

Expert Eye

Should you hire a pro to decorate your house?

by Mary Larsen - August 2005

Does your home need a little something?

Maybe you have ample space for entertaining but lack the room to host out-of-town guests. Or maybe your home feels basically put together but really could use the finishing touch to make it special. Of course, there's always the possibility that you just have no idea what to do with that big, empty, white room. Is it time to call in a professional designer or decorator? According to the Triangle East Chapter of the Interior Design Society, there are three main reasons to hire an interior designer:

Time

You simply don't have any. You may have the best plans, a brilliant sense of color and fabulous taste. You may even have piles of fabrics and paint chips and pieces of furniture. But between business lunches and Pilates, when will you ever get into it? A professional can keep you in control of your project without your needing to hang a valance, position a chair or spend hours shopping for the perfect area rug.

Skill

After thinking back to your hair choices in the '80s, you aren't so confident in your ability to make anything look good. A bright yellow wall or that "Hang in There" kitten poster seems like a good idea now, but will you (or anyone who comes over) really like the results?

Uniqueness

Sure, you could just go into the furniture store and buy everything in the display, right down to the life-size ceramic Dalmatian. But is that really you? Don't risk letting your home look like every unimaginative bachelor pad in the Triangle. Designers have access to sources that are not available to the general public. Plus, beautiful things can be found anywhere, from a flea market to a frou-frou boutique. A professional can do all the leg-work for you, go places you might not usually consider and take the time to visit three different stores to find just the right hardware for your kitchen cabinets.

Looking for the One

Once you decide to put your home into the hands of an expert, don't just hire the first one listed in the yellow pages. The Triangle East Chapter of the Interior Design Society urges you to do your homework:

- Ask friends and co-workers for referrals.
- Explore the options. Consider interior designers, decorators and window-treatment specialists. Many specialize in one area, while others are a full-service.
- Go online and do some research. Find out if they're reputable, certified or members of professional organizations.

- Ask questions. Find out anything from "how do you work with a client" to "do you have a list of references." Get all the information you need to feel comfortable with this person. After all, you are inviting a stranger into your life!

YOU CAN PUT A LOT OF TIME, MONEY AND ENERGY INTO A ROOM, BUT IT STILL DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT.

Sometimes you can put a lot of time, money and energy into a room, but it still doesn't feel right. You need guidance and affirmation for your decisions. A designer can help you tilt a couch to an appealing angle, ramble off the pros and cons of wallpaper versus paint, and make your room flow.