



[the nest] home design handbook

Simple ways to decorate, organize,
and personalize your place



Carley Roney

and the editors of TheNest.com

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Photographs by Ellen Silverman



Clarkson Potter/Publishers
New York

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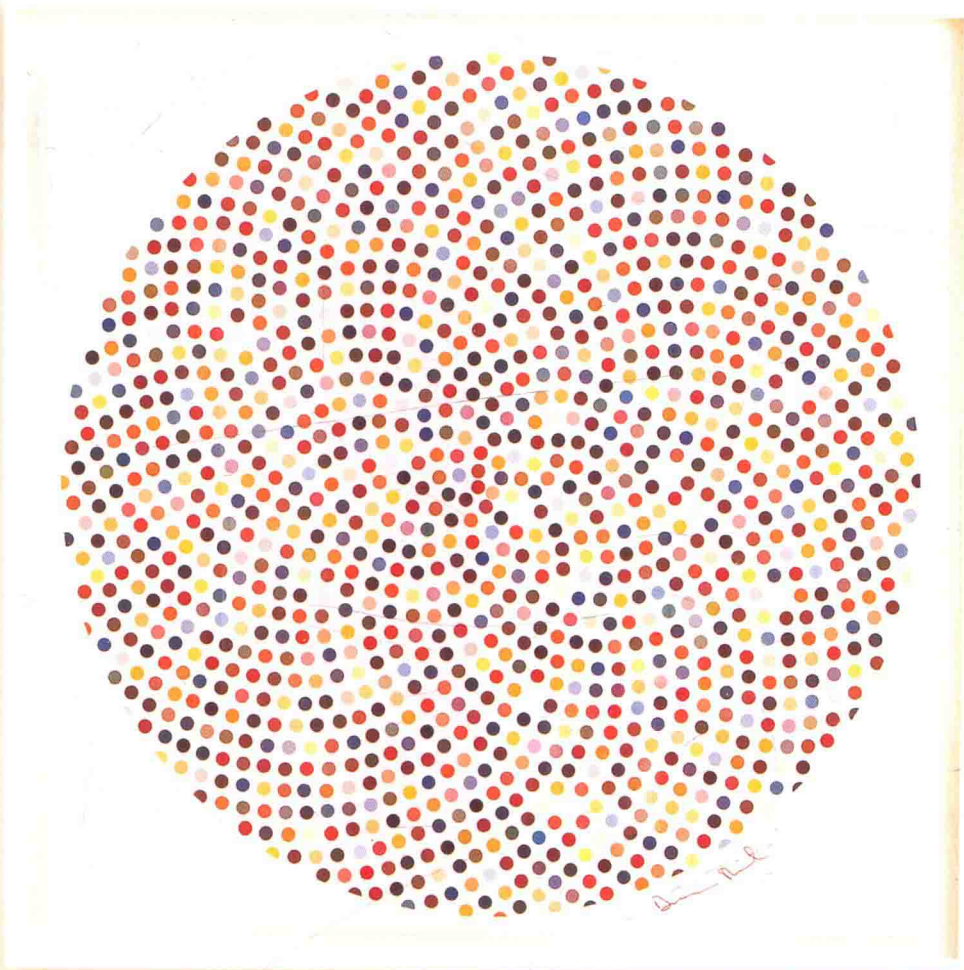
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A design detail as simple as a vertical hand-painted wall stripe in a bold color personalizes a space.



start here

a well-decorated home looks attractive to guests, but *your* well-decorated home is an extension of your personality. Some people wake up in the morning with an instant understanding of their style. They move into a new place and know *exactly* how they are going to arrange the rooms. They know what they love and how to effortlessly pull the pieces together. And then there are the rest of us. It's not that we lack opinions or taste, we just like lots of things—and we're not always sure how to combine them. We have a sense of how stuff should work but aren't confident enough to trust our instincts, or we lack the pieces needed to complete the look. So the space just stays not quite right.

Don't give in to your doubt. A well-designed living space is as essential as the clothes you wear to work. You'll feel better, cooler, smarter, and more confident if your look is not only pulled together, but also reflects your personality. So where to begin? Tackling your whole space can be intimidating, so think of it as an adventure. Get prepared: Here are the eight things you should consider before starting your project.

