

Call Room Service for decorative boost

By Cathleen Collins Lee
special writer

THEY DIDN'T paint or wallpaper. They didn't buy any furniture or order any window treatments.

But Judy and Sherwood Leitman of Southfield recently had their living room transformed in the space of a day from an ordinary space to a rich and interesting one: more open, more colorful and alive with a mix of objects from all over the world.

What the Leitmans did was commission Mary Lee Marcus-Nelson, part of a small but growing group around the country called visual coordinators, to spend an entire day rearranging the furniture, pictures and decorative objects they already had in their condominium living room.

Although she isn't a trained decorator, Nelson feels she has a gift for bringing out the beauty in what people own by the way she groups and places furnishings.

"Judy and Sherwood were just stymied, and most people are," Nelson said. "They don't know what to do with what they have. It's not what you have, but where you put it that's important."

NELSON, WHO calls her business "Room Service" and lives in Union Lake, has been working as a visual coordinator for the past five years. She charges \$350-\$500 a room.

She says her services are especially appreciated by newlyweds, people who have moved, and older couples moving from a large home to a smaller one.

Although she focuses on room rearrangements like she did for the Leitmans, she also will pick out paint and wallpaper and shop for furniture, usually at a rate of \$45 an hour.

Before Nelson arrived on the scene, the Leitmans' large living room was nice, but predictable.

A beige corduroy sectional sofa was arranged at right angles in front of a large window. A three-piece wall unit occupied a nearby wall. The large pieces of furniture dominated one end of the room, leaving the far side feeling like an afterthought.

The Leitmans also had many interesting pieces of antique furniture and decorative objects from Asia, Mexico and Europe, along with Judy's own watercolors. But they were scattered along the edges and in the corners of the rooms, where they had little impact. What's more, the beige carpet and off-white walls didn't add any color.

THE FIRST thing Nelson did was clear the decks. With her assistant, Jan Miltz, also of Union Lake, she took down all the pictures and moved all but the biggest pieces of furniture completely out of the room. She took stock of items she could pull from closets or other rooms in the condominium. And then she was ready to get to work.

She angled the sectional away from



Shown is the Leitmans' living room before Mary Lee Marcus-Nelson spent the day rearranging it. The large

pieces of furniture are all on one side of the room so that the far side feels like wasted space.



photos by JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

Mary Lee Marcus-Nelson angled the furniture to open up the space in the Leitmans' large living room. She brought interesting pieces forward where they would

have more impact. She also created different levels of interest by adding tall arrangements.

the window and pulled it closer to the far side of the room, opening up more of the space and creating a more interesting line. She also moved one of the wall units and a large buffet to the other side of the room so the room would feel more balanced.

Once the major pieces were in place, Nelson began playing around with all sorts of combinations of the smaller objects. She pulled a large Asian statue of a seated woman out of a corner and right into the center of the

room, in front of the window and at an angle to the couch.

She also brought forward two antique brass floor lamps, placing them on either end of the sectional. In front of the lamp near the window, she placed a small, round wooden table with a black marble top. On it were a tall vase and two crystals, which made an attractive combination.

ONE OF Nelson's most unusual changes was placing a small end table

right on top of the buffet. This arrangement added height to the room, and became the backdrop for an interesting grouping.

Nelson set an old violin inside the table legs diagonally. On top of the table, she placed a small plate in a stand, a candle and a vase with twigs in it.

An Oriental ginger jar lamp and a painting set on the buffet balanced the

Please turn to Page 11