate or artsy.

"When I sit down with clients or prospective clients I try to have a vision already in mind of what I'm going to do, I do this as an art form.

tures of the various species of fish, plants and animals involved in these particular setups really make a big difference and also to do conceptual and CAD drawings and sketches to show the dimensions and proportions, how the setup actually integrates in their home, business or restaurant."

Czerw is conservation-minded and prefers to use captive-bred or tank-reared species whenever possible and he loves to share his knowledge with the owners of the tanks, not only to help them with the care of their fish and plants, but to give them the ability to educate people who show interest in their tanks.

"It is important to me to involve the clients in the project education-wise so they truly understand what it is they have and so they're then able to communicate to someone who inquires. They're able to explain how intricate some of these filtration systems are, lighting systems and the biological layout, the design and the species featured.

"We have the ability to bring almost zoo- or aquarium-quality exhibits to your home or office to integrate some sort of actual artistry that you would typically see at a zoo or aquarium."

Czerw also offers updates to existing tanks, expert maintenance for tanks and consultation services. For more information, call 527-0426.

I can describe it all in so much detail, but the pictures truly are worth a thousand words and pic-



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