1. Set a deadline and a budget. Why do home improvement projects seem to drag on endlessly? Unlike with a wedding, there's rarely a drop-dead date. So pick one, right away. Make it realistic (not next week—probably not next month, either), and stick to it. Write it on your calendar. Plan a huge housewarming party for that date and send out save-the-dates to all of your friends. It'll keep you on your toes! Even if you've lived in a place for three years, throw a celebration to say farewell to the same lackluster décor and welcome in your new living space. You also need a budget. Basic rearranging can be done without cash, but chances are you'll need to buy new bed linens or a chair or a couch. Decide right away how much you can devote to new purchases and set your sights accordingly. And keep in mind, no budget is ever big enough!

interior design cheat sheet

Want to know a little secret? There's actually a science to making a room look good. It's all about understanding (and acting on) basic design principles—overarching ideas like balance and scale. You also need to consider color, texture, light, and other specific elements, but we'll get to those later in the book. First, study up on the basic principles that will impact your space.

1

Harmony

Make sure the mood of the room is cohesive or unified. The arrangement of furniture should fit the style of your furnishings. For example, if you're going for a minimalist, modern look, don't have a cluttered corner of traditional accents. Harmony doesn't expel the chance for contrast. Using opposing elements like modern and traditional furniture can be successful when done in equal parts, like a checkerboard.

2

Rhythm

It's the repetition of elements in space and time. There's always a beginning and an end to the pattern: think of columns, or an organized grouping of photos. Symmetry, arranging elements around a center line like a fireplace, is one way to create rhythm, but it's just as rhythmic to repeat shape (for example, a circular coffee table is matched with a circular mirror) or color.

3

Scale

Scale compares the size or dimension of one thing to another. In order to properly keep a room to scale, you need to take the sizes of objects into consideration. The heights and weights of your furniture should be relative to the size of your room. A giant sofa in a tiny living room won't look right; neither will tiny nightstands next to a king-size bed. This also relates to the proportion of objects: The shade of a lamp has to be in proportion to the base.

4

Emphasis

Every room needs a focal point—the area that draws your eye. Whether it's an existing focal point (say an exposed brick wall) or a chosen one (a great patterned armchair), you need to emphasize the area around it so that everything else leads the eye to the focal point. You can also use emphasis to divert the eye from an existing focal point (an ugly fireplace) by placing hot colors or small and visually interesting items away from the area.

5

Balance

Similar to establishing harmony, balance is all about arranging furniture in a way that's pleasing to the eye. Centering certainly does the trick (think of how you hang paintings), but it's more about evenly distributing the visual weight of furniture so that no one piece overwhelms another. You need to arrange the elements of the room to provide an equilibrium: You wouldn't put an entertainment unit next to an ornate fireplace. Rather, if you have a large piece at one end of the room (the fireplace), you need to balance it out with another visually weighty piece at the other end (the entertainment unit).

2. Pick a room. Prioritize your time and resources. This book starts with the most public areas of your home leading to the most private, but if you'd rather begin by creating a calming oasis in the bedroom, go for it. Of course, some things will need to be done throughout your home, like cleaning up and appropriately categorizing everything, but working on one room at a time and following through until the last pillow is in place will help you avoid the feeling of having a hundred incomplete projects under way.

3. Find your style and make a statement. Unless you have a home with an open floor plan, each room can make a boldly different statement. Use your personality. If you live to cook and entertain, fill your kitchen with cheerful colors and artwork. More the traditional type? Start with a formal dining room conducive to serious conversation. And if you'd like them both, that's okay, too!

4. Get on the same page. The space you inhabit is not only yours, it's shared with cohabitants. What are your ideas? What are theirs? Put your inspiration on paper. Choose the colors and styles of specific items you want, and create a design inspiration sheet. You don't have to hammer out all the details right away. Focus on two things: color and spirit.

5. Get up to speed. Learn the basics when it comes to design. This book is all about understanding décor. You'll find secrets that stylists and designers use every day, and once you know why you like certain styles and ideas, you'll be able to project them onto your own stuff.

6. Throw it out. If you're moving into a new space, it's almost easier if you start with nothing. This is especially important if you're combining two sets of stuff. If you can't bear to part with an item, label it and store it in the basement or in a closet. Compromise is important here, too. If you veto an item your cohabitant loves because it won't fit into the decorating scheme, use it in a different room.

7. Shop wisely. Don't buy anything until you really know what you want, and never feel pressure to fill a space. Sparse spaces can be lovely if done right. Know what to invest in. Think of the bed, the couch, and shelves as staples, and the rest as accents.

8. Enjoy the process. Even if you make a bad decision (those bloodred walls may have seemed like a good idea on paper . . .), know that all things design are reversible. Granted, if you're tearing down walls or retiling a kitchen, you should probably think it through, but that garish set of pillows that you swore matched something in your space can be covered in under ten minutes. It's not life or death—it's home décor.

