

Springfield

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Business Scene:

TAMARA BURRIS INTERIOR DESIGNS
AMERICAN AMBULANCE

The Home of
BOB BUSSING

Tamara Burris

Designing With Flair

By: Dawn Boyer



Tamara Burris has a flair for interior design. As a child, she used the boxes her dolls came in to make rooms that she could decorate. She chose the wallpaper and furniture for her parents' kitchen at the tender age of eight. Still, it didn't hit her until she went away to college that interior design would be her career. "My roommate in college was majoring in interior design. I was planning to be a fashion retailer, but once I saw the kinds of things that she was doing, I realized **'That's** what I wanted to do!'"

Scale and Balance

Certain basic principles of scale and balance always apply to a good design. It's Tamara's job to apply these principles and enhance the client's unique style. She says she often uses the client's ideas and interests as a starting point and builds on them in unexpected ways. "When they have an open mind, people will often say 'You know, I never thought of that. You're right!'"

"The average person hasn't studied design and doesn't think about design all day long like I do," she says. "They just don't have the time. So that's what I bring to the table: experience, training and fresh, new ideas."

Practicality

The first questions Tamara asks her clients are about their lifestyles. "Do you have children? Do you have pets? Do you eat on the sofa while you watch television? How do you spend most of your time? Once we identify how you would most enjoy living in your home, I design around that." She comes prepared to work with what they have, since nearly every client has a set budget in mind and a timeframe in which they would like the work to be done.

Vision

"I have this ability to 'see things done,' she says. "I can walk into a room and know: *that picture's too high, that clock*

would look better over here, things like that. When I'm working, I always have a vision of what the room will look like when it's finished." Even before she became an interior designer, her friends and co-workers knew about her special talent. "When I was working in an office, co-workers would bring me swatches or floor plans and ask me 'What would you do with this?'"

Strength in Numbers

Burris has developed trusting relationships with a number of local businesses. The group of professionals she works with includes Jane Frazier for drapery, Ash Street Upholstery, Madison's Furniture, Calhoun Carpets,

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and Marx Fireplace and Lighting. "I believe an interior designer is only as good as the people she works with, and I couldn't do what I do without them," she says. "They always call you back right away and always stand behind their products."

Finding Needles in Haystacks

In her search for unique pieces, Tamara frequents boutiques, antique stores and tag sales, locally and in cities like Chicago and Las Vegas. "I like to find unusual things that no one else has. I want every house to be unique." She creates her own decorative pieces as well, from custom beads to flower arrangements. For her niece's wedding, she fashioned floral chandeliers with custom beads she created herself.

Certain finds require a leap of faith. "Sometimes I need to purchase furniture directly out of a catalogue, sight unseen, because businesses just aren't stocking those large items anymore. People have to trust me and the business I'm buying from enough to order furniture from just a picture, and I know I have to back that up. I've been doing business for a long time, and people who know me know that I can be trusted.

Great Expectations

"One of the great things about my job is almost all of my business comes from referrals, so people know what to expect," Tamara says. The client sets the parameters for the work and the first meeting is always complimentary. Some people call her in for advice on where to hang pictures. Others want to design an entire room. "It's the follow through that is important," she says. "I always call people to keep them informed. If I receive bad news like customs problems causing a delay in delivering a piece of furniture, I let them know I'm working on it. Sometimes I will call just to let them know I'm thinking about them and working on ideas. But always, it's the follow through that is important."

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