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New designs for spring

By Amanda Eck



Photos provided

The spring season can bring lots of surprises. Sometimes the weather can change wildly from day to day. Just down the hill from me, cherry blossoms bloomed on one side of the street - and not until weeks later on the other. My favorite spring surprises, however, are often found on the other side of the country.

I recently returned from North Carolina where I attended the spring furnishings market at High Point. The High Point Market is the largest furnishings industry trade show in the world, bringing more than 75,000 people to High Point every six months. With more than 2,000 exhibitors and 11.5 million square feet of showrooms, it's like Disney World for interior designers. I always return from market with innovative ideas for assembling spaces.

Coming back with new ideas is easy though. You'd almost have to be asleep to not have that happen. As nice as those fresh, creative ideas are, they aren't the true "gold nuggets" of the visit. When I go, I spend extra effort looking for the surprises - the things you'd never expect to find both pleasant and unpleasant in

ways only that unique situation found at market can provide.

The first thing I look for at High Point is scale. Not the size of the place - although it is simply massive. Your feet remind you at the end of every day how big it is, and I think I broke my fit bit from walking so much. But seriously, I'm looking for how big things are in relationship to the other. Is that sofa arm too low or too high, or how far you sink into it when you're sitting down.

It is not always easy to comprehend the scale of an item (especially lighting) from a website or catalog, so getting to see these pieces up close makes all the difference. Speaking of lighting, I noticed that brass/gold fixtures are not going anywhere anytime soon. We are seeing lots of iron/metal finishes as well as painted metal in an array of colors.

I also look for comfort and quality. And then there's the quality of construction. Opening drawers to feel if they glide with ease or if I have to put some muscle into it, doors that open and close easily, and looking at the underside of pieces to determine if there are globs of glue. The old adage you get what you pay for still stands true. And I will admit, many do not make the cut.

Upholstery is another item that can only be felt and experienced in person. I am a huge advocate for quality upholstery that is made in the USA and unfortunately local furnishings stores have limited options to choose from. I like to bring my clients the best their money can buy and many times those pieces are not sitting on a showroom floor to see. So, I make sure when I am at market to sit, bounce, lay and even roll on furniture to see if it makes the cut. You never know what something is like until you're physically interacting with it. Not only is the sit test important, but the feel and durability of the fabric needs to be considered. No use in having a high-quality piece of furniture upholstered in a fabric that will not stand the wear and tear of everyday life. I try and use a Crypton Home fabric any chance I get.

Those are not my favorite surprises though. The very best surprises are the ones I call the "one-offs."

Hunting for the one-off is like being a talent scout. You're sifting and sorting through dozens of hopefuls trying to find the ones that really provide something intriguing. They are sometimes new players who are visionaries with a product or service I'd never seen before. They could also be a stalwart optimist who's been to market several times before offering a product I'd seen but now it comes with a new twist or use that made it relevant where before it was only forgettable. My favorite one-off is the reclusive artisan who just recently found their courage to show off their skill.

Here's to hoping you all have a wonderful, surprise-filled spring friends. Until next time!



Photos provided



As the Owner and Principal Designer of Lamorinda-based Amanda Carol Interiors, Amanda Eck believes your home's interior should be both approachable and well-appointed. She often asserts, "Beauty is a necessity." With a distinct sense of style that mixes contemporary and classic design she fashions spaces that are both elegant and inviting. Her design aesthetic is inspired by anything visual but especially fashion, architecture and art. Visit <http://amandacarolinteriors.com> for more design ideas.

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