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TOP
TIPS

Interior Style file



Let Vancouver interior designer Patricia Gray help guide your next redecoration project, large or small.

PHOTOS ROGER BROOKS

Vancouver-based Patricia Gray, one of Canada's premier, award-winning interior designers, has completed projects in the U.S., Africa, and Asia. Her signature style captures imagination in highly functional and simply beautiful rooms. Gray shares with us her best advice for the home decorator, principles that you can apply to any room—or every room!—in the house.

The Laurel residence, home to a busy professional Vancouver couple, portrays Gray's principles, from the restful master bedroom (above), to a relaxed family space (right), to rooms for entertaining (page 20).



GRAY'S WISH

Spend more, buy less

"It pains me when people spend money on inexpensive upholstery pieces, then have to throw them in the landfill five years later. If you spend a little more in the beginning, and buy pieces that you love, they will last you 25 or 30 years or more."

1. CLEAR THE CLUTTER.

When assessing any room, "take out anything that's not relevant to the space, so you can see it without all the distraction," Gray advises. "Get rid of the stuff you don't like. If that means you're left with a sparsely furnished room, all the better. It's emotionally exhausting to have a bunch of stuff around that isn't fulfilling you. I'm very big on not having anything in the home that isn't useful or beautiful."

2. MAKE A CHECKLIST.

Write a list of all the activities that you'll do in the room—and be honest! If you eat suppers balanced on your knees in the living room, jot that down. "Try to consider all the variables," says Gray. "In the family room, it's very important that you have a comfortable place to sit, a lamp for reading, a table to set your drink on, and an ottoman or coffee table you can put your feet up on."



FRESH FAVOURITES



3. START BIG.

“Start with your biggest basics; you need to get the big, important pieces to anchor the room right. In the living room, it’s a sofa. Look very carefully at how the room is going to be used, where the focal point is, where the traffic flow is going to be, and choose your sofa appropriately. The colours are neutral, the quality is good, the style is simple and appropriate to your lifestyle. If people make a mistake in the large pieces, they’re forever trying to make it up with everything else.”

4. HAVE FUN!

“Have fun with colour in paint and accessories. One paint colour doesn’t cost more than another, but it can make all the difference. You can change your colours with candles or pot cushions. For a seasonal change, roll up your area rugs in the summertime, cozy things up in winter with cuddly velour throws. It’s always better to group things, like ornaments or small carvings; they become a focal point. It has more impact.”



Gray’s tester trick



Paint a piece of poster board with a tester colour. You can then easily move it around the room, checking it in different lighting and against different objects.