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Above, Eduardo Mendoza of The Enhanced Home in a Capitol Hill home he has rearranged. Below, Mendoza moves a table.



STAGE RIGHT

Eduardo Mendoza and The Enhanced Home presents your house in a better light

BY CAROLINE LI
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Save Eduardo Mendoza your grandma's old lamp — he says it could make your house sell more quickly and for more money.

Mendoza makes a living by rearranging living spaces. His business, The Enhanced Home, is based on word-of-mouth referrals from clients and real estate agents. He says at the rate he's

going, there is little need to advertise.

"I'm the creator, I'm the master, I do what I want," said the 37-year-old designer.

Mendoza is a house staging specialist. Over the last three years he has become a

HOMES

favorite among local real-estate agents who are looking for someone to stage their properties before an open house.

“The agent gives me the house, the owner says, ‘do your magic’ and then they don’t talk to me. The agent trusts me 100 percent,” said Mendoza. “My agents are my hero. They all love me,” he half boasts.

But his work backs up his confidence. “My business is with occupied homes with furniture. There’s already furniture and I just need to put it in a way that looks better,” he said.

He works for clients as far as North Carolina without ever going to their homes. “They send me the floor plan of their home. I look at the walls, can picture everything in my head and I can tell them where the bed goes,” he said.

“There aren’t many people out there like him that does what he does,” said Nancy Williams, real estate agent with Windermere Real Estate in Queen Anne. According to Williams, a staging operation will cost about \$3,000-\$5,000 — and is paid by the owner.

“Most stagers will have you use their furniture. Eduardo is just very talented and it lies in the fact that he takes furniture that people already have. You never know what you’re going to get, but you know it’s going to be nice,” said Williams.

Mendoza says he tries not to stage homes like show homes, but give a natural, realistic feel — often using old sports items such as hockey sticks or tennis rackets and mounting them on a bedroom wall. In the kitchen, items spilled from a woman’s purse onto the dining table add an extra hint of reality.

“I don’t want you to come into my house and think you’re walking into Bon Marche, like everything is matching. I make it unique. I want you to feel like the people who live here have taste,” said Mendoza.

All it takes is one mental picture and he’s off to find the missing pieces. Often, clients will give Mendoza a blank check to purchase additional items that he feels are needed for the house. Depending on the

theme of the house, Mendoza will hunt for the perfect pieces in thrift stores or places like Crate & Barrel. Sometimes, all it takes is a little digging through the family’s packed boxes of old trinkets and unwanted items.

“People have all the elements at home, it’s just a matter of showing them” said the designer.

Mendoza said he doesn’t look like a typical designer. Dressed in cowboy boots, cargo pants and a jean jacket, he has both of his ears pierced and a shaved head. Laughing at himself he said, “People don’t really trust a guy who looks like me. I don’t look like a designer. People are usually expecting someone with flowers in their hair who wears nice clothes and have a beautiful vocabulary of design,” he said. “I don’t have the big vocabulary, but I’ll do my best.”

He uses his short list of adjectives to his advantage. His Spanish accent also scores him points with new clients.

“Some people love it that I have an accent and the fact that I’m not from here, they think that’s kind of cool,” said Mendoza, who grew up in Peru and studied business and space planning in college. After graduation he went to Quebec to study French for one year. Then he left for Ottawa where he dabbled in international business for another year before he went back to Peru to work construction with his father.

He said working with his father allowed him time to figure out where his real interests were. In 1997 Mendoza came to Seattle to study residential design and travel management at the Art Institute of Seattle.

The dot-com boom opened up new opportunities and in 1999 Mendoza landed a job at vacationspot.com Inc., which was later bought by Expedia Inc. in 2000. He spent two years at Expedia working in the operations department as a computer reservation analyst.

Before starting The Enhanced Home in 2004, Mendoza worked for Jan Sewell, another staging company operator. Sewell’s company worked only with empty

houses. When clients wanted to keep their things in the house or were working on a tighter budget, Sewell would refer them to Mendoza.

“She knew that I liked doing those types of projects and eventually I realized I could do it on my own,” said Mendoza. Opening up his own business allowed him to work in his own way, with no creative limits.

“With Jan, she had her own furniture. The paintings looked like they came from an art museum and the sculptures and everything were so nice and high end. It was scary to the customer living there. You’re scared you might break something,” said Mendoza.

Though Mendoza might be at a lack of words to describe himself, Williams praises him for his “different level of sophistication and uniqueness.”

“He has a foreign flair that a lot of locals don’t have. He’s very artistic and I think part of it is because he has that background that gives him little twist on his design,” she said.

Both Williams and Mendoza say most people don’t know how to present their house the best way possible, which is a reason that designers like Mendoza enjoy good business.

“They don’t see the full potential of (the house). Eduardo comes in and fluffs things up and it looks amazing. It’s a really a good way to get top dollar for your investment,” said Williams, who is convinced that a staged home sells for more money than an empty one.

Mendoza says his 2005 revenues were between \$195,000-\$230,000. He’s the only full-timer but he employs two part-timer movers to help him with the staging.

One house will usually takes Mendoza three days to finish “Since I’m not ‘Incredible Hulk,’ I need my movers. I have them move my pieces and then I have to be alone, really.”

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