

STAGING & REDESIGN

PUBLICATION



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MEET LIZ PENSIERO
LIZ PENSIERO STAGING & DESIGN
NEW CANAAN, CT



Liz Pensiero, Owner & Principle Stager of Liz Pensiero Staging and Designs, LLC is an award-winning, Professional Home Stager based out of Stamford, Connecticut specializing in both Occupied and Vacant Staging throughout lower Fairfield County, Connecticut. Liz has been Staging & photo styling homes of all styles and price points since 2014. She is a 2020 recipient of the Real Estate Staging Association "Top 100 Most Influential People" as well as a 3-times "Best of Houzz" winner. As a lifelong resident, Liz has been immersed in the local Real Estate market for years and understands the unique fabric of the Connecticut housing cycle. She has become a valuable partner for many of the area's Top Real Estate Agents who turn to her for Staging at all levels. Liz believes Staging is a marketing tool meant to help homeowners achieve top dollar, regardless of listing price. Some of her favorite projects are family homes that have been lived in for years. "Those homes that are filled with stories and memories and beautiful, well-made, mid-century modern furniture can be the most exciting transformations. It is a thrill to be able to bring those homes back to life and introduce them to the world again. I absolutely love being able to incorporate some of the family's pieces into my designs! It makes for a unique and curated look that impresses both in person and through the camera lens. As a Home Stager, we are being invited into someone's home to help them disconnect and release it to the next owner... that is a true honor". As a wife of nearly 23 years and mom to three ranging in ages 10 to 20; life is busy, full, and truly blessed.

Q: TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF AND WHERE YOU ARE IN BUSINESS TODAY.

I have been in business since 2014. I started out small, just doing occupied projects through word of mouth. My first job paid \$200 and I was thrilled. Today, my first-quarter sales have tripled my total annual sales of just two years ago! I do believe that the pandemic has played a large part in that. Our Real Estate market and our proximity to NYC have just exploded since our lockdown was lifted last May. I believe this tremendous growth can't be sustained forever, so for now, we ride the wave while we can.

Q: FROM BEGINNING UNTIL NOW, HOW HAS YOUR BUSINESS CHANGED?

Brand recognition is probably the biggest. I have tried to stay fairly consistent in my brand message. By keeping a constant rotation of emails, networking, advertising, and social media, I have been able to grow my brand within my market. In the past few years, the quality of work has changed. Projects are larger and the work seems to be even more important because Home Staging is better understood today than it was just a few years ago. The amount of work is much more consistent. Rather than waiting weeks between jobs, the work has turned into multiple projects 5 days a week.

Q: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE STARTING OUT?

Start slowly and thoroughly, learn your local Real Estate market. Remember, we are ultimately Real Estate consultants. Our primary job is to assist Real Estate Agents and homeowners to sell quickly and at the highest price possible. Make sure you are proving yourself to be a knowledgeable and valuable resource to your audience. Understand if there is low inventory. How long are homes staying on the market?

Who are the big Agents in your area? Is the house on the main road? Do they have water or sewer issues? Do they sit on wetlands? How is the school district? Is there building, traffic, or construction concerns in the neighborhood? If you are asking people to trust you to help sell their home, know your stuff! Only then can you confidently go into the home and give constructive Staging help. Create relationships with a few key Agents in your area. Realtors are essentially your way in! They know when properties are getting ready to list. They will be the ones to refer you. Provide special Realtor pricing to these key Agents. Service their client needs first so you become their go-to Stager.

