

DON'T FALL INTO DESIGN PITFALL

FINANCE YOUR HOME

Fall has arrived in Southern Ontario, and this year we have been blessed with beautiful, sunny days and cool nights. It's a natural time to start thinking about re-decorating, and whether you're looking for change in a single room or the whole house, it's important to start by defining your personal style. There are so many products on the market today, consumers have a seemingly infinite selection of colours, finishes, styles, accessories and pricing. If you don't have a plan when you start to shop, you'll be distracted by all kinds of items that you love, but which may not necessarily create harmonious design.

To identify your personal style, start by going through your old decorating magazines and tear out any pictures that appeal to you. You may be drawn to the colours, the window coverings, the shape of furnishings or the fabrics. Remember, you are not looking for something to copy in your home - just rooms that you find pleasant to look at. Once you have finished, go through the pictures, and I can almost guarantee there will be a common theme throughout all of them.

Perhaps the pictures you selected show dominant lines in the room that are long and horizontal, with bold colours, bare windows and prominent art pieces. Your style is Contemporary, so you need to look for neutral fabrics with textural appeal and furniture with low, clean lines. Avoid clutter and stay away from pieces with too many curves or decorative elements. Make your focal point a single piece of art or sculpture that you absolutely love. Window coverings should be simple - side panels in a soft linen similar to your wall colour will maintain the contemporary esthetic while keeping things warm and inviting.

However, if your pictures were dominated by lots of curves, glistening surfaces, luxurious fabrics and

beautiful hand-woven carpets, your style is more traditional. This look is easy to accomplish if you have 18" baseboards, 12' ceilings with original plaster details and hand-laid herringbone floors, but most of our surroundings are far less grand. Not a problem. Just remember that the most distinguishing element of traditional style is symmetry of windows, furniture placement and art work, creating a sense of calm.

Start with a focal point, such as a fireplace, and use 'pairs' (chairs, sofas, tables and lamps) to emphasize that area. Soften tightly upholstered furniture pieces with lots of soft down pillows in an array of luxe fabrics. Add sparkle with chandeliers and highly polished floors topped with beautiful Oriental or Persian carpets, and you'll have a room with timeless appeal that you'll enjoy for years to come.

Traditional and Contemporary are two of the more obvious styles that can be identified with this exercise, but there are many more. The key is to zero in on the elements that caught your attention as you went through the magazines, and then keep them in mind as you shop. You'll find it much easier to avoid being distracted by pieces that break the 'rules', and the end product will be a room that successfully reflects your own distinctive style.

Courtesy of Valerie Clubine, Signature Interiors
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