

PRESS RELEASE

Decorate like a pro

7 November 2014, Johannesburg: So you want a professionally designed interior, but you can't afford the decorators fees? Sue Scott, from leading furniture retailer, Grafton Everest, shares some insider info on how you can add that designer touch to your living space without having to call in the professionals.

Up your game

“Making a home both functional and beautiful is no easy task and often requires a skilled eye. That's where interior designers come in - they have a knack for taking a home from boring to beautiful using a few clever design tricks,” notes Sue. But she is also well aware that not everyone can afford an interior designer, and many people simply want to try their hand at planning their space and making it their own. “There are certain rules that most interior designers use when making an ordinary place extraordinary. With these guidelines, your interiors can look like you hired a designer and no one will be the wiser,” nods Sue.

1. Layout

“Use the biggest seat in your living room as the starting point for the rest of your design,” notes Sue. She recommends positioning your sofa in such a way that it doesn't obstruct the flow of the space, that it makes the most of the view outside, and that one can easily see the focal point of the room from it, whether that's the television or the fireplace.

Another designer solution is to pull your sofa away from the wall to make your space feel more intimate. If your room is big enough, place a server behind your sofa with two lamps, a stack of coffee table books, and a little statuette underneath a dome for example. “Creating a well-considered and beautiful still life is something interior decorators get so right. The trick is to create groupings without over cluttering,” says Sue.

The same goes with armchairs – don't be afraid to let them “float” in the room. “A fun idea is to upholster the back of you armchairs in a more expensive fabric or an elaborate design. Not only will it cost you a lot less than doing the whole piece, it will also add interesting detail in an unexpected way,” suggests Sue.

2. Palette

“A good interior decorator generally uses at least three colours when putting together a colour palette for a space. This could be completely different, but complementary colours, or varying tones of the same colour,” points out Sue. The general rule of thumb is to use the most neutral and light colour for the walls and curtains, a slightly darker variation for large pieces of furniture, such as your sofa or wall unit, and then a more daring colour/s for smaller accents, such as scatter cushions, an occasional chair or flowers for example.

Stuck for what colour to paint your walls? Pick a colour from one of your accent pieces, then find a more toned down version of it in the paint fan deck. “It could be a matter of adding more white or grey to the colour so that it can work on your walls. This way the colour will tie in with your overall scheme seamlessly without overwhelming the space or making it look too contrived,” notes Sue.

If you decide to go for a more neutral palette be sure to add texture to create interest. This could be the patina of a well-lived leather sofa, the warmth of a knitted throw, raw silk curtains, or a smooth glass vase set upon a rustic wooden coffee table. Says Sue: “More muted living spaces are a massive trend at the moment, and it makes sense, as they don’t tire and are easy to live with.”

3. Lighting

A living room plays many roles – entertaining, relaxing, and even working. So it’s important that there are various light sources to adapt to these different activities. Sue suggests putting ceiling lights on dimmer switches as a quick way to change the mood of a room. “Once you’ve got that covered, add a floor standing reading lamp next to an armchair for task lighting, and table lamps with low wattage bulbs on either side of the sofa to create warmth and atmosphere,” says Sue.

4. Scale

“It may seem counterintuitive, but fewer large pieces of furniture look much better in a small space than lots of little pieces of furniture. Large pieces just own the space with such confidence in a way that smaller, spindly pieces don’t. If chosen and placed correctly, larger pieces somehow have the ability to make the space feel grander,” notes Sue. Most designers will recommend investing in a large quality rug - it adds luxury to the space that smaller postage stamp-size rugs never will – and making a statement with a large ceiling lamp. “If you can’t afford a dazzling chandelier, you can achieve a similar effect with a simple oversized lampshade,” notes Sue, who believes that the key to a well balanced interior is to mix large and small scale elements, whether it be in furniture pieces, accessories or pattern.

5. Details

“Take a look through any interior design magazine and there’s always one thing in common – flowers. Almost every shot has them, so take a quick lesson from the experts and add a few blooms to your space,” says Sue, adding that a bouquet tends to look dated, so rather group a large mass of like-flowers in a vase for that finishing touch.

Don’t hide precious items behind closed doors only to come out at special occasions, use them everyday to turn your ordinary décor scheme into the extraordinary. “Delicate crockery that was handed down from past generations may be too fragile to eat off on a daily basis, so why not hang several plates on a wall. Or turn that delicate lace tablecloth, that you don’t want to spill food or wine on, into a pretty curtain with a few simple hooped curtain clips on a rod,” nods Sue.

There’s no denying that interior designers love to use wallpaper to bring a space to life, but it’s a costly affair, and if you don’t choose wisely the look can date quickly. Why not try incorporating beautiful wallpaper by framing different pieces and displaying them as artwork, or perhaps including a few bright and beautiful scatter cushions on your sofas instead. “A hot trend in pattern at the moment is pineapples and palm fronds, perfect for the summer season,” points out Sue, who believes that whilst a well designed space is important, you should also allow your home to reflect your personality and individual flair. “Stick to the rules, but also have some fun!”

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Released on behalf of Grafton Everest (www.graftoneverest.co.za) by The Line Communications (www.theline.co.za, ant@theline.co.za).