

# Solve your space problems with great design



JANE LOCKHART  
DESIGN  
CONFIDENTIAL

Home organizing isn't a new concept, but with the well-timed launch of a new Netflix series people are taking a second look at their own, over-stuffed homes.

The show, *Tidying Up With Marie Kondo* features the Japanese consultant guiding homeowners through her process of cleaning out excess stuff. Her brand of purging — saying thank you before discarding the old, is grounded in the basics of the Shinto religion.

She teaches you to be diligent in the ritual of tidying, and establishing a respectful connection between the present and the past. Mesmerized by her sweet disposition, people willingly thank their excess stuff and emotionally extricate themselves from weight it holds them under.

When designers plan to visit a clients' home for the first time, we ask them not to tidy up or throw things out in advance. We need to see how people really live — stuff, and all. No one likes that request.

Typically, embarrassed glances are exchanged between the homeowners, apologies are mumbled for the mess, the feet, oh the feet keep shuffling, hoping we'll move on.

But, it's not you, dear clients, it's the design. It doesn't work! So, yes, you need space for stuff but we can probably fix it. And by the time we're scheduled to do so, we encourage you to now treat yourself to some Marie Kondo-minimizing.

The first goal to living with any storage is to see it. Sounds simple, but most closets don't have decent lighting. Nooks, crannies, dark corners all conspire to keep you from seeing your stuff.

Throw a well-placed light on the situation and the drama disappears. I like to add undermounted strip LED lighting in the coves of shelving. For larger walk-in closets treat it to recessed ceiling lighting, and throw in a striking pendant light for a touch of elegance.

Closet design is very specific, personalized to individual needs. Think about the clothes you wear every day. Do you wear lots of dresses? Jeans and high heels? Invest in the right type of storage solutions for your needs.

Why have one full length hanging rod when what you really need

is two shorter rods for shirts and jackets, and ample drawers for the rest.

In fact drawers are so much more practical than shelves. You can see everything in a drawer when you pull it out. With shelves you need to dig out to get to the stuff in the back. Remember my number one goal for any storage is being able to see everything.

My number two goal is to hide everything. It may sound hypocritical but no one wants to look at all their stuff, all the time. That's why doors were invented.

Before I moved into my own condo I had several walls of custom storage installed, with doors and drawers to keep everything out of site.

You can learn a lot about people based on the state of their closets. Are they methodical in their organization of stuff or are they metaphorically treading water to keep above it. As designers we are respectful and conscious of our intrusion... but we love solving space problems through great design, so for us it's the best part of the job.

— Jane Lockhart is a celebrity designer, TV personality and leading expert in the world of design. Visit [www.janelockhart.com](http://www.janelockhart.com).



PHOTOGRAPHY BY GILLIAN JACKSON

Closet design is very specific, personalized to individual needs. Think about the clothes you wear every day.

## It may be picture-perfect but buyer beware



RED BARRINUEVO  
STYLISHLY  
LIVING

A home is a huge financial and emotional investment, and a dream for many. Most of us imagine it in our childhood, then plan for it in adulthood. When you're finally ready to shop the market, today's homebuyers have technology on their side, helping them find that perfect place.

Unless it's not really perfect.

Welcome to the world of virtual home staging, where things aren't always as they seem. Let me illustrate my point by telling you my personal home-buying horror story.

As is common nowadays, my search started online. After a seemingly endless stretch of scouring listings I finally came upon a real contender. Stainless steel appliances, granite countertop, gleaming hardwood floors and crown molding. This place almost seemed too good to be true, for that asking price.

I booked a viewing, prepared to be blown away and make an offer. That is, until I saw the place in person.

The furniture was gone. I'm talking empty, except for my disappointment. I'm not sure what the biggest let-down was: the stained carpet, the dated



While conventional home staging involves furniture and decorative elements to boost the home's appeal, virtual staging requires no physical furnishings, just software and imagination.

laminated countertop (where I swear I remembered granite in the photos), the leaking faucets, cracked walls, the list continues. That's when I learned that "virtual staging" is a thing.

With technology, it's easy to entice homebuyers by showcasing a perfect home using virtual staging. While conventional home staging involves

furniture and decorative elements to boost the home's appeal, virtual staging requires no physical furnishings, just software and imagination. There's no limit to the types of digital upgrades that can be applied - none of which actually come with the house.

Decorating software has its place. As a stylist, it's an awesome tool to

test new finishes and products before making a financial investment. Virtual staging programs let you try it before you buy it, so you can make confident choices.

This technology can also be used to give prospective homebuyers a view of what's possible in a given space, with the right investment. Some

homebuyers have a hard time seeing beyond the dingy wallpaper and old carpets. Virtual staging programs help homebuyers picture their potential dream home, with all the bells and whistles of their dream home.

In my case, virtual technology was used to falsify a listing with phony features, and it only served to turn me off - and likely many other home hunters, too.

Real estate agents have a moral and professional code to present listings truthfully. Speaking as a decorator and a homebuyer, there's a lot to be said about a little honesty.

**TIP FOR HOMEBUYERS:** Do your due diligence as you shop for homes. If it seems too good to be true, it probably is. And before you schedule a showing at that incredible home you saw online, it never hurts to ask the listing agent if the photos have been digitally altered.

**TIP FOR HOME SELLERS:** Attracting home hunters is a good thing, but closing the sale is the real objective. If your home has been virtually staged, disclose such information to your buyers right off the bat. After all, if they can't trust your listings, what else are you hiding behind the walls?

— Red Barrinuevo is a Toronto-based interior designer known for creating stylish yet functional spaces. Visit [www.redesign4more.com](http://www.redesign4more.com).