

# Top interior design MISTAKES

by LYNN FENWICK, B.I.D.



**FOR SOME PEOPLE INTERIOR DESIGN** comes naturally, but for most it is no easy feat. Beginning a new project can be overwhelming, whether this is designing a new space or sprucing up a current one. There are a few common mistakes that many people make while trying to tackle their interior, so we thought we would address these errors with some tips and solutions on how to keep your design experience enjoyable.

## **FAIL TO PLAN**

The top mistake we see people make is tackling a space with no plan or direction. Figuring out what is needed in

the space before going shopping will save time and money. Look through magazines, the internet and take pictures of things that inspire you until there is a clear vision and desired outcome. It can be overwhelming walking into a store aimlessly and often leads to impulse buys.

## **WHAT'S A BUDGET?**

Once there is a plan in focus it is important to think about what the budget will be. Budgeting is a good way to stay on track while shopping. It's okay to splurge on that great accent chair but choose where to splurge and where to cut back. Continue the 'splurge and save' ideology when



purchasing pieces for the rest of the room. With all this in mind, don't be discouraged if you don't find all of the pieces you want immediately. This is your home, not a showroom – character takes time to build. Don't just buy things to finish the space. Shop around and collect pieces over time that expresses your personality.

## **IT HAS TO MATCH!**

Just because there may be the perfect end table doesn't mean it has to go along with the whole collection so everything matches. Today, design is about lifestyle and adding your personality. The pieces need to blend, but matching is not as exciting when you visually wander through a room.

## **ARTFULLY MINDED**

Art is a very important aspect of creating cohesiveness in a room. Where people have trouble is how they hang their art. Often we see it hung too high. Unfortunately, there is no one size fits all formula we can give out as it depends on factors such as where the art is going, ceiling height, and what it's hanging over. There are however, a few general tips. A good start for a single piece of art is 57-60" from the floor measured to the center of the art work. Again, this isn't a firm rule but in most cases art should be at eye level, there's no need to crane your neck to view your

favorite pieces. If multiple pieces are being hung, such as for a gallery wall, we cannot stress enough to measure and plan! Figure out beforehand where each piece will go in accordance to one another before putting holes in the wall.

## **CAN WE TALK?**

With open concept floor plans being so popular people are having difficulty placing furniture. They typically resort to pushing it up against a wall. This usually leads to awkward situations where the furniture placement does not allow for easy conversation. Don't be afraid to float the sofa in the middle of the living room – it allows for furniture pieces to congregate, conversation to flow easily and usually a more natural movement of traffic.

## **AREA RUG UNDERSIZING**

The advantage of the open concept is that rooms can be used for multipurpose; the kitchen as a place to entertain or the living room as a study. The disadvantage of one large space is how do you delineate that space? An area rug is a great way to define a space and unify the furniture, just make sure it is large enough. Typically, the mistake we see is a small rug that just fits under the cocktail table. That usually tends to add visual clutter. A good starting point for an area rug is 8' x 10.' A good rule of thumb is that the two front legs of the sofa should be on the carpet. That also



applies to any chairs in the grouping. Dining room carpets should allow for the chair to slide out from under the table and still remain on the area rug.

#### **CLEAN, BUT CLUTTERED**

Sometimes no matter how clean a place may be, with everything in its place it still feels cluttered. Everyone knows the saying "less is more," although it may be easier to admire the minimalists than embody them. What is one to do with all those things we collect? An over cluttered space can contribute to stress and anxiety so invest in storage baskets or hidden shelving. If you have a collection to be displayed, keep it all in one area on a shelving unit, rather than spread throughout each room. Remind yourself that every square inch does not need to be covered. Try some larger pieces and let them do the talking.

#### **COME OUT OF THE DARK SIDE**

Another tip to making a space feel larger and more airy is the placement of your drapery. Hanging them higher above the window is going to make the ceilings feel taller resulting in the sense of a larger space. The more natural light the better, but often you need to supplement that. Not having enough light will also contribute to a feeling of heaviness. Layer your lighting; on top of your main ceiling light have

another for ambiance (a dimmer switch is an easy solution) and have task lighting when you need a little extra for reading.

#### **NOT TO SCALE**

The last area that we see people struggling with is scale. Scale actually ties many of our other components together. Scale and proportion are more difficult to achieve, often because people don't think about them. This usually impedes people from pinpointing where they went wrong. For instance, too many large pieces in a room will make it feel small and crowded, however too many small pieces create an atmosphere of mess and clutter. The key to a successful, aesthetically appealing space is to mix size, weights, and heights. Some pieces like the sofa and loveseat have visual weight, while small but correctly proportioned chairs will balance the room

Interior Design is what we do at Fenwick & Company, but we are also here to teach our clients eventually, how to design for themselves. These guidelines we have provided are not rules that must always be followed, but when you know the rules, you also know how to break them. The bottom line is that it is your home and it should be designed in whatever way makes you comfortable and expresses your individual style.

