

The Profile

EYE FOR DESIGN



Insights from Libby Rush

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Special to The Voice-Tribune

It’s a beautiful sunny, crisp day as I enter Bittners to meet Libby Rush. Holiday décor glistens in the showroom. As Libby assists a client in choosing a fabric pattern for a bedroom design, I browse the collection of unique pieces Bittners has to offer and venture into the newest addition, the modern, chic Urban Showroom.

Striking white ceiling and walls set the vibe for this city chic environment with unique, urban furniture. A chandelier made of white antlers catches my eye hanging over a beautiful round table.

Libby warmly greets me and we settle into regal high back chairs in a comfortable room adorned with cream and gold tones. As our conversation begins, Libby begins to share her keen eye and extensive knowledge of design.

Why did you choose to go into design?

Design actually chose me! I had an opportunity after graduating from college to take some business classes at Sullivan Business School, which opened a door for a part-time position doing appraisals at Bittners. That role eventually turned into a full-time position. I worked on everything from buying, furniture and design to attending buying trips and handling sales on the floor – I did whatever needed to be done. I wore many hats. I don’t think I realized until later in life what an incredible opportunity it was and how much hands-on experience I gained. I truly found my passion in interior design.

What is your education and background?

I always loved art and studied art history at Sweet Briar College in Lynchburg, Virginia. I studied abroad my junior year in Florence, Italy, which truly shaped my sense of design style. After 10 years as a Bittners’ designer, I left in 1985 to join Ewald Design Associates with Giampaolo Bianconcini, who had a retail shop with design consulting on the side. We ran that together for 25 years, but I decided to come back home to Bittners in 2011 as Vice President of Residential Design.

What do you love about design?

I really gravitate toward the challenges and rewards of design projects because I enjoy the people connection. Fortunately, once you’ve had a career in this, you’re able to do multiple homes for individuals and their families, many of which I now call my close friends. I enjoy the generational aspect of it.

I also love that design is such a team building situation. If you’re building or renovating a home, it’s not just one person. You have the client, designer, contractor and all

the many sub-contractors working together to finish the project. As a designer you are put in a position to be the point guard on many projects, and you have the responsibility to keep it all going.

What are some current design trends you see?

A very classic, timeless look with some unexpected twists is a current design trend. I think that keeps a room interesting. The twist can come from art, color, accessories, fabric, lighting. I’ve worked with two projects recently that I’ve been able to implement a lot of reclaimed wood in the flooring, furniture and ceilings.

What is your design philosophy?

Buying the best quality you can afford is so important. Develop a plan and implement as you feel financially comfortable, that way you stick to your vision and not get sidetracked with expensive mistakes. Less is more.

What inspires you in design?

Taking time to live life every day will inspire your work. If you stop and look around you, you can find amazing things. I’m always excited to learn – from everything and everyone.

Having a beautiful showroom at Bittners every day I do not take for granted. It helps me bring more beautiful things to clients – they can see it, touch it, experience it. It not only inspires, it’s a welcome addition.

What are some of your design strengths at Bittners?

I’m very much about learning and gleaning information from others and appreciating everyone’s strengths here at Bittners. The vision that Douglas Riddle has for our business and how he pushes all of us to take it to new heights is simply amazing. I love being surrounded by talented designers and support staff, with a beautiful revolving inventory of products and the unparalleled talent of our master craftsman in the custom design shop. It’s a remarkable team effort.

What are some of your career highlights?

My 25 years as a business partner with Giampaolo Bianconcini

and learning how to run a retail and design business with him. My recent involvement in a barn/weekend home renovation in Eminence, KY is also a highlight. It was something out of the ordinary and uniquely challenging and I loved that. We used cypress trees that were on the property to build the beds that are in the home and a local stonemason artisan hand cut each stone used. Reclaimed

wood was placed throughout, including a red door that was taken from another famous barn in the area.

Who inspires you?

My mother and my father, Jane & John Stough. My mother has lived the last nine years with Parkinson’s Disease and she handles her every day challenges with such grace and dignity. My father, for his humility, strength of character and his work ethic. For both of them, family always comes first.

What type of community service are you involved in?

I’ve served on the Parkinson’s Support Center of Kentuckiana Board for four years and have helped to develop the Denim & Diamonds event for the organization. I was the Denim & Diamonds Chair from 2009-2010 and am now serving as the current Design Chair. I also served as the Design Chair for the Derby Gala benefitting the Kentucky Derby Museum.

What you are grateful for?

My family, friends and clients that push me to be the best that I can be. I’m also grateful for my husband Noel and my two children and their spouses, Caroline & Gil Myers and William & Chloe Rush. I appreciate all that I have learned from Giampaolo Bianconcini through the years as a wonderful mentor and for William Bittner Schneider who opened up the world of design for me. I couldn’t be more thankful.

What is something that no one knows about you?

I was the May Day Queen at Kentucky Home School (now Kentucky Country Day School) and I was on my high school’s golf championship team.

Q&A with LIBBY RUSH

- Hobbies:** CrossFit, UK Basketball, walking with my dog
- Favorite book:** Snow Flower and the Secret Fan by Lisa See
- Favorite movie:** Funny Girl
- Best restaurant:** Wild Egg’s for Breakfast, Seviceh and Garga’s in Florence, Italy
- Favorite vacation spot:** Grand Cayman Islands and Italy
- Favorite artist:** Italian Renaissance Era
- Favorite wine:** Mollydooker the Boxer Shiraz; Chateauneuf-Du-Pape by Chateau Mont Redon
- Best advice you ever received:** My Dad would always sign everything YCDAIYT - You Can do Anything If You Try