



“He Made Me Look Better Than I Ever Looked Before” --- Bobette Hogue

For years I thought I alone could create the warm and inviting environment in my home that I so craved. I’m creative, my friends tell me I have good taste, this will be fun. With the Internet providing all the furniture and tile and lighting and window coverings that I could possibly need, I thought I could surely pull it off.

I selected a sofa, chairs, wall decor, etc. from on-line sites. Almost immediately, problems arose with damage due to delivery and product quality issues that I hadn’t anticipated. Trying to get problems solved was even more difficult, as I could never get anyone on the phone to help me. I was getting frustrated because I didn’t like what I had

put together, seating was uncomfortable and I wasn't achieving the look that I had envisioned. My job was getting busy and I couldn't devote enough time to it. These mistakes were starting to cost me money and time, so any savings I thought I would get by the DIY method were quickly evaporating. I decided to just stop, and for over a year the interior of my home had remained unfinished.

I'm not inclined to give up and upon a friend's recommendation I walked into District 5 Interiors in Charlotte to take a look around. While there, I met Lee Tripi, lead designer. I was a little reluctant at first because I thought using a designer would end up costing me a lot more money. But he asked me many questions about my home and my lifestyle and he actually listened to my responses. I still wasn't convinced until I saw photos of his work and read the testimonials from past clients. So then I finally decided to have him come over to the house and consult with me. Here's a little bit of our conversation:

BH: I've never worked with a designer, so I'm not sure you can help.

LT: Well you've told me that you've had a quite a challenge in making your home what you want it to be. After I do a complete assessment of your home and lifestyle preferences, I'll put a plan together that addresses those needs and saves you money and time by eliminating mistakes.

BH: But will I be able to afford it?

LT: I don't know how you could afford not to hire an expert. It can be tricky to do it on your own. With my thirty plus years of experience, knowledge and resources, I'm not

only going to surpass your vision for what it can be aesthetically, but within a reasonable pre-determined budget and completed in less than three months.

BH: I've heard that some designers want to impose their own personal preferences on the client. How will I know that what you present will enhance my lifestyle and liveability?

LT: It's been my life's work to understand what relates to the inhabitant and why. Not only will I make sound suggestions for the elements that make up the space, but I will tell you why they work specifically for you. I'll relate them back to what I've learned about what appeals to you. The design plan will only include elements with lasting

appeal and value. I try not to do anything trendy that will lose it's value quickly. You will make the final decisions based on a solid plan.

BH: I've had a hard time dealing with retailers and on-line resources. How do I know that if problems were to arise that they would be taken care of?

LT: I act as your advocate. I feel that I have a responsibility to represent you as if it were my own home. I communicate daily with my resources and contacts. They have proven over time and experience that they're reliable and if problems were to happen, solutions are offered quickly and not at the client's expense.

BH: Your photos are great. How do you achieve the wow factor?

LT: It's several things, really. There's the boring technical aspect, such as applying the basic fundamentals of composition like proper space planning, balance, contrast and asymmetry. Also knowing what will appeal to the eye. Creating an even distribution of light, utilizing materials of quality craftsmanship, and most important all elements working in harmony with each other.

One of the most common mistakes that people make on their own is the thought that each element needs to stand out and make a statement. The opposite is true actually, as each piece needs to work well with the other pieces and not compete for your attention. If there's one word to live by it's simply: Simplicity.