




7 EASY EXERCISES

How To Assess Your Home's Interior & Add Personal Value To Your Home



Have you ever sat down and tried to assess the areas in your home you like best or why a room is not working for you? Here is an easy process to work toward your goals.

You must first assess what exists. Most of us do not realize the reality of what we have created in our homes, good or bad. The function of a space usually takes precedence in our lives, and rightly so. We buy a home for the number of bedrooms or simply for the mere expanse of the space it has. But space is not always the answer for your needs. Instead, your goal should be a healthy and emotionally satisfying living environment.

Interior designers are astute at assessing interiors, dissecting the good from the bad according to client needs, and moving forward with a plan beyond the mere function of a space. Below you will find some of the very same guidelines we as professionals use every day. Each situation is unique, but here's some examples:

HOME OFFICE: quiet yet inspiring (warning: color can detract from concentration)

MASTER BEDROOM: relaxing, peaceful, quiet

MASTER BATH: functional and/or spa-like

TEEN BEDROOM: restful, quiet, inspiring, a place to recharge

GREAT ROOM: lively interaction areas for visiting, TV, eating along with reading, resting

LIVING ROOM: multi-functional, family interaction

DEN: intimate, quiet



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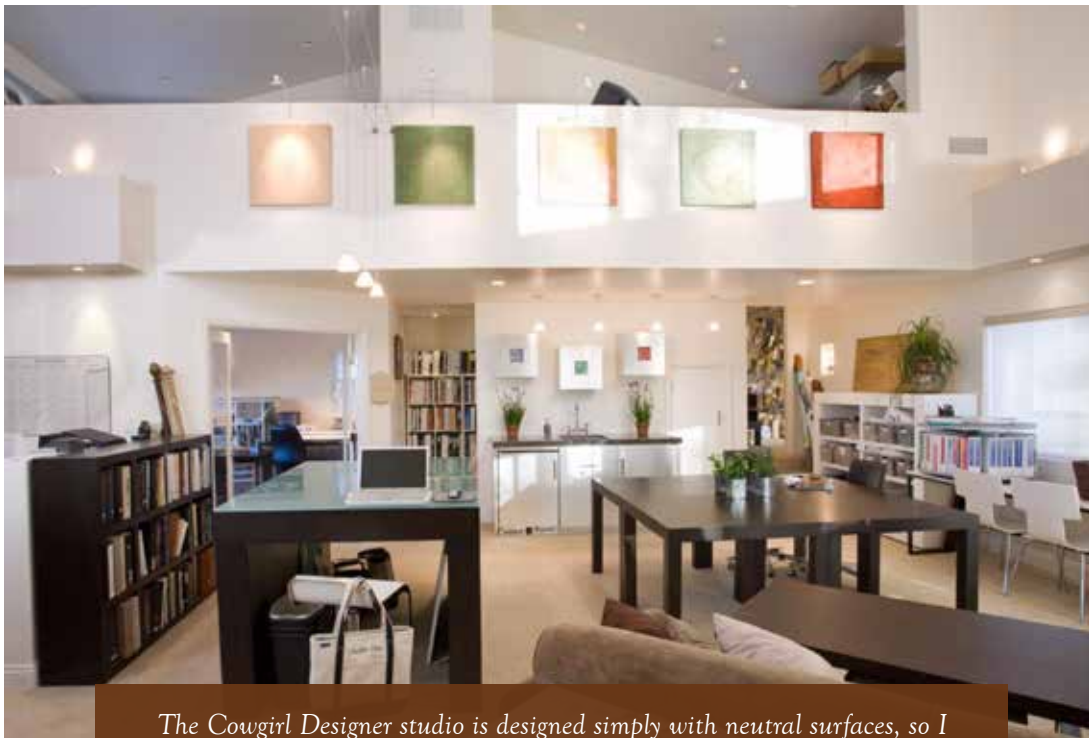
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FEELING

A successful interior is one that evokes the appropriate feelings while you are in that space. It seems obvious, but we sometimes tend to unintentionally sabotage ourselves. Color, light, contrast, texture...they all have different properties that make us feel a certain way. Some of these subjects are general to the entire population, and some of them are unique to you as an individual based on your history.

