DESIGN MISTAKES
WE'VE ALL MADE & HOW TO GET IT RIGHT

"the details are not the details. they make the room."

Nothing brings on the design sweats, the overwhelm, + the decision fatique more than a home renovation... particuarly when it's your first one.

"It's through mistakes that you can grow. You have to get bad in order to get good." - Paula Scher.

This is a MUST READ when you don't know where to begin, or if you are in the thick of figuring it out. This guide will provide you valuable information about hiring a contractor, managing expectations, and setting a realistic budget.

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ISSUE NUMBER ONE

SCALE

and

BALANCE

find your inner goldilocks

the issue

Not having proper SCALE + BALANCE in a room is the one of the **BIGGEST + MOST COMMON** mistakes that people make in their rooms. The furniture is either too large or too small for the space which throws off the entire look of the room.

Often times, in Living Rooms, it's HUGE, oversized sofas + chairs with tiny rugs in front. In Bedrooms, it's usually just huge everything. Or, what about when the room feels so vast that you get the urge to re-create the Sound Of Music opening scene? Learn to channel your inner Goldilocks. **Find pieces for your room that are not too big, not too small… and blend it just right.**

Scale + Balance is one of the most basic design principles for a reason, it's the foundation of a space. And while you can bend some of the other rules of design, **this one has to be right.**

how to get it right

Step ONE: Know the size of your room. Simple, right? Yes, but it is so often overlooked. When a room seems small, we almost always measure to make sure something will fit. But it seems this step is skipped otherwise. **It's ALWAYS a good idea to get out your tape measurer**, measure the overall length + width of your room + take note of them somewhere (not just in your head).

It's also really helpful to take photos of your room from multiple angles. This way, when you are shopping, you can reference back to the photos.

No matter how well you think you know the room…**There is always something that can be overlooked**. Like, not having an electrical outlet on that wall, or that return air vent that you need to keep open, etc... Plus, it's just good to see your room from an alternate perspective, like the camera lens (and before + after photos are always fun!).

Step TWO: Know your layout. Before you buy furniture, you need to know (or least have a really good idea) of **what you want + where you are going to put it**. Not knowing this is a disaster waiting to happen… like grocery shopping when you're hangry. You're going to talk yourself in to the pretty sales display, or let too many of your design whims take over + cloud your judgement. Then you'll be stuck trying to "make it work" in your room. Spoiler, it rarely does.

Knowing your layout will tell you WHAT you need, as well as the SIZE of what you are shopping for. This is crucial. And no, "The wall is really big" is not a proper measurement. Sure, maybe you could fit a 9 foot long sectional sofa in your "really big" room, but would you have room for anything else? **Have a plan before you shop.**

3 Step THREE; **Don't buy "The Set."** Yup, I know. This is the hard part. "But it all goes together. I don't have to think about it!" you plead… Yes, but there are SO MANY reasons not to. And big reason not to is SCALE + BALANCE. **Buying a set will always throw the scale and balance off in your room.**

Instead, look for individual pieces that you love and blend them together. You CAN have an "oversized" piece, but something on the larger side needs to be balanced with a slimmer pieces (think skinny jeans with a super comfy oversized sweater). So, if you pick the giant sofa that is just SO comfortable you can't imagine a room without it, great! Just resist the urge to also get the matching chair and ottoman because, guess what, they are ALL going to be huge and they will overwhelm your room. Same can be said for that ultra-cool mid century set up. It all looks SO GOOD and is SO ON TREND right now. But you bring it home and it looks like doll house furniture in your room. As a rule of thumb, **aim to have no more than TWO matched pieces in a space.**

Always buy what you love, I will never try to talk you out of that; but I will, until I'm blue in the face, try to talk you out of buying the Living/Dining/Bedroom/Kids/Office/Whatever Room set.

LAYOUT

and

FUNCTION

first things first

the issue

It's not always about being pretty. That's right, I said it. Our rooms first have to *function* for us, otherwise there is just no point (other than a REALLY pretty Instagram photo).

