

Creating Sumptuous Spaces – Tips on Interior Design and Decorating

Our homes are our castles, our keep and refuge to which we return after doing battle with corporate dragons, traffic, bureaucratic brain scientists and recalcitrant nursery school tots. And how much more pleasant the experience when the space is to die for. And getting those spaces beautiful is one of life's great pleasures. There is nothing quite like a spot of interior design and decorating therapy to brighten the dingiest day.

Well, most of the time anyway. Sometimes things can really go badly wrong and slips betwixt the drawing board and the paint pot can cause some spectacularly unexpected and, well, interesting results. Never fear though, there a couple of basic pointers when it comes to decorating that can save the day.

Make your own choices. Although glossy house and home mags can offer up tons of great ideas, your home is your space and anything you apply should centre around your needs, taste and the constraints of the space itself.

Lighting and the effect of furnishings and features affects everything you put into a space, so don't choose fabrics, carpets etc. in the store. Ask for samples or swatches and check them in your home environment.

The same applies to colour. Don't choose paint in store. Buy a sample and paint a small section of wall and assess the effect in-situ. Also remember that texture plays a big role in how colours present themselves. Paint on a smooth wall will look subtly different when applied to a textured finish, particularly as light shifts through the area.

Don't crowd your walls. Unless you have absolutely no choice, don't allow furniture to hug the walls of a room. Group the furniture to create social space and don't be afraid to utilise the centre spaces. Walls are easier to maintain in this way as well.

Don't box yourself in. Points of entry and exit should never be obstructed and logical traffic flows should be left open. This not only makes for an easy flow through the area but facilitates cleaning.

Avoid trends. Trends are gone as quickly as they pop up. Stick with classic, timeless themes and quality furnishings. Neon animal print faux fur may be "in" today but will probably be a source of great embarrassment tomorrow.

Create focal points in an area. Any room benefits hugely from having a feature or furnishings that create strong focal attractions. Arrange the furnishings in the room to maximise the effect of that focal point. At the same time try and keep the focal attraction generic with wide appeal. Uncle Ernie's stuffed whale head is not a good idea for the living room wall.

Mismatched furnishings can destroy a space if you can't find some way to tie them together theme wise. Try and maintain a common thread or theme when decorating a room.

Details, details, details. The importance of detailing in a room can't be stressed enough. Colour coded scatter cushions, table lamps, books, fragrant candles and flowers all make great accessories and add detail that draws a theme together.

So, there are a couple of pointers to help your home decorating have personal impact. The most important thing to remember though is to express yourself in your decorating and above all else – Have fun!