For instance, if you want that elusive feeling of “ahh” when you come home from work, but in reality, you’d rather walk the dog to get out of the house, then something needs to change. The goal is to create an interior that fits you like your favorite pair of jeans.



The Cowgirl Designer studio is designed simply with neutral surfaces, so I am not influenced by my surroundings when designing for my clients.



EXERCISE #1

I am going to use the Luxury Ranch design studio as an example of how the interior layout and decoration of a room can affect the productivity of the occupant. Often people expect a designer's office to be designed to the max with lots of fancy furniture and expensive wallpaper. I prefer to design in a space that encourages objectivity, without the influence of a particular style or intense color to throw off the color samples I bring into the space to assess for my clients. Hence, my office is void of any decorative furnishings, color or any textural decoration such as wallpaper or area rugs. However, you may find a slight pop of color here and there like the sapphire blue picture frames.

Not all designers agree with this theory, especially if they specialize in one style category of design and like to be surrounded by that style. Because I design everything from contemporary to Western, my studio is a backdrop of white walls, beige carpet, white, grey, black and ebony desks and working surfaces. There is only one main focal point wall and the background is painted a cool silver tone with quotes framed in sapphire blue, my favorite color. There are a few color blocked paintings on the loft wall above me to keep it from being completely boring, but even those are subtle in intensity.

Customize the principals of FEELINGS to the room you are focusing on. You may want other members of your household to do the same for that room or a different room.



EXERCISE #1

How does the room currently make you feel when you first walk in? Use descriptive adjectives and phrases.

How do you WANT it to feel when you enter the room?

ROOM #1

ROOM #2

ROOM #3

ROOM #4



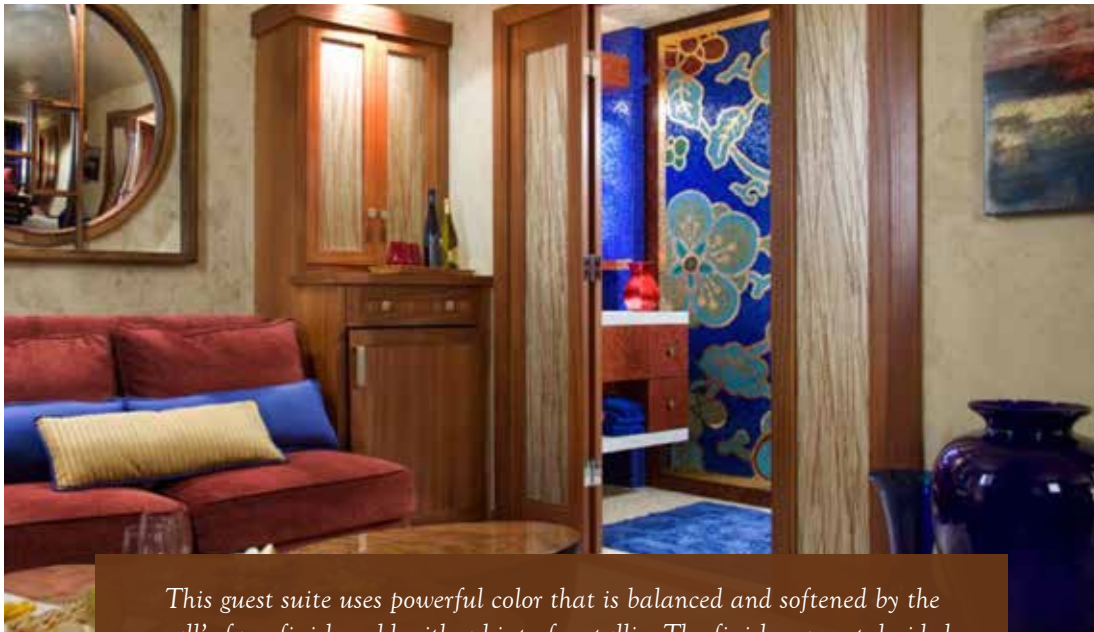
COLOR



Color is by far the most powerful tool there is to transform a room quickly. As with any powerful tool, it needs to be used carefully. Interior designers and artists study color theory for years, so don't beat yourself up when you can't figure this out quickly. Also, the same color will look different depending upon what color it is next to. One small throw pillow in the incorrect color or hue can throw off the balance of an entire room.

