

Designing Women: Tales, tips and trends from interior decorators

By **NANCY SUNDSTROM**
Special to the Record-Eagle

For some people, working with an interior designer when remodeling can improve the chances that a home's interior will be current yet timeless, well-balanced, yet livable and distinctive.

In new construction, interior designers can be involved right from the blueprint stage. Or, they may assist with something as simple as selecting a paint color.

"There are so many choices today, from hundreds of paint colors to the vast array of furniture manufacturers," said Linda Dean Stallman, ASID, of Traverse City. "An interior designer... is someone who can bring cohesiveness and uniqueness to a project."

Tales

"A (client) relationship that is successful is one that incorporates the client's dreams and desires with the designer's ability to bring the project to a successful completion," said Stallman, adding that in the process, trust and communication are important elements.

Stallman recalled one incident in which she and the client had selected an unusual color for the walls — a taupe with a hint of eggplant. When the painting began, the client panicked because the shade appeared to be significantly different. Stallman dropped everything and ran over, only to find that it hadn't quite dried and was giving off a pink cast. She was confident that they had selected the right color, and assured the client that when it dried, it would be just as they had anticipated.

"Fortunately, he had confidence in me and when it dried, it was perfect, and the client was grateful we didn't change it," she said. "It is difficult to visualize what a little chip of paint will be like in a large space, but it shows how important it is to have confidence in your selections."

Tips

Lynn Pettyjohn, ASID Allied and owner of Lynnteriors in Traverse City, said that consumers today are better educated about doing research themselves and then taking it to professionals who can complement existing information and guide them in finalizing decisions.

"One of the most important tips I give a client is to do your research, as much as you can, and then bring those ideas in to your designer," said Pettyjohn, who is currently working on such diverse projects as the historically correct restoration of a Washington Street home and decoration of a fourth floor penthouse in a new development overlooking West Bay. "If you don't do your homework, the process can become extremely expensive and time consuming, and no one wants that."

Pettyjohn's advice is to visit the Internet, take photos or clip images from magazines, collect swatches of fabric and color samples, and take notes — lots of them.

"The more you know about what you want and the more you share that with a designer, the better they can assist you in creating a residence that emulates you," she said. "In the end, you want a home that is yours, different from everyone else's, and reflects who you and your family are."

Trends

Meg Redli is another well-established ASID designer who, with two other partners, owns Interiors, Inc., which has a showroom in Petoskey and a satellite office in Traverse City.

For 25 years, Redli has been working with clients on design projects that are often being formulated while homes are still in the blueprint stage.

Redli said the trend of using professional designers in her industry isn't surprising. There are always new uses of color, styles, fabrics and finishes, and designers make it their business to go to market each year and learn what is new.

"Casual with comfort still continues to rank high, as does eclectic design, in general," said Redli. "What people want is a livable, personal space which reflects what they, not the designer, wants. That's why the cookie cutter design is out, and interjecting your own lifestyle is in. Remember the matched sets of furniture our parents had in living rooms no one ever went into? You rarely see that in any home today, but you will see comfortable, livable, low-maintenance areas."

Redli said that some of the more popular choices these days include colors like sage and plum, softer metals, distressed finishes on wood and textured fabrics. The options are many and mistakes can be costly, she said, so working with a designer with whom you're comfortable is preferable to being forced to live with unwise choices.

"It's a challenge to make it all come together," concluded Redli, "which is why we're there to help."



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Traverse area interior designer Linda Dean Stallman in her office. Above right, some layout ideas by Stallman.





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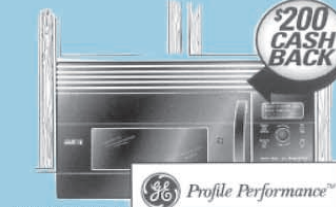
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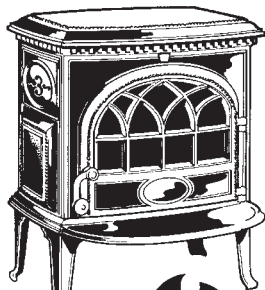


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