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Interior Designers: “To Have Or Have Not” Here Are The Questions...

If you watch television design shows and read magazine articles on the subject of home decor, you are likely familiar with these questions.

“What’s the difference between a decorator and a designer?”

“Why should I hire a decorator/designer?”

“When should I hire a decorator/designer?”

“Can I hire one for a consultation only - and how does that work?”

“How do I choose one who’s right for me?”



Barrie designer,
Cyndie Jerome
(CJD Cyndie Jerome
Designs)



Cyndie Jerome's busy home-office has a view to the lake and wall to wall, fabric samples. The corners are occupied by leaning bolts of fabric, destined for 'sewing rooms' to be transformed into sumptuous, custom drapes and plump decorator pillows. Her ringing phone punctuates our conversation with a sense of urgency as deadlines loom.

She came to the business of interior design late in life, as it wasn't until her children were older that she caught the bug and began taking decor courses and networking with designers and industry people. But, the defining moment came the day that a designer friend took her on a 'day trip' and generously introduced Cyndie to her many resources and contacts.

Decorator/Designer

When she works with a client whose project requires technical/structural changes, she uses the services of a structural engineer, an architect or a qualified building contractor. So basically, other than a different accreditation designation, that's often the only difference between a designer and a decorator. They do everything for the client that a designer would do, with the exception of determining and approving technical/structural changes. Costs are similar but vary, dependent

upon the size of the project, resources and materials used.

Q- Why/When/How do you hire a designer/decorator and choose one that's right for you?

A- "When you are overwhelmed with design decisions for a 'whole home,' 'new build,' or a 'room makeover' a designer can help you focus, avoid mistakes and enhance the outcome. Ask friends & colleagues for a referral to someone they've used or has a known reputation. A professional has unlimited contacts and can save you countless hours resourcing product. Interview & ask to view samples of their work - ask questions - check references, and be honest about your budget & expectations."

Q- Can I hire a designer for a consultation - how does that work?

A- Yes, most designers will consult for an hourly or flat fee. I tend to spend about 2 - 2 1/2 hours with the client while they take notes. Often, a consultation can result in being hired to source window treatments, for example.

Q- Where do I start? What's the first thing I should do and why?

A- "The #1 most important thing without a doubt, is to make a "to-scale' floor plan of the room,

especially when buying new furniture. Otherwise, you could buy a sofa that's much too big or too small for the space. This one thing, saves time, money and frustration in the long run."

Q- Should I paint a room before for after buying the furniture?

A- "Paint last. Companies can match any colour you want these days. This gives you more options. If you paint first, your limited by that colour when you go to buy your furniture."

Q- I read that lighting is very important. Why?

A- "Yes. Lighting is 'key' to a room. And, use different sources, like combining halogen and incandescent. Don't just have a ceiling filled with pot lights. Use under-cabinet, task lighting in a kitchen, and a show-stopping chandelier. Bathroom sconces flanking the mirror creates softness, but include a ceiling fixture for overall light. Use a variety of table/floor lamps. Changing a shade can quickly update a room add dimmer switches everywhere, to create mood."

Q- Is white a good choice if you can't decide on a colour?

A- White rooms work well as a canvas. It allows you to change a room by adding colour by the



application of accessories, which are much easier to change than furniture, paint and area rugs - and less costly.

Q- What are some favourite 'whites' and why?

A- "Benjamin Moore - Cloud White CC-40 on cabinets & trim / Chantilly Lace OC65 grey tones, works well with blues & greens / White Dove OC17 warm / Ballet White OC-9 Chalky for 'Paris Apt.' look / Farrow & Ball's - 'Pointing' is classic."

Q- What can I do now without spending a dime?

A- "Move your furniture around and you'll see it with 'new' eyes. Bring in things from other rooms. Edit by moving or removing art and accessories."

Q- Can we update the kitchen without painting or replacing cupboards, surfaces or appliances?

A- "Introduce more texture and interest by adding drapes, upholstered chairs & open shelving for displaying collections."

Q- Is wallpaper really a huge trend for 2010.

A- "Yes. Big, bold patterns. Use it in an area that will give you the most bang for your buck. Spend your money where you see it most, like in a foyer/entry."

Q- What are some of the colour trend predictions for 2010?

A- "Pantone's 2010 colour of the year is turquoise, going forward into summer. From cool & watery, to deep peacock for drama. Try it as an accent first. Amethyst is one of the new ones and is a must have for bedrooms. From a greying neutral to vibrant purple. It looks amazing paired with white. Green is still on trend, in mosses, Kelly and malachite. Yellow - bright and bold is really hot but try a splash of it somewhere, if you aren't a big fan. Pink - from hot to pastel. Grey is even bigger than last year. It's the best kind of neutral as it can be paired with almost any colour. The tones range from almost white to almost black and everything in-between. It works especially well with buttery yellows and taupes." (for more on colour trends see page 35)

Q- What are the emerging decor-styles for 2010?

A- "Bohemian or Boho' is still big, but has emerged cleaner this year. Mixing patterns and textures with your travel souvenirs, vintage and antique pieces. 'Industrial Chic' is uber-modern, hi-tech softened with textured wallpaper and reclaimed wood - ie; metal legs on a rough-hewn, wood table. 'Organic Modern' is the use of natural & sustainable materials like bamboo, cork, hemp, and linen, with matte, polished, honed and ribbed finishes."

Q- Give us some designer 'tricks of the trade?'

1. "Changing the bed linens, accessories and window dressings will effect a total room makeover and incorporate some things from other rooms.
2. Buy less but buy the best you can afford.
3. If you can't afford that outrageously priced fabric for new drapes, buy a smaller piece and make a cushion.
4. Use neutral colours for semi-permanent items.. these are the things that are least likely to be replaced, like sofas, tables and chairs. Using neutrals this way, extends their longevity as they're less likely to be effected by changing trends. This includes carpet, and ceramic/porcelain flooring."

Memorable Projects

One design job came to mind immediately. The client wanted the basement 'party room' made over. During the evaluation process, they uncovered a signed, drum kit and boxes of pristine, decades-old record albums by bands like the The Rolling Stones and The Clash. Cyndie had a number of them framed to create a gallery wall.

She brightens with anticipation as she describes a current undertaking as "a designers dream" - carte blanche. Jerome's downtown Toronto client has asked that her newly expanded offices be based on the hit, television show, 'Mad Men.'

Her last thoughts on the subject of design..

"Decor Evolves, Serendipity Happens and effects the plan."

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