Interior designers are trained to know how colors will affect each other. Our clientele, depending upon their expertise, may need several visual aids to be able to envision what their new sofa will look like once the room is painted a different color.

I am often asked at the first consultation what color to paint a room. In reality, paint is the usually the LAST decision I make, after I know what will be in the room. I cannot pick out the correct paint color until the window treatments, flooring, area rugs, artwork, and/or the furniture will be.



This guest suite uses powerful color that is balanced and softened by the wall's faux finish, gold with a hint of metallic. The finish was not decided until the cabinetry and bathroom tile were installed.



EXERCISE #2

What colors are dominant in each room? Do you like these colors, or are you just matching to something existing that you do not even like?

ROOM #1

ROOM #2

ROOM #3

ROOM #4



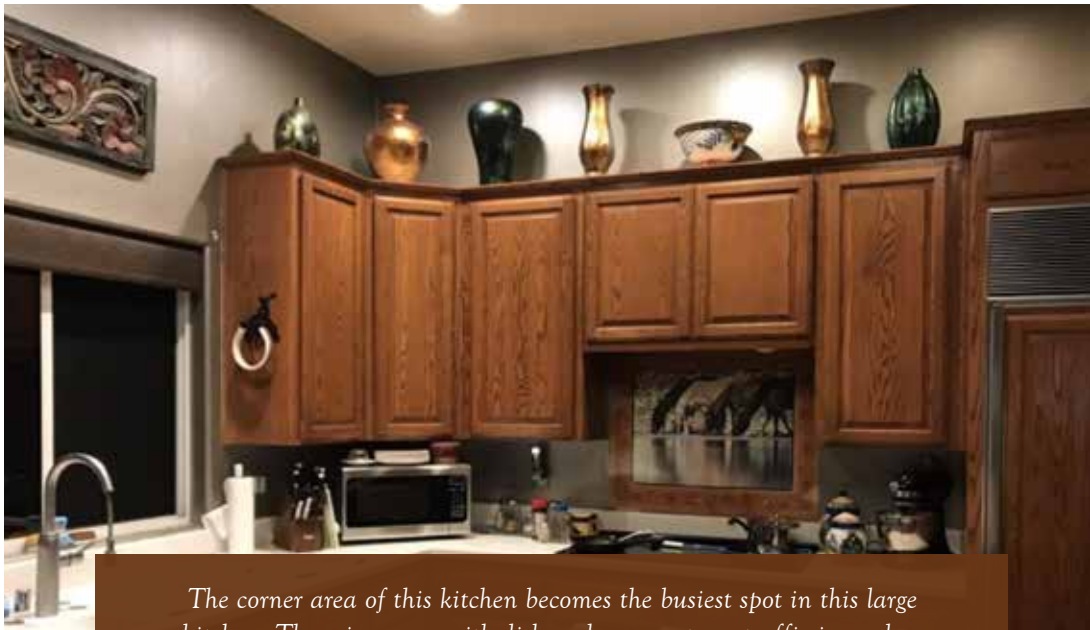
FLOOR PLAN *A functional floor plan always trumps looks.*



It doesn't matter what a room looks like if it does not function well. Moving or adding a wall to perfect a floorplan is much more important than the expensive tile or counter surface that could blow the budget. When in doubt due to compromise, I always suggest going with function over form.

Assess your floor plan first before finding fault elsewhere. Does the floor plan direct traffic in the right direction, or does it often cause chaos? A perfect example is a corner by the refrigerator where everyone seems to want to be at the same time. This can create feelings of frustration and negativity sometimes directed at the person next to you who seems to always want to be in your personal space!

You may be continually anxious that you cannot see your toddler while you are cooking, doing laundry, or watching TV because there is not a dedicated play space that can be sectioned off with a baby gate because the openings are too wide to accommodate one.



The corner area of this kitchen becomes the busiest spot in this large kitchen. The microwave with dishes above creates a traffic jam when cooking and moving from the stove to the sink.



EXERCISE #3

Do you feel in control of your morning routine? In which room or rooms and at what time(s) do you feel distress or anxiety? Are you and your husband always running into each other when getting ready in the morning? List your concerns room by room.