For example, have you ever walked into someone's house and been completely clueless about where you should sit/stand/awkwardly lean because the room doesn't feel set up to accommodate you and the people in it? Sometimes it's because you have to squeeze between too much (or too large) furniture, or you snag the only available "guest spot" in the room and then you're afraid to leave it all night because you don't want to be standing around or uncomfortably propped on something that really isn't made for sitting on like the rest of the suckers in the room. On the other hand, what about when you're all "sitting together" but you feel as if you have to shout across the room to have any conversation? Having a functioning + clear layout is an important key to a successful room.

Taking the time to think about + play with your layout, either physically or with pen + paper, will help you create the best plan for your space saving you time and money in the long run.

how to get it right

1 Step ONE; When you're placing the furniture in your room, it's so important to first consider **WHAT** you'll be doing in there and **WHO** will be using it. Of course rooms serve multiple purposes so there is not usually one single answer, but the layout that you choose should support the majority of these functions and occupants.

For example, in a bedroom, yes I know you sleep there, but what else? No, no, I know that too. But do you read in bed? Day nap? Retreat and rest? In a kitchen, do you make dinner as a family or is it a solo event? Do you eat in the kitchen? Are you cooking or are you a microwave mama? No judgement here! But the way you answer these questions does make a difference to how **your space should function to serve your needs**.

Take some time (at least 5-10 minutes) thinking about what you really want to do in the room you are working on. **Knowing this will help you hugely with a successful layout.**

2 Step TWO; If you're starting from scratch, **block out a layout** of what you think your furniture plan should be on your floor with painters tape, cardboard (we all have enough amazon packages lying around these days, right?!), toys, blankets, other furniture pieces, etc.… This is an opportunity for you to play not only with the layout, but also with the size and scale of the pieces in it, so don't worry about it being exact.

If you're just looking for one or a few new pieces, start by moving your existing pieces around the room, removing what you don't need, and then use something (see suggestions above) to block out the areas where it feels too empty.

If you're not into the idea of shuffling around your existing furniture, or can't scavenge enough materials together to physically block a layout, then go with the good old fashioned way; paper, pen + pencil.

Have some fun and think outside the edges of the room. Pull some, or all of, the furniture away from the walls. Try something crazy, because guess what? You don't get just one shot at this. Set it up the way you think best, then leave it for a bit (if you can). Notice the way it "feels" and "functions," and give it a little "walk through" as if they were actual pieces of furniture. Then move it around and try something else. Draw every layout you can think of, even something you are "sure won't work," because who knows, it might just work, or kickstart an idea to something else. Keep repeating until you're happy and you've found the layout that best suits you.

3 Step THREE: Once you're happy and have your ideal furniture layout, take a photo of it so you remember it later, or sketch it out on a piece of paper.

Write down the list of furniture that you need + the ideal dimensions for each (including the minimum and maximum lengths/widths/heights) that you could live with. Guess what? You've just made a pro plan + shopping list!

THE WHOLE PICTURE

they can't all be the star

the issue

It's easy to get caught up in the individual aspects of a space and let it cloud your vision. But not *everything* can shine in a room, it's a team effort. When your head spins just from walking into a room, it's too much.

When the fireplace is bold, and across from it is a huge media cabinet with lots of little decor, when the rug is brightly patterned, and there are four different pillows with witty sayings on them, the coffee table has gold painted accents and the chair has fringe + embroidery, there is a gallery wall and an accent wall and built-ins happening...

Listen, there are some VERY successful rooms that carry a lot of punch. But generally speaking, this should be left to the very experienced + brave individuals who inhabit these rooms. You can get there too if you really want to, but ease yourself into it.

Every space should highlight it's best features, whether architecturally or decoratively, and the rest should play a supporting role.

how to get it right

1 Start with some aspect of the room that gets your heart racing in the best way. It could be an amazing piece of art, the beautiful stone fireplace, a fun vintage chair, a great view, gorgeous tile or wallpaper, etc.. then build from there thinking about how you can make *that* piece stand out by *complementing* it.

