

I recently used the services of Bya Patzner who owns Category of 1 Interiors, I "discovered" her after reading about her and her home in the Shanghai Daily.

She helped us transform our new temp home in Shanghai. I am pleased with her assistance, as not only did she use a lot of the stuff we owned but had put away in boxes, she put a new life in items we already owned.

She helped organize our home to make it cozy and personable. The place we rented had furniture from the landlord, but few things matched (and a lot were old) and it was also stuff that didn't reflect our lifestyle.

We didn't spend a lot of money, but learned a lot from the process. Bya's expertise on color (paint is probably the cheapest investment you can make to transform a home, and I didn't believe her initially, but am totally sold now that I saw what she did to our home with just a few cans of paint) truly helped us make Shanghai our temporary permanent home. Even if it is for a year or two.

She took me shopping at her usual vendors (she doesn't get a cut from the referrals based on my query). Changing the frames to paintings we already own, and adding a few plants throughout the house, helped give our place "character". All this took a couple of weeks - no thanks to the rain that came down in late November which resulted in it taking longer for the paint to dry. I didn't end up taking on all her recommendations, but I took most of it, and am really pleased with the outcome. My husband who travels a lot, loves our master bedroom, because it gives him a sanctuary to relax from work, away from the hustle bustle of life.

She has a few local contacts, from painters to contractors, with whom she has used for years. They cost more than usual. I did my homework and shopped around. An example are the painters she recommended who cost about 20% more than market rate, but they have been instructed to follow her method of painting. Basic things such as using the right brush (goat hair, not pig hair), the direction in which the 1st and 2nd coat of paint should be applied. I had a few "dramas" during the process, nothing unexpected if you have worked with local hourly workers before... but we managed to work through it. Patience is required, as not all of the workers (who do not work under her) follow instructions outlined by Bya.

So the overall process took a little longer than she told me - but I chalk it to Bya being a high energy person and I think her timelines sometimes are based on the speed she does things, not the rate most people do things... :)

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