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H&L'S ANNUAL **INTERIOR DESIGN ISSUE**

INDULGENT IDEAS AND
PRACTICAL ADVICE

H&L FEATURE HOME

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WORKING THE
ROOM



My clients often ask me, "How do I make my space work without sacrificing style?" As a designer with over 20 years of experience, I have had lots of practise. As with anything, along with practise and experience comes knowledge, invaluable Aha! moments and special tricks of the trade. I continue to apply what I have learned in my design work with confidence knowing that I will make my clients happy and give them spaces that look great and fit their needs. My best advice for designing a room, either on your own or with a professional, is to first determine how you want to use the space, then identify any special features and architectural elements that make it beautiful. Knowing this will help you design the perfect space.

In each of the rooms featured, the space is clearly defined by the furnishings, colour scheme, window treatments and lighting. Here are my tips on what makes these rooms work and how I addressed some common design problems homeowners experience when decorating their spaces. I hope they'll help you with your design dilemmas.

THIS ARMLESS CHAIR
IS WELL SUITED TO
A FORMAL LIVING
ROOM DESIGNED FOR
ENTERTAINING AND
SET BY THE FIRE



Jane's **5** ELEMENTS OF GOOD DESIGN

1 ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

No matter the size of the room, highlight the strongest feature in the space. In this dining room, the magnificent tray ceiling adds architectural interest, formality and visually lowers the height of the ceiling, creating a more intimate space. Drama was added by painting the recessed ceiling in warm tan with contrasting white moulding and a crystal chandelier. White wainscoting below charcoal grey walls makes a stunning backdrop for a collage of china plates. The eye is drawn to these features rather than the size of the room.

2 CREATE CONTRAST WITH COLOUR

Contrast adds energy and draws attention to features and decorative elements in a room. Even if you love neutral colours it doesn't mean a room has to be bland, as you can see here. Often when too many neutrals that are the same contrast or brightness are used in a space, it can feel flat. Using a range of neutral tones from light to dark will give a room more energy and create dimension. The more contrast you add, the more dramatic it will look and feel.

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3 DEFINING DETAILS

Often homeowners feel the most comfortable in rooms where everything matches, but matchy-matchy decor can sometimes leave interiors feeling a bit underwhelming and impersonal. Give spaces some life and personality by adding pattern, texture and shine throughout. Shiny surfaces like metal, glass and mirror attract attention and can make a room bright, dramatic and feel more formal, while matte surfaces lend a more modern, understated feel. Texture and pattern add warmth, comfort and personality. If you have trouble mixing these together skillfully, then add texture to the carpet and bring patterns in through pillows, throws and art. Accent pieces like vases, candles and books can be a combination of shiny and matte so you have a little bit of everything in your room.

A NEUTRAL COLOUR SCHEME DOESN'T HAVE TO BE BLAND IF YOU PLAY WITH CONTRAST



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4 FOCUS ON THE FABULOUS

Homeowners often struggle with what a focal point should be and wonder what the benefits are to having one. A focal point creates harmony and balance within a space. It draws the eye into a space and offers a hint to your visitors as to where to look first. A focal point helps make a room comfortable, inviting and it eliminates visual clutter making a room flow more easily. Traditionally focal points are thought to be fireplaces or significant pieces of architecture, but really anything can be a focal point if it is treated properly and made worthy of looking at. A media centre, a beautiful window or even a fabulous piece of furniture can be the focus of a room.

5 SIZE AND SCALE MATTER

The most important element in any room is the furniture. It's a good idea to purchase sofas and chairs that fit the proportions of the space and suit the needs of your family. Even if a space is two stories high, it doesn't mean that furniture should be large or overpowering. Consider the actual floor space or footprint to determine the size and scale of your furniture pieces. Choose seating pieces that are comfortable with durable, easy-to-clean fabrics. Lower-backed chairs provide better visual sightlines through to other rooms or windows; armless chairs, like the ones in this living room, encourage conversation making it more comfortable to turn in your chair to chat with guests. Consider swivel-skirted chairs for rooms used for entertaining.



Elements of good design are easy to master once you know what they are and how to use them. With the right balance of these elements you can completely transform a space. Whether you're starting from scratch or simply updating your decor, remember that a quality piece of furniture, decorative moulding, colour and contrast, glowing floors and wonderful fabrics are simple and affordable elements that will instantly turn a plain room into one you'll love to live in for years to come. **HL**

"A GOOD DESIGN CAN FEEL LIKE SOMETHING YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN WAITING FOR WITHOUT KNOWING."

— Paul Huizinga