

Inside Info on Interior Design

What is in and what is out in home décor?

We got the skinny from veteran Weston interior designer Robin McGarry, A.S.I.D.

Q. *Are you seeing any new trends in interior design?*

A. In the last five to ten years with all the new technology and the pace at which people work, people's homes have become more of a place for tranquility, peace and rest. It's more about specific pieces and the beauty of the pieces and how they all come together and work together toward a beautiful design, as opposed to sumptuous rooms filled with expensive furnishings and accessories.

What do you see happening in wall treatments?

Walls, floors and ceilings are underestimated when it comes to the impact they have on the overall design. Color is very important and a lot of people don't understand that it is not an easy process to select the right color. One shade off can make a tremendous difference. But also in terms of materials on the walls, there are many options. In a lot of my projects, I use a beautiful Venetian plaster, which has a lot of depth to it, not only on the walls but also on the ceilings. However, well-done and authentic Venetian plaster can run an average of \$25 a square foot and that can get expensive.

Is green still the color in vogue? And is beige regarded as passé?

Green is always in. But it used to be the dark hunter greens that were very popular and now the lighter sage and celadon greens are used, and more of the blue/greens. I find that blue, in various shades, is very popular and in conjunction with browns and other earth tones creates a very restful space. I don't think beige is out. In fact, I don't think that any particular color is necessarily in or out. It's mainly how it's used and in what proportion. All homes should have harmony and balance with use of shapes and colors in the correct scale and proportion. Colors should harmonize, but they don't need to match.

How do you begin the decorating process?

I ask the client, "How is this room going to be used?" "What do you want to do in this room?" For instance, if it's a bedroom, "Do you want a sitting area? Do you watch TV there?" Then, we create a furniture plan based on the needs of that client, which basically means the size and scale of various pieces, like a sofa, a chair, and coffee table or possibly a built-in cabinet or computer



Interior Designer
Robin McGarry

workstation. Once the client approves the furniture plan, then we get into the selections — the materials, style and color.

How important is lighting?

Lighting is what really creates ambiance in a room. When people walk into a room, they can't tell exactly what makes it so special, but it's usually the lighting. The low-voltage MR16s I like to use are one of the nicest lights out there because you can get the greatest range of light. You can choose more of a spot as a narrow beam for illuminating art or sculpture or use it as a flood for more general lighting.

At what stage should you involve the interior designer if you're building a new home?

As soon as you've got the schematic plans from your architect. Architects are generally not as familiar with furniture scale, furniture arrangements and the allowances needed between pieces. I take the architect's schematics, put in all of their existing and proposed new furniture, and then the client goes back to the architect and they make revisions to modify the plan to make the room function better for the client and still maintain architectural integrity. This means that the design process doesn't get to the point of construction documents, which then need to be reworked because the furniture doesn't fit.

Do you have any other advice for clients?

Make sure that your initial budget includes the cost of everything — rugs, flooring, window treatments, fixtures, furniture and accessories, including art. Most clients don't include a reasonable budget for good art. Also, your home should express your personal style, spirit and character, which a good designer can help you translate into décor. Don't ask for the opinions of friends and extended family because they will be making a judgment based on their own style, which may not be congruent with yours. The more you understand your own personality, the more successful your home will be.