

# HARRINGTON

## COLLEGE OF DESIGN

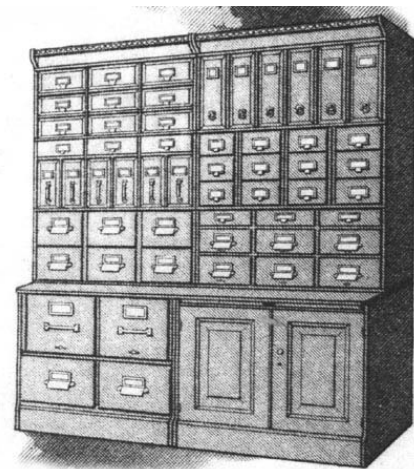
### ROOSTING

Jessica Riddle and Neelu McGibbon



When it came time to divide into teams for this senior living project, I wanted to work with Neelu. Not only is she my best bud in school, and we have a similar sense of style, she has very strong space planning and technical skills while I am more into the materials and styling of an environment. I'm Dorothy Draper to her Florence Knoll. In other words, we are an unstoppable team. Ha ha. All kidding aside, Neelu and I are simpatico, our skills complementary to one another, and we have a lot of fun working together.

When looking at our individual design programs for the senior living unit, I had made use of a lot of built-in furniture, and Neelu had a very compelling sliding-door-as-room-divider concept. We were able to combine those ideas in our new model, where the main wall that separates the bedroom from the living room is a combination of dual-sided built-ins and sliding glass doors. We were very happy with the result. We also spent a lot of time talking about cabinets in theory, history and practice. I was describing to her how I like dressers and cabinets that have lots of different drawer and compartment sizes,



because the size of those elements can be an organizing factor, dictating what size of items should go in what size of container—a place for everything and everything in its place. Neelu said that she likes the opening and closing aspect of cabinets—the surprise element. We thought of the *wunderkammers* of long ago centuries, which eventually evolved into museums. We wondered if there was a way to combine the old look of antique curiosity-style cabinets with the modern convenience of built-in furniture. We visited a couple of antique stores and the thought occurred to me: what if we sourced inexpensive used dressers and wardrobes—free-standing pieces—and mounted them to the walls? Or what if we deconstructed them into their components, and used those to fashion built-in pieces?. I believe this idea could be reproducible, yet individualistic as well. The fashion chain Urban Outfitters has had its “Urban Renewal” line for 20 years, where designers take basic vintage and deadstock clothing items like flannel shirts, denim, sheets and scarves, and make new clothing out of them which is distributed to all of the company’s stores. I’m not sure how successful the Urban Renewal line is, but as a business concept it is very appealing. Imagine if all of the furniture in Catholic Charities’ apartment buildings was comprised of upcycled vintage pieces? It would be great PR for them, and I imagine that residents would enjoy the individual quirks and patina of the pieces in their apartment, and appreciate the efforts their landlord made to save the environment. And of course, they will love to display their various curios in a unique way.

Senior citizens can have many items from their long history that they like to display—photographs of family, small gifts and other trinkets collected over the years. People also like to collect certain symbolic objects. Mary Bowden, the resident whose unit we are designing, has a collection of roosters displayed around her apartment. When we asked her about them, she simply said that she likes roosters, and so people have taken to giving her gifts in rooster form. But Mary is a very energetic, caring person who likes to rally her community. At least once a week she and her sisters prepare breakfast for the entire building, and she likes to reach out to community members and make sure they feel included. So in a way, Mary is a rooster for her community, calling for the others to wake up and start the day. As designers, we should pay attention to the symbols that are important to clients and residents—they can help guide the concept and details of any project. So with that in mind, I am naming our team “Roost.” I like this name!