ROOM #1

ROOM #2

ROOM #3

ROOM #4



FOCAL POINT



Every room should have a dominant focal point. If your eyes tend to jut around from place to place and never rest on one thing, you probably need to create one. A colored wall, or your favorite architectural feature such as a fireplace or favorite art work are common focal points. A baby grand piano, or even your exterior view framed by beautiful windows can be the main focal point. DO NOT make an unflattering feature a focal point.

A room without a focal point can make you feel restless or even worse, it is just plain boring! It may seem obvious, but often the things you like least about a room will often become a non-intentional focal point, like a ghastly huge stone fireplace straight out of the 70s. In this case, you either need to get rid of it or find a way to detract from it. An easy solution would be to paint the stone, neutralizing its dominance, possibly blending it with the wall around it. What will remain will be texture on that fireplace surface which can be balanced with large textural pillows and a shaggy area rug under the coffee table.

Secondary focal points are evident in almost every room unless there are very few items in it! Test this theory by documenting what you order you tend to look at things. If you have a rough time being objective, invite a friend over and ask them what they see. They may be able to give you an objective opinion. Family members tend to overlook what they see day in and day out.

This photo is from one of my favorite client homes. The main focal point is the stove and backsplash area due to its large size and the dark, yet bright blue European stove with gold accents. Although the stove is hidden behind the island the rich burgundy color of the island leads your eye to the back wall. And although the arched window to the right is a secondary focal point, if you enter from the left hallway, the arched window is the focal point that pulls you into the room.





EXERCISE #4

Analyze your rooms one by one and list the main focal point and any other secondary focal points you may identify.

ROOM #1

ROOM #2

ROOM #3

ROOM #4



VIEWPOINT *Always consider the vantage point from where your room will be seen.*



As designers, we are constantly aware of where things are located and how they will be viewed from all parts of a room. A dominant focal point is meant to be seen. If your intended focal point is rarely seen because of its location in your room, you may want to reorient it for maximum viewing.

On the other hand, if you do not want an area to be readily seen, there are ways to detract from those areas. A common request in a kitchen is to hide the sink with a raised or lowered area to detract from dirty dishes. This is commonly accomplished in an island with multiple levels.

Viewpoints are different from focal points because there can be many viewpoints looking into the same room. Realize that there may be a different focal point in the same room if viewed from a different vantage point. Even though the main focal point is obvious, it may be hidden from view when walking into the room from a different direction. For instance, the great room may have the same or different focal point entering from the front door like a guest, vs. your normal entry point from the garage.

The only time you get a direct view of this backlit stone kitchen backsplash is when you enter either from a small door from the formal dining room (this view) or if you sit at the bar on one of these stools. However, due to the backlighting and the lights in the cabinets, your eye will always be drawn to this area unless it is morning when the bright daylight from the sink window draws your eye to the backyard.





EXERCISE #5

Pay attention to the entry to each room and prioritize them by the most frequently used and the least frequently used.

ROOM #1

ROOM #2

ROOM #3

ROOM #4



BALANCE



A balanced room considers Focal Points, Color & Texture, Scale & Proportion.

An improperly balanced room can cause anxiety and negative feelings- that dilemma can be solved with balance. However, there's so many things to balance that it may be frustrating for you. Realize that a few hours of design consultation with a professionally trained interior designer can be worth a \$400-\$500 investment. This fee is an inexpensive investment for the value it can bring. In the end it can save you time, money and frustration.

A. COLOR & TEXTURE

Color is one of the most powerful tools there are. Color theory, however, is quite complex and interior designers and professional artists have studied and practiced with color for years before we even meet our first client. If you are intimidated by color, a simple interior design consultation by a professional can clarify your desires for a color balanced room, sometimes in a matter of minutes.

Color influences human feeling. Psychology of color should always be considered along with the use of a room. As designers when we shop for clients, we always bring our control samples with us. No matter how good your memory is, it is always best to balance the colors together as they are selected. If you are looking for a new sofa, bring a paint chip of the wall color, a swatch of the carpet, or colored pictures of your area rug to match too. The temperature of a color (warm or cool) is very important when balancing your color palette.

Have you identified a color palette you would like to use in your home? Do like even like your existing color palette? Is your interior full of colors you don't really like just because Aunt Mary gave you that floral print sofa? Trying to match to something you don't like will waste time, money and give a less than pleasing result.

