



FROM HOUSE TO HOME

BY JOYCE TURNER-GIONET
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON HARTOG

“When other little girls were running outside to play, I was reorganizing my bedroom,” laughs Tina Singh, owner of **Lionsgate Design**, a thriving Port Credit interior design and decorating studio. After 10 years as a successful project manager for a leading telecom company, her artistic side was beginning to protest. Tina decided it was time to find that little girl again. She dreamt of days filled with colours, patterns and textures, a design studio alive with creativity and a portfolio of classic interior spaces. A typical Leo, Tina is warm and personable, radiating natural energy. A mom of two young children with a husband who frequently travels for business, her days are full.

Tina recently finished designing the family’s 5,000 sq. ft. Lorne Park luxury home – a custom build from the ground up. “Home is our sanctuary,” says Tina. It’s a personal philosophy that has translated into a successful business mantra. “People love their homes, love working on them, love showing them off. At Lionsgate, we approach every space as a one-off. No two clients are alike and we treat their spaces the same way,” she says. The explosive popularity of design and décor TV shows indicates she’s right; we are indeed crazy about our spaces. Tina delivers a caution: “Remember, there are labour costs associated with those TV makeovers and they aren’t always made obvious.” When thinking about a custom build, reno or even a simple room makeover, know your budget. Tina suggests tacking 10 per cent onto big jobs for those unexpected expenses

that always crop up. “You never know what’s hiding behind walls or ceilings that will need to be removed, refaced or replaced,” she says.

Lionsgate Design started as a storefront with clients seen by appointment only. As the business grew, the space became more of a warehouse. Kulbir, Tina’s husband and an invaluable asset on the business side, encouraged her to move to her current location, a studio on Lakeshore Road with higher visibility, a more polished patina and a more intimate atmosphere for consultations.

There are many aspects to Tina’s business: property staging, interior design and decorating, custom builds, holiday/event decorating and colour consultation.

In property staging or as Tina refers to it, “lifestyle merchandising,” her role is to make a home stand out in the competitive resale market. The first stage in “staging” is to de-clutter and de-personalize. “I tell clients we’re selling a dream, we want buyers to fall in love with your house and to do that we must keep personal paraphernalia to a minimum,” she says. One client loved her home so much after the staging she didn’t sell it. One of Tina’s favourite jobs was an empty 500 sq. ft. condo in Toronto’s Liberty Village. It had been languishing on the market for months. Tina researched the area’s buyer demographic, then went to work. Everything brought in for the staging – furniture, fabric rolls, jackets, scarves, rhinestone touches on shoes, even a vintage

seamstress mannequin – was meant to appeal to hip, young females with a love of fashion and city nightlife. The condo sold in four days for well over asking price.

Sometimes clients want a simple room makeover. One client wanted to replace her dated buffet and dining-room table – estimated replacement cost about \$4,000. Tina suggested refinishing and \$900 later, the delighted client had a “like-new” set in a stunning Espresso finish trimmed with Swarovski crystal hardware.

Then there’s the custom build in which Tina works with the clients, architect, builder and her own established trades to design the entire home from the ground up. From a practical perspective, a house is simply a series of physical spaces linked together. Tina’s talents turn those spaces into a home. Can the rest of us achieve this alone? Perhaps a talented few, but most will benefit from Tina’s expertise.

So how does this busy Leo find balance? “An uncluttered, monochromatic palette, with pops of colour to keep me sane and smiling,” she says as her arm sweeps up and around to indicate the layout of her sensational new home. “To me, a house is a home first, a sanctuary where at the end of a busy day I can take off my designer’s hat, throw it on the hat rack and spend time with my family. I’ve done my job if my clients feel the same way when I am finished with their home,” she smiles. **OH**

