

BY MOLLY GUTHREY

The culture clash was real for Saomara Larreal when she moved from a small, urban apartment in Venezuela to a big, suburban house in Woodbury after a job transfer a few years ago.

“I used to live in a small apartment complex in Caracas,” Larreal says. “My furniture arrived about two months after I bought my house in Minnesota. It was a joke: Everything was so small and my house was so big.”

She called on Marsha Anderson of Shasha Interiors for help. “I knew what I wanted,” Larreal says, “but I wasn’t sure how to do it.”

That’s Anderson’s specialty.

“My tagline is, ‘Your style, my expertise,’” the interior designer, whose nickname is Shasha, says.



SHADES OF GRAY

Upon walking into Larreal’s living room, Anderson noticed that the homeowner had started testing out different shades of gray paint on one of the walls.

“Paint is one of the hardest things for people to select,” Anderson says.

Although her specialty is color — “That’s my gift, color” — Anderson says she understands people feel overwhelmed when looking at paint colors or fabric swatches.

“It’s like when I go to Home Depot to buy a light bulb,” she says. “I’m standing there, looking at all the choices — warm, cool, daylight — and I think, ‘Are you kidding me? I just need a nightlight bulb.’”

Her advice: “Take that paint card over to

the door or even outside,” she says.

Because you want to see the color in natural light, the light that you might have in your home, rather than the store’s fluorescent lighting.

“That’s why it doesn’t look the same when you bring it home,” Anderson says of paint selected in the store.

And when picking out samples to try at home: “Never hang up more than three samples,” Anderson says. “One woman I was working with had 20 little cards. I said, ‘We are going to narrow these down to three, then narrow it to one — because you’re just confusing yourself.’”

Since gray is still everyone’s favorite neutral choice, Anderson has some advice as well:

“I have never used cool grays,” she says. “I do warm grays instead.”

Why doesn’t she use cool grays?

“Cold grays make me edgy,” she says. “They’re sterile and I don’t want to live in a sterile space. When I walk into a house with a cool gray -- it has a blue undertone to it -- it reminds me of cement in a basement.”

Warm grays, though, make her feel differently.

“Warm grays relax you,” she says. “They give you comfort.”

One of her picks is Pashmina from Benjamin Moore’s Affinity Color collection: “It’s a soft gray,” Anderson says, “but it’s got a warmth to it.”