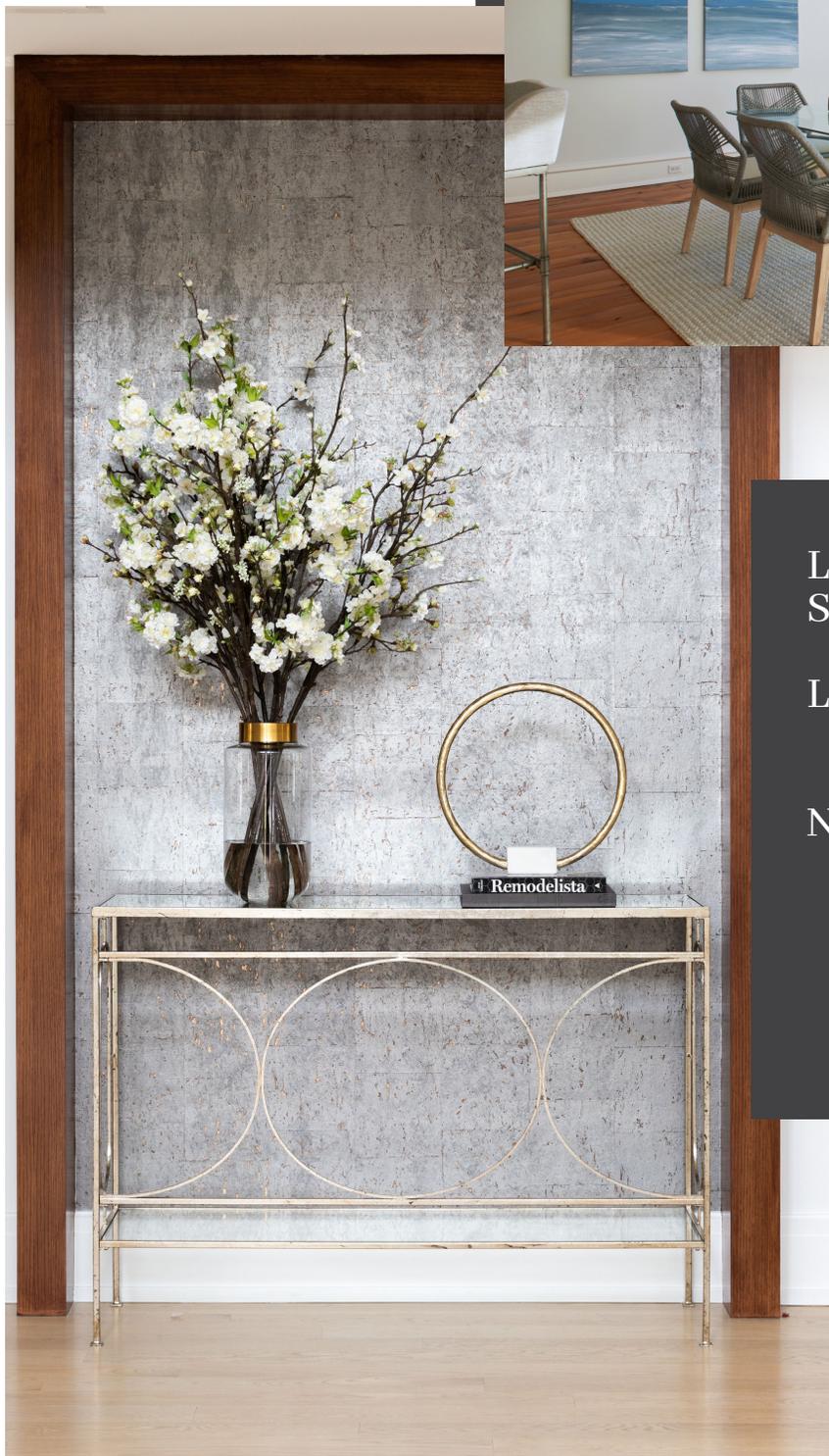
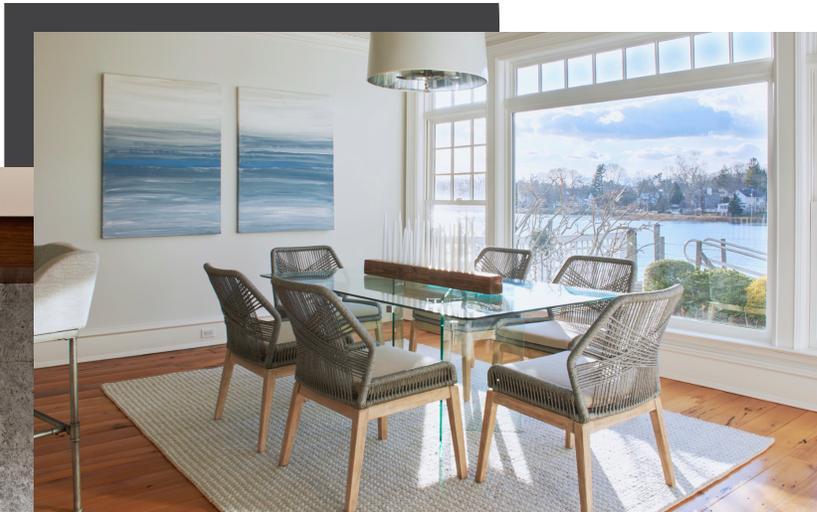
Q: HOW ABOUT SOME ADVICE FOR THE PERSON DOING MOST EVERYTHING IN THEIR BUSINESS?

