

# Style & Substance

Carving a Design Niche,  
Helping Clients Heal

Photos by ROBERT MACIAS



Designing for women who have lost spouses creates "memorable experiences for me, and all these women are remarkable," says designer Doreen Mack.

**B**lessed with an amazing marriage of 30 years, there is not a day that goes by that my husband and I do not thank God for each other," says designer Doreen Mack of Interiors by Doreen/Lofty Expressions Inc.

It is because of this bond that Mack feels deep compassion for women who have lost their spouses, and is drawn to create interiors for them to help them grow through their grief.

"One of the most rewarding facets of my profession is working with women in their 50s to 60s who have lost their spouses," she explains. "I have a passion of working with them in the design of their homes to help them let go by moving from the past and into the present."

Mack shared with *Vision* some thoughts about her unique design niche:

**Why these clients:** "It is especially rewarding to watch these clients emotionally grow as they discover who they are, their wants and needs and to see it unfold in the design of their home."

**The concept:** "Changing their environment greatly changes their lives. It is truly a difficult time in life, and I don't recommend any changes for the first year. After a year, they have worked through a great deal emotionally and are ready to move forward. Some clients have sold their homes. Others will remodel or redecorate their entire home. The one thing that is certain is that these women are eager for a new beginning."

**What you do:** "This is a very vulnerable time, and trust is a huge issue. I am there to guide them through the process and oversee the project from beginning to end. In remodeling, we begin with construction first, lighting, new counters, cabinets, flooring, painting and faux painted walls. The icing on the cake is the window fashions."



This Tahoe-style family room that opens up to the kitchen would work well with a place on a lake or in the woods. "This room resonates my client's personality," says Doreen Mack. "The fireplace river stone was washed with colors to coordinate with the room and peach-colored wall. Silhouettes are used for the blinds, with the sculptures bent to conform to the windows."



“From the inside looking out, the window frames one’s view to the outside world, to bring in beauty, light and life. Outside in, it is a welcoming invitation that brings in warmth.”

**About the window fashions:** “As the eyes are the window to our soul, our windows are the eyes to our home. Window fashions are a process within themselves. From fabrics, textures, colors and window fashion design—this process brings out the essence of these women, if appropriately guided by a window fashion professional. This is the beginning of pulling a whole room together:

“Starting with our leading fabric for window treatments, this will set the tone for the entire room, from paint colors to accessories, throw pillows and area rugs. From the inside looking out, the window frames one’s view to the outside world, to bring in beauty, light and life. Outside in, it is a welcoming invitation that brings in warmth.”

**Client rewards:** “By the time we are done with this process, my client is more independent, confident and ready to tackle the next phase—dealing with the personal items. ... In re-doing their home and making design decisions, it has taught them to let go and dream; and in doing so, they have discovered their new identity, the person within. The process is now complete and my client is ready to move forward with more confidence and self-esteem in an environment that feels safe and reflects her image.”

**Designer rewards:** “These experiences have been just as rewarding for me in watching a client grow and become her own person with a new life and hope for the future. These are memorable experiences for me and all these women are remarkable.” **V**



CLOSER LOOK



Interiors by Doreen/  
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Designer Doreen Mack created a soft cornice box with contrasting jabots in gold silk beaded fabric to frame the outside view from her client's living room. Faux painted walls add to the effect.

[ opposite top ] The old world, Tuscany look of this master bedroom, designed by Doreen Mack, features a floral Empire valance, with a stripe contrast lining and a large welt at the top and bottom. The welt is knotted over each horn with tassels at the long point. Silhouette blinds add privacy. The bed is custom-made, with coordinated bedding and wallpaper.

[ opposite bottom ] This dining room, which is adjacent to the living room, features the same window fashion as the living room: a soft cornice box with contrasting jabots in gold silk beaded fabric. Silhouettes are used in both rooms for nighttime privacy.