

'Sacred Spaces' part two



Sacred Spaces

Shiree Segerstrom

To continue from last week's column, when making over a home using the client's own furnishings I always start with the living room and entry and then gradually move on to the dining room.

I always view the rooms from the entrance to the room first.

Every room should have an anchor and/or focal point (a large entertainment center or a painting over a fireplace), texture (baskets, throws), scale (something with height or heft), greenery, and one to four pieces of ambient lighting (table or floor lamps).

The home should be somewhat equally furnished with the guest rooms, kids' rooms, and baths obviously a little less so. The master bedroom, the living room,

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the dining room, and entry are important areas and should receive the lion's share of attention.

Entry: Furnishing the entrance room or area to your home with a dresser, sideboard, or tall hutch makes it feel lived in.

I love the sideboard in my entry and top it with flowers, my vintage 1960's silver service, hard bound design books, and framed photos.

It also acts as storage for extra dinner dishes, table cloths, and napkins.

Using a table lamp in the entry creates instant ambience most hours of the day.

The entry should say something about you and your family. If you embrace dogs, kids, and mud then have tile flooring, a bench and a coat rack. If you're more formal like me, then use a dresser, sideboard, or buffet and store your silver and china in plain sight where they can be appreciated daily.

Living room: this is the hardest room in the house to do but if you get the right sofa in the right place you have the hardest parts out of the way. Sometimes sofa placement is obvious. The smaller the living room the easier it is to place the sofa.

One guideline is that if there is a fireplace, putting the sofa opposite has an "anchoring" effect. In design terminology anchoring means something feels solid, stable or permanent. In long, narrow rooms it's always best to

break up the length with a central conversation area where the sofa (and chairs) "flank" the fireplace rather than face it. It's also inviting to place the sofa so it's facing the door by which you most often enter. If you have a large entertainment center, it will narrow the options. Once you place the sofa and loveseat or armchairs, it's really nice to create secondary conversation areas with smaller chairs and accent tables. This is a particularly nice feature for people who entertain.

I have a few comfortably furnished seating areas in my living room. Unfortunately my pets usually get there first.

Dining room: I have a complaint about dining rooms. They're a boring sea of wood. For that reason, I usually do two his and her fully upholstered armless "slipper" chairs for the ends of the table, coordinating window coverings, and coordinating skirted chair cushions for the side chairs.

However for the purpose of this article-making over your home using what you already have, we'll talk about ways to improve your dining room without purchases.

You can help the dining room become more inviting by bringing in a table lamp for your sideboard and installing a dimmer switch for the overhead fixture.

Using them simultaneously creates a really nice ambience. Distract the eye from the wood by focusing on the wall décor. Hang some of your best artwork

and a great mirror.

Always make sure the mirror reflects a nice view. Create a centerpiece for the table that has an anchoring effect which can greatly improve the room and give it new purpose. I love collections of Chinese blue ceramic jars, topiary of differing heights, and even a few stacks of hard-bound books.

Candlesticks can look wonderful if they are in current styles and differing sizes and shapes. Table top effects take a little experimentation.

Keep trying till you get it right.

Step back (don't trip over anything like I do) and look at your arrangement as you work. It will keep your perspective fresh.

Shiree's Cheat Sheet

- In lieu of tall pieces of furniture like hutches and china cabinets you can get a similar effect by topping a dresser, sideboard, or console with a large scale mirror.

- In lieu of wallpaper try using three or four large black frames and outfitting them with a beautiful fabric or wallpaper.

- Mirrors are a great alternative to artwork until you know your style well enough to begin collecting art.

- Matching lamps on a sideboard creates an instant design statement. Candlestick lamps are easy to decorate with because they fit most anywhere, but don't play it too safe.

Rules of scale were meant to be broken.