

BUILDING & RENOVATING GUIDE

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ASK THE EXPERTS...

interior design

Interior designers do far more than just help choose nice cushions. They play a crucial role in ensuring your new space works for you on every level, turning a house into a home and making it a pleasure to live in

What are the benefits of using an interior designer?

Anna Campbell-Jones, Habitus, Glasgow:

Personalisation is really important. An interior designer can help you to work out the best way of expressing your personality and your passions. Their service is not a luxury – they will be able to help you find cost-effective ways of achieving what you want and will have access to tried and trusted tradesmen, and you will be far less likely to spend too much money on things you later regret.

Anna Agapova, O&A Design, London: A good designer is an artist and a psychologist. They study their clients, their rhythm of life, character, dreams and desires. And then they reflect this in the design, creating spaces that go far beyond simply an idea of comfort. I want my rooms to be like art – to inspire people and bring out different emotions. It's a myth that hiring a designer is expensive. A good designer will find the best combination of price and quality. They will know the characteristics of building materials and will tell you how these behave and whether their cost is justified. That way, you can avoid irreversible mistakes and unnecessary expenses. Also, many shops give designers discounts, which will help to keep your project on budget.

When should the interior designer get involved in a build or renovation project?

Gillian Gillies, Gillian Gillies Interiors,

Toronto: An interior designer should be hired at the same time as you hire the other key people in your renovation or build, such as the architect or builder. That way, you benefit from everyone's individual skills from the start. It's a lot like building on strong foundations. It pays dividends to build a strong team from day one.



A classic interior designed bedroom complements the room's proportions and scale

Habitus: As early as possible. If it's an extension, the designer will help work out the impact the new space is going to have on the rest of the home. If it's a new-build, they'll take a holistic approach to the whole house.

O&A Design: Ideally, the interior designer should get involved at the very beginning. Just like the architect, builder and engineer, they will offer a different perspective and have an important influence on the finished product. The designer will draw up a work plan with a description of what needs to be done when. They'll also assist with costs and can help steer you away from impulsive decisions that may break the budget. Most importantly, they will help create a space that truly reflects who you are.

Why do you think people care more these days about interior design?

Habitus: People are spending more time at home – and entertaining at home – no doubt as a result of such things as streaming services for movie nights and restaurant-quality food delivery services. The general increasing interest in interior design, and the greater accessibility of a wide range of styles of furniture, fabrics, wallpapers and decorative items to suit all budgets, has made it easier for people to have fun with design at home.

I need more storage. How do I get more out of redundant corners and spaces such as eaves and under the stairs?



Sarang fabric in fuchsia from Designers Guild

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► **Gillian Gillies:** All our clients start by telling us they want more storage. We always ask that they edit their belongings before we begin our designs. It turns out that often more storage space is *not* required; it's just that the storage space they do have is not tailored to their needs. Once their belongings have been edited and we can see what they really do need to store, we usually design custom interiors for closets and spaces.



A free-standing contemporary bath in bright white works with wood and slate grey

Habitus: Being clever with storage is the key, especially in a family home. A designer will look at the layout and position of limiting elements such as doorways to maximise every nook and cranny. A bespoke solution is usually required, even if this is only well-designed painted MDF.

What are the top trends for kitchens and bathrooms?

Gillian Gillies Interiors: Sustainability paired with timeless selections is (thankfully) a huge trend. Clients want to, and should, invest in these rooms, as these are the most used and abused areas. Working with materials that are maintainable and classic will result in spaces that transcend the date they were installed. We mix metals and woods and finishes in our kitchens and the overall look is effortless and elegant.

Habitus: Colour and pattern, eclecticism, mixed materials and individuality are what my clients seek more and more. For example, the sheer range of tile designs available in recent years has gone through the roof – if you'll excuse the pun! In most of our bathroom projects, the preference is for a freestanding bath. These make the space look more elegant, tailored, modern, personalised and luxurious.

O&A Design: For bathrooms, I'd say the main trends are wood, wallpaper and freestanding basins. Adding something natural and organic makes the bathroom feel accessible and welcoming. Try a combination of different colours and styles of timber, a high-quality hardwood floor or wooden panelling. The latter can add tradition but changing the colour will freshen things. Consider wallpaper, especially a flower print, which is very on trend. Papers are easy to replace

when – much easier than removing tiles. Papering just one wall is effective, particularly if it is something glamorous and with a sheen. The latest collection by Antonio Lupi, an icon of bathroom design, is proof that freestanding washbasins have become the focus of contemporary bathrooms. Models made entirely of marble are especially stylish. Lightness and solidity are balanced by

natural forms and streamlined shapes.

For kitchens, contrasting textures and smooth finishes are in vogue – a glossy splashback or marble countertop matches rough wood drawer fronts. Lighting is always crucial but we are seeing far more demand for statement pendants and chandeliers, rather than simple task lighting. Green and olive are the most popular colours for the new-season, combining with rough natural materials such as wood, stone, jute and leather. People are gravitating towards warm, tactile and above all natural materials. Waste segregation systems are no longer an optional extra; it is essential that designers make these invisible and highly functional.

Any design advice on windows and how to dress them?

Habitus: For replacement windows, I'd recommend any colour except white. Most double-glazing companies offer dark grey, which is really popular. Black is also a trend, especially in aluminium-framed industrial-looking Crittall-style windows. Newly made double-glazed timber sash-and-case windows are always a good choice – they last for years and you can paint them any colour you want. Adding a toplight with a fixed or opening window such as Velux can transform a room. In one recent project, I added sash windows to a traditional stone building. Done with care, this can look like the window has always been there.

O&A Design: We usually take a three-layer approach to dressing windows. We prefer a Roman shade from natural monochrome cotton as the outer layer; in the middle, we always put a blackout blind; and we finish this curtain pie with a decorative drape, which is made from natural materials such as silk or wool. This combination helps to control the light in the room, and shades the room easily in the summer.