



AN EYE FOR STYLE

A MANHATTAN- AND SEA BRIGHT-BASED BUSINESS OFFERS CONSULTATION SERVICES AS WELL AS FULL-SERVICE INTERIOR DESIGN. BY JESSICA JONES-GORMAN • PHOTOS BY ROBERT NUZZIE

After graduating from the Fashion Institute of Technology and working in both the interior design and fashion industries, Virginia Tesi had just begun a collaboration to create one of the first designer furniture websites when the nation was devastated by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"After 9/11, Internet businesses were in trouble and my position of creating one of the first designer furniture websites was dissolved," Tesi noted. "But instead of slipping into despair I focused on my dream job—what I really wanted to spend my life doing—and opportunity came knocking."

Literally.

Tesi's neighbor needed an apartment refresh and when she learned Tesi was out of work, she hired her on the spot.

"I didn't realize it at the time, but this was the launch of Virginia Tesi Design," she said.

It was a path Tesi had always wanted to follow. Maintaining an interest in aesthetics, fashion, interior design, and art,

she chose FIT because she knew the experience of living in New York City would inspire her daily. When she took a position at a high-end furniture retail company, she realized that helping combine beauty and function in people's everyday lives was what made her tick.

"I want people to come home and love where they live and have it reflect who they are," Tesi said.

An Allied member of the American Society of Interior Designers, the owner's love of art history and fine arts has sent her traveling abroad on several occasions to study the art, design, and architecture of different cultures and periods. She conjures those inspirations to help create spaces that are functional as well as beautiful as she works on comprehensive interior design services, new construction, kitchen and bath design, space planning, floor plans, custom furniture and window treatment design, project management, or home styling.

"The interior design process is a lot like dating," Tesi explained. "I get to

know as many details as possible about my clients' lifestyle, their needs, tastes, time line, budgets. My approach is to enhance their lifestyle, so I show them options and advise them on how they can reach their goals."

One of the most important qualities an interior designer must possess, Tesi said, is the ability to listen to the client and then create the space based on his or her wants and needs. She recognizes the importance of follow-up service and has created strong relationships that have helped her build a strong client base through referrals. After purchasing a home in Monmouth County three years ago, she was ready to expand her business to New Jersey.

"I lived in NYC and had purchased a home in Sea Bright for sun and surf on summer weekends," she said. "I was so enamored with the area because it was so close to New York yet still had such a small-town feeling with family-owned shops and restaurants, live music every night of the week, and plenty of arts and culture."

Tesi was so taken with Sea Bright, in fact, that she decided to make it her primary residence. But three weeks after moving in, Hurricane Sandy hit.

"You would think having five feet of water in my home would make me pack up and go back to the city," Tesi said. "But it afforded me the opportunity to meet so many warm, welcoming, and helpful people—it only confirmed my decision to open an annex office here."

So she built Virginia Tesi Design, Inc., in Monmouth County, and continued to work in New York. She was soon chosen by the Visiting Nurse Service to design a room in Blithewald, the Stately Homes by-the-Sea Designer Show House.

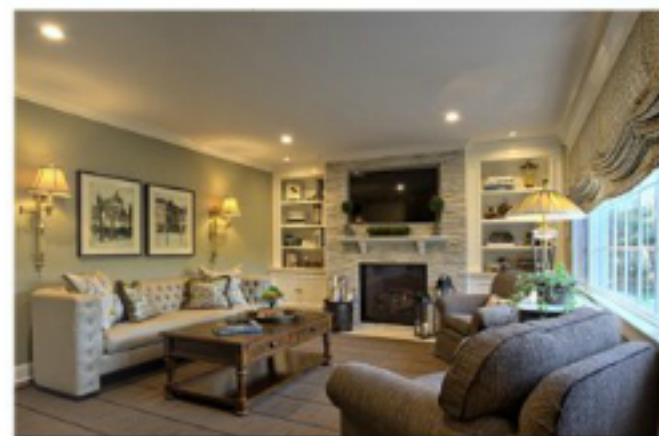
"Unfortunately, the Show House was destroyed by a fire days before the opening," Tesi said. "Knowing that I would not reap the financial benefits of my investment, but yet again, a sad situation afforded me the opportunity to meet other designers in the area as well as secure a team I would need here to properly execute any of my designs."

Tesi was introduced to Virginia O'Connor of Rumson, whom she credits with showing her the ins and outs of the area, its people, and their businesses.

"My mantra is that unexpected setbacks can bring new opportunities to move forward and bring new and positive possibilities," said Tesi. "I find value and fulfillment in every circumstance and embrace every setback as an opportunity to move forward."

And while interior design has changed and been greatly affected by technology over the last few years, Tesi explained that this does not affect the way she does business.

"New technology, home shows, blogs...they do not change what I bring to my clients' lives," the designer said. "In fact, an educated client realizes the benefits of saving money, but also of professional assessment and a wide variety of resources and contacts...together, they'll provide the 'Wow!' factor. Thinking outside of the box is what I do all day." •



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