I currently do almost everything! I wish I had the advice! I made my first hire about 2 years ago because I just got too busy to do it all alone. My assistant handles most of my social media and is with me on all projects. She knows my business well so I can delegate when necessary. I also partnered with a local moving company about a year ago. That was a lifesaver! If I have any advice, it would be to delegate where you feel comfortable. We can't do it all; however, we can do things better if we can find someone we trust to help. I'm still learning how.

Q: WHAT SUGGESTIONS DO YOU HAVE ON MANAGING INVENTORY AT AN EARLY PHASE AND MOVING TO A MORE SEASONED BUSINESS?

The biggest part of this business is not design but inventory management! One of the biggest growing pains I found was learning how to have the right inventory available at the right time and at the right price.

SPOTLIGHT



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My advice would be to start slow! If you are going to make the investment, make sure you buy pieces that are neutral enough to be used multiple times, but won't become stale or too taste specific over time. Speak to your local storage facilities and work out long-term pricing with them. Many have the first month free! Invest first in accessories that are easy to store and change frequently. Buy local! Facebook Marketplace has really elevated their game lately! It is a wonderful place to find items such as gently used coffee tables & dining tables. I still find wholesale freight costs to be astronomical and Covid has caused huge shipping delays. Try buying smaller pieces from your local area when starting out. I also have collaborated with several local artists and photographers that give their pieces to me on loan for my Staging projects. Due to Covid precautions, many galleries are closed and therefore most artists have a huge inventory of artwork they can't do anything with. These mutually beneficial relationships help keeps costs down, artwork inventory fresh, and help display their most recent pieces. My advice, get creative!

Q: WHAT PROCESSES NEED TO BE IN PLACE IN A BUSINESS SUCH AS YOURS?

Contracts are important. Remember you are going into people's homes. We are being trusted to move their things around, change things from room to room, tuck things away in drawers, etc. Oftentimes, we are referring painters, bringing in movers, and hiring organizational consultants. Make sure you have a contract in place so you are covered for ANY situation that arises. Research insurance coverage. RESA has some very affordable options. I always make sure that I have the homeowner's (or responsible party's) credit card on file which I hold as security against any damage to my inventory. Having a solid contract in place that requires a signature shows that you are a serious professional business and not a hobbyist.

Q: WHAT ARE SOME LESSONS LEARNED?

I've learned that I don't have to be the biggest or the best. When I was first starting out, it was very easy to feel intimidated by the larger, more well-known Staging firms. Those established, multi-warehouse entities filled-to-the-brim with a ton of gorgeous white furniture! I pivoted a few years back and decided, rather than striving to keep up with them, I would create a business model that worked for me. It was then, my business started to flourish. Don't spend your time competing; spend your time providing quality work in a manner that works for you. There is no right or wrong way. If you are thriving and happy (and making money!) then continue on the path that works for you. Be the best at what you do... not what your competition does. I feel, as humans; we are always learning. There is always something new to learn, no matter how long we've been doing something. I've learned that we evolve. The Staging I did when I was first beginning was not nearly as confident as my work is now. I look forward to creating new and better work for new clients. The more we learn, the more we have to offer our clients.

ANY LAST-MINUTE ADVICE FOR OUR MEMBERS?

One of the best things I have done in my career is join our professional organizations. Home Staging can be very isolating. Our peers and colleagues are often seen as our competition. I often feel as if I work alone in a bubble. As humans, we are social creatures by nature, and, at times; I miss the ability to have peer interaction. By joining HSRA, RESA, and IAHSR, I have found the ability to reach out to other Home Stagers. In the tech-saturated & Covid weary world of today, Facebook groups and Instagram have become the new water cooler. Take advantage of this new way of connecting and networking. Post pictures, ask questions, provide insight for others and contribute where you can. You'll be glad you did!

