

EXPERT INTERIORS

**HOW TO FIND THE BEST DESIGNER
FOR YOUR HOME**

by AMANDA FLATTEN

The new sofa you bought is too big, the chairs are too small and the colors throughout the room are all wrong. You want to entertain guests, but there's no way you are inviting them over to see this mess. How can you pull together a sophisticated space that reflects your personal style combined with the elegance you see on the pages of a magazine?



ABOVE LEFT: Great for casual entertaining, this remodeled kitchen by designer Linda Fritschy, ASID, is open to the family room. The goal was to create a design that was functional and pleasing to the eye. Photo by Robert Peacock, Peacock Photography

Hiring an interior designer is the answer. No matter how big or small the project, a designer can help you achieve the look you want and keep you from making costly mistakes along the way.

A DESIGNER'S ROLE

Designers wear many hats. They help the indecisive save time and money by setting a budget, designing a workable floor plan, purchasing furniture with the right look and scale for the room, making lighting choices and finding artwork and accessories. "Many homeowners don't know where to start. A designer can address challenges and pull it all together," says Sandi Stephens, design director at Antique Stop.

"A designer is a mediator that provides clear communication between the client, architect, builder and subcontractors," says Linda Fritschy, ASID. "A designer also acts as a visionary, a facilitator and an educator. Perhaps the most important role of a designer is to listen to both the verbal and nonverbal communication of the client."

Emily Fiihr, interior designer for J.H. Interiors, ASID Industry Partner, TAID, says one of the biggest challenges homeowners face is determining the layout of a room. "Space planning has a lot to do with the look of a room. Many people have nice pieces, but they don't know where to put them," she says.

Another common problem is dealing with color. Becky Taghdiri, co-owner of Home Décor (a one-stop shop for furniture, accessories and design services) with husband Mark, says people often have trouble matching the colors of a new sofa with existing furniture. "We can make suggestions to blend wall color, furniture and accent colors to bring the whole room together," she says. A new rug and accessories can completely change the look of a room without breaking the bank, she adds.

Many homeowners ask designers to solve storage problems, according to



ABOVE: A large picture window in this formal living room designed by Linda Fritschy, ASID, provides a welcoming focal point. Two Louis XIV armchairs are covered in an informal cotton stripe and are paired with a custom wood topped table on a black bamboo base. Chartreuse, silk draperies frame this setting. Photo by Buff Strickland



ABOVE: This banquette provides a cozy area for two or three in an open kitchen/family room floor plan designed by Linda Fritschy, ASID. The custom piece is covered in ultra-suede on the seat and a soil-hiding woven pattern for the back. Photo by Buff Strickland



ABOVE: In this family room, the design started with an existing sofa. Designer Shirley Flabiano, ASID, of SAS Interiors, created an eclectic space featuring artwork by business partner Roger Leighton. Built-in shelving and the fireplace surround have a special finish. The two chairs with hammered leather flanking the fireplace are art pieces themselves. Photo by Michael Hunter



Shirley Flabiano, ASID, of SAS Interiors. And don't forget about the view when you look up. "People always forget about the ceiling, but it is an important part of a room," she says.

When Fritschy forms a design plan for any room, she considers the following:

- What are the focal points of the room?
- What is the proportion of the ceiling to the dimensions of the room?
- How much time does the client plan to spend in this room? What activities are going to be performed in the room and does the client have pets, kids or grandkids?
- How does the room relate to the other rooms around it?
- What existing furniture, art and accessories does the client want to use in this room?
- What is the overall feeling the client wants for the room? What inspires them or speaks to their soul?

CULTIVATING PERSONAL STYLE

While some designers have a signature style, it's important to find a designer who can integrate your personality into the space. "The design should suit the client," Fiihr says. "As a designer, you can't make the room look like you or all the homes you work on would look the same."

By asking questions about your likes and dislikes, looking at the décor in finished rooms of your home and finding examples in magazines that you like, a designer can determine your personal style. "By truly listening to what the client has to say, educating them and respecting their wishes, a level of trust forms that enables the client to express themselves," Fritschy says. "It's fun to me to watch the client's level of taste grow as the design process expands. The more sophisticated and trusting the client becomes, the more creative and distinctive their interiors are." ▶

TOP RIGHT: An antique bed is the focal point in this traditional bedroom designed by Shirley Flabiano, ASID, of SAS Interiors. Partner Roger Leighton added a special finish to the intricate nightstands. Photo by Michael Hunter



ABOVE: This wine room built in a McKinney home was designed by Emily Fiihr of J.H. Interiors. It is temperature controlled and features an oil-painted mural, reclaimed cedar beams on the ceiling and rustic brick walls.



Designed by Shirley Flabiano, ASID, of SAS Interiors, this elegant living room features an antique grand piano, chairs with gold trim from the early 1900s and dramatic artwork by Roger Leighton. Photo by Michael Hunter

THE RIGHT DESIGNER FOR YOU

Choosing the right designer is invaluable, and Stephens says when considering designers, you should interview two or three to make sure you find the right fit. "You must have a connection with the designer and be able to trust them," she says.

According to Fritschy, you should find a designer with

experience working on projects similar to yours, ask for referrals and review their portfolio. Also, the American Society of Interior Designers is a great resource to find qualified local designers. "Most importantly, trust your gut during the interview," Fritschy adds. "You are looking for that connection that will provide the foundation for a great working relationship."



resources

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF INTERIOR DESIGNERS
www.asid.org

ANTIQUE STOP
Designer: Sandi Stephens
3400 Preston Rd., Ste. 205
Plano, 972.312.1501
www.antiquestop.com

LINDA FRITSCHY INTERIOR DESIGN
4908 Gulfstream Dr., Dallas
214.866.0041
www.lindafritschydesign.com

HOME DÉCOR DESIGN CENTER
Designers: Becky and Mark Taghdiri
4700 Alpha Rd., Dallas
972.387.0508
www.homedecordfw.com

J.H. INTERIORS
Designer: Emily Fiihr
5005 Colleyville Blvd., #240
Colleyville
817.428.7088
www.jhinteriors.com

SAS INTERIORS
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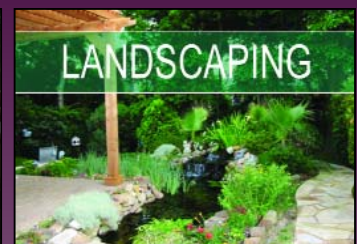
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