

What to expect from your interior designer

If you're planning a home improvement project, an interior designer can be a valuable investment

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When it comes to interior design, the popularity of home improvement shows, as well as social media accounts dedicated to the topic, often give misleading ideas about the process designers undertake when approaching a project. Time-lapse videos and budgets sponsored by advertisers contribute to unrealistic ideas about project timelines and costs. Plus the huge variety of styles and products available can often contribute to confusion on the part of the homeowner.

That's why the expert help of an interior designer is more valuable today than ever before.

"Interior design is more complex than most people assume because it's not only about making a space beautiful, it's about the assessment of space, visual forms, proper lighting, and the relationship between colours and textures," said award-winning designer Carmen Roy. "It's a combination of beauty and science."

The first step is meeting with a client and discussing the scope of the design project. This entails more than just their taste in decor, but rather an all-encompassing

conversation about what's important to them, as well as lifestyle factors that have an impact on home design. "Do they have children or pets," Roy said. "Are they eco-friendly? These details matter."

Next in the process is determining budget, time frame, and what clients expect from design services. "Some clients want a turnkey project while others just want a consultation to guide them," Roy said. "I usually offer my clients two options for their project — two different floor plans and renderings to give them a visual — and colour choices are dealt with in the same manner."

The client is heavily involved in the process, but ultimately the designer is tasked with producing results and so a certain amount of distance is a must.

"Interior design is built on mutual trust, and if that (is lacking) the project won't unfold as it should," Roy said. "I always say if you hired an artist to paint your portrait and you doubted their talent and stopped them in their process, the outcome wouldn't be as spectacular as it could've been." Once everything is decided upon and the designer gets to work, the progression can be quite complex, with many other experts involved.



With so many styles and materials available, the expert help of an interior designer is more valuable today than ever before. - ALL PHOTOS: PARKPLACE ESTATES

"As a designer, you often manage a team of contractors, electricians and painters as well as your clients' expectations," Roy said. "Navigating everything can be challenging, but well worth the outcome of the project."

In terms of the final look that's achieved, the result will depend on the client's taste, budget, and the scope of the project.

"You can hire five different interior designers on the exact same house and make the look completely different each and every time," said Philip Kaleel, co-owner of ParkPlace Estates. "Some people will prefer a more modern look, more classic, more retro, more rustic, or more glam. There's no right or wrong way to design a home; it all depends on what character we're trying to portray."

That goes right down to the bones of the house as well. For designers, a blank canvas that's as neutral as possible is often the easiest to work with.

"As builders, it's always a challenge to create a space that will please the largest amounts of people, so we tend to design homes with that in mind while meshing the most trending and current styles," Kaleel said. "For example, the classic look with some certain modern elements and rustic accents are very trendy right now."



The final result of any interior design project will depend on the client's taste, budget, and the scope of the work.

In deciding what type of style you want to achieve in your home, doing research is the best way to begin.

"Get inspired by browsing through pictures online or in magazines," Kaleel said. "Usually people can quickly decide if they like or dislike something just by looking at it. Then once that's figured out, start thinking about what could work in your own home. Your choices can completely change the look and feel of your home."

Having a degree of certainty for what you like and dislike as a homeowner can also help your designer know how to proceed.

"Create a folder with photos and ideas that you like," Roy said. "It will help guide you and your designer on

what vision you're aiming for."

In addition to curating ideas, you also want to ensure that you're working with the right people by asking for referrals and looking into the previous projects of anyone you hire.

"I've heard too many horror stories from homeowners purchasing items that can't be returned such as a furniture, bathtubs and vanities when a simple floor plan by a professional designer could have prevented those expensive mistakes," Roy said. "Good design takes time, with some investment attached to it. It's a fun job, but it's not all glamour. You work very hard and have sleepless nights, wanting nothing but the best outcome for your homeowners."



Before hiring a designer, it's important to do research to determine your style.