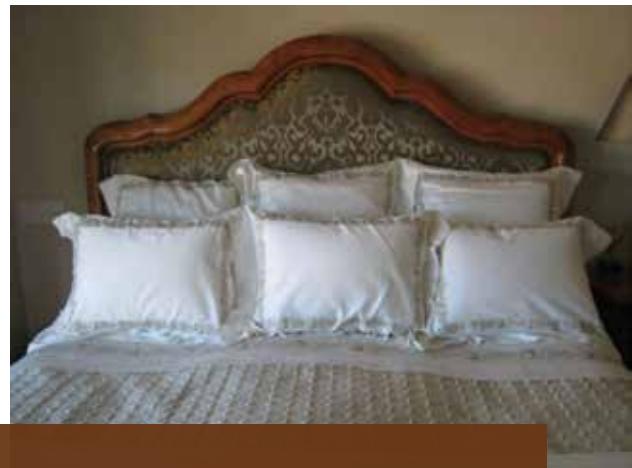


B. PROPORTION

Proportion can refer to balance of the colors in the color palette you choose to use for a room, the proportion of a chair to the size of a room, or even the size of table legs to a tabletop. For example, a contemporary table may have slimmer legs to the same table top size as heavy Spanish table legs to the same table size. Proportion of object parts can define the style of a piece of furniture.

C. SCALE

Human scale is the most obvious reference we can all identify with. However, scale can refer room size also. A tiny slim-framed chair in a room filled with massive furniture will look out of scale, yet it may look much bigger in the same room filled with similarly scaled furnishings.



This San Diego master bedroom I designed is balanced in many ways. The headboard shape and intense warm color against the light wall established it as the main focal point. The TV and dresser do not overwhelm the space and balance the bedframe and headboard nicely. The window treatments are background color derivatives of the headboard, and the texture in the window treatments is balanced by the textures in the bedding. The embroidery on the top duvet is in contrast to the modern pattern on the blanket giving it an eclectic feel. The contemporary shape of the lamp compliments the modern circular pattern on the exposed blanket and the circular legs of the bed. This room has a balance of traditional and modern elements that give it a one of a kind look. The tone of the colorpalette is calming and tranquil.



EXERCISE #6

Based on the topics mentioned previously and what you have learned so far, try to identify the reasons your room is balanced, or why it is not balanced due to color, scale, proportion, textures in the room, etc.

ROOM #1

ROOM #2

ROOM #3

ROOM #4



LIGHT

LAYER THE LIGHT!

No matter how beautiful your focal point is, or how well it is balanced in color, texture, proportion and scale, if your sources of light are not considered you could be very disappointed in how your space looks and feels. Think of that dingy corner in a restaurant, or that part of the doctors waiting room that seems uninviting and always has empty seats. If in a restaurant, we may even choose to go elsewhere to eat because of the lighting. Every corner of your home should be inviting, comfortable, useful or decorative enough for us to love being in that space.

Lighting is extremely technical and always changing. Even interior designers cannot keep up with all the ever- changing technologies involving intensity and temperature of the light a source emits. I sometimes engage the consultation of a trusted lighting designer to collaborate with me on a project. I want to make sure I give all my clients the benefit of the latest advancements.

*The 3 layers of light are obvious here:
Ceiling can lights provide general lighting
for the room while the undercabinet lighting
and fixtures over the island serve as both
task and ambient light sources.*

*Photo sourced from Houzz, design by
William Byrd Homes
<https://www.houzz.com/photos/bridgetown-in-wexford-plantation-traditional-kitchen-charleston-phew-vp~21073845>*

NOTE: Not My Photo. Credit: William Byrd Homes





EXERCISE #7

Based on the three types of lighting listed below, identify each type in each room. You may need to hire an interior designer or lighting designer to help you decipher the color temperature of the bulbs. The bulbs may be incongruent with other light sources in the room.

- 1. General Lighting- Recessed ceiling lights, large overhead fixtures*
- 2. Task Lighting- Focused areas of light for desks, cooking, reading, art, etc.*
- 3. Ambient Lighting- Accent lighting from sconces, lamps or overhead recessed fixtures.*

ROOM #1

ROOM #2

ROOM #3

ROOM #4



I hope you have found this useful.

If you have any questions or
comments about the content,
please contact me by email, I
would appreciate your feedback.

Most respectfully,

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