



Photos by Mike Lauterborn

Kelly Sohigian sits a spell on the front steps of her Fairfield home, with its railings sporting holiday garland.

REWORKING A SPACE?

Call Kelly for creative interior design

By Mike Lauterborn

OFTEN TAPPED BY FRIENDS and neighbors for her good ideas on decorating, Fairfielder Kelly Sohigian took the plunge back in 2005 and hatched her own affordable home décor and interior design business – a successful enterprise that now serves Fairfield

and Westchester Counties.

FCL sat down recently with the design diva in her beachy living room to tap her for the details on her thriving business, learn how she approaches a job and discover the excellent contractors with whom she collaborates.

“I don’t want people to be intimidated by the words ‘interior decorator’ or ‘home design,’” Sohigian said

straight off the bat. “I approach a job with a very flexible plan. I like to work with clients, and understand not only their likes and personality but the mechanics of their living environment.”

The designer gives her clients homework through an online portal called Houzz, which helps them articulate what they want. “A lot of times,

people have difficulty expressing what they are looking for design-wise," she said. "Through Houzz, they can look through 'idea books' and pull and compile visual references into their own folder that we can then discuss. It's a very simple process."

One of her recent clients bought a traditional Colonial home that she wanted to update and modernize. "She thought she wanted dark wood floors at first," Sohigian said. "But after I reviewed her idea folder, I recognized that, in fact, she preferred a light wood floor. She was surprised and then pleasantly pleased, as it was the right direction for her ultimately."

Kelly had an early start in the design industry, but with clothing retailers at first. In the early 1980s, she worked at Bloomingdale's in New York, first as an intern in their holiday program then assistant buyer and on up the ladder.

Then it was on to neckwear, working in fashion merchandising for

Christian Dior. She topped that as a senior salesperson representing Italian silk printing mills, before starting a family in 1997. By this point, the Bronx-born designer had migrated from Scarsdale, NY, to Norwalk, then Fairfield.

"My family became a priority but I had the itch to continue to pursue my design-oriented passions," she said. "Neighbors would ask my opinion on home design and I would go pick fabrics and recommend styles to them."

Thinking of work opportunities that would allow flexibility while earning an income, Sohigian got a real estate license. "I would go to people's homes and suddenly see opportunity," she said. "That's when the light bulb went off."

Now, in her client process, she does a house walk-through, confirms the desired aesthetic and discusses budget and timeframe. Then she taps preferred local contractors like Carlos Sabatini of New Improvements;

Ximena, her Trumbull "workroom" manager; and Electrician Mike Gianetti, to help her with follow-up.

"I work with top manufacturers on a wholesale basis and pass along the savings on furniture, accessories, lighting, rugs, tile and granite," she said. "I can help stage a home as well, to get it ready to put on the market."

Does Kelly have holiday design cred? You bet. For the past six years, she has decorated a room at the Burr Homestead as part of the Christmas Tree Festival showcase and she decorates for St. Anthony's of Padua Church.

Soon, Kelly will be appearing on TV – HGTV, to be specific, in a spring episode of "House Hunter Renovations".

Call Kelly today to refine, refresh and renew.

To contact Kelly about designing or redesigning your space, call 203-258-5709, email Kelly@kellydesignsofct.com or visit www.KellyDesignsofCT.com