When you are choosing individual aspects of the room, it's easy to talk yourself into thinking something is too boring on it's on. But, always remember, that it's NOT going to be on it's own. So yes, the wall color can be a light shade, the sofa doesn't have to have the nailheads + button tufting, the countertop and the backsplash and the cabinets don't ALL have to have something going on. Think of your space as a whole.

This isn't to say that every piece can't be beautiful or special. But think about back up singers for a second. Individually, they are amazing. But most of the time, you don't even notice their voices, but without them the song would be missing something + it wouldn't feel complete. Working together, they highlight the star.

There are so many tools available to help you with this. Find one that you are comfortable with to help you visualize it all together before you start purchasing. Pinterest is great for this, but so is just saving images on your computer and printing them out. You can use a basic computer program such as Word or Keynote, or you can even download an app to create a mood board. Visualizing the whole is such an important step and useful way to help you from creating a space that is too boring or too crazy.

Since we're on the subject, let's take a second to talk painted accent walls because they are so often a "focal point." This was a huge trend that came about and allowed a lot of people to experiment in a safe, non committal way, with pops of color. But it since has become so overused and has lost its potency. It's almost like a design fall back when you don't know what to do with a space. "Let's paint that wall red!" Sorry, no. **Accent walls are great IF you have something architectural to accent** (like a fireplace, built-ins, archways or nooks, interesting room shape, etc..) or if you are trying to define the space somehow. Like if you have a large open floor plan and you are trying to distinguish a "purpose" in part of the room. Painting one wall in that area can create definition of the area without having to put up walls or get too creative with your furniture.

In order to really take in a room and feel settled, your eye needs some visual relief. The more you add to it all, the more you could be taking away. Embrace the negative space through a blank wall or some breathing room on the shelves. Let your special pieces really shine by balancing with supporting pieces.

ISSUE NUMBER FOUR

FALLING FLAT

create layers of interest

the issue

These are the rooms that are usually described as "Too... (fill in the blank)." Is everything too light, dark, or somewhere in between? Every room should have a blend of color and texture to keep a room from falling flat.

Don't get me wrong, you can absolutely have a beautiful monochromatic room. You've seen it! But look closely at that Pinterest picture… there is a mixture of textures and shades of that "one" color. When done well, you don't even realize it. But without it, rooms can look cold, institutional, boring and flat.

Another layer (see what I did there?) to this equation is light. Even a light, neutral room can seem dark without proper use of light. And while natural light is always the best option, not all of our homes are built to take advantage of it (and of course, the sun does go down every day, so there's that). Using light to its best advantage can completely change how you see a room.

how to get it right

Layer, layer, layer… like Rachel's haircut.

1 Step ONE: **There are so many opportunities to create layers of color + texture within a room that are so obvious they are often overlooked.** There are the "soft furnishings" such as your upholstered items, rugs, pillows, linens/throw blankets, and window treatments to name a few. Then there are the harder, and sometimes more permanent, materials of the room which are made of the flooring, wall color/treatment, non-upholstered items (coffee/side/dining tables, storage pieces, etc..),

Let's say, for example, you have matching fabric upholstered chair and sofa in your living room. Now add in a leather ottoman, giving the space a new texture and new color. Then add a chunky woven pillow, there's another new texture and maybe even a new color or shade of the color you're already working within. Next, add a metal/glass table (new texture). All of that sits on a natural sisal area rug (great texture and another shade of color) over your wood floor (there's another texture + color shade). You can paint your walls a color and the trim, built-ins another (there's two more colors). See how many opportunities there can be? Remember **there CAN BE too much of a "good thing," so blend it through the use of color + texture.**

Step TWO: When it comes to lighting, is your room an "all or nothing?" If so, you are missing a great opportunity to add layers your space. It's always best to create lighting options in your space, not just for different functions, but because the **varying light sources will reflect light differently off of the textures and colors that you've layered to create more visual interest and warmth.**

Assuming your main light source is from the ceiling, add secondary lighting levels, and even a third source with wall sconces, table and/or floor lamps, reading lights at the bed, bookcase or art lights. By having these different options and combinations of lighting, you can easily set different moods within the space for different functions.

And, whenever you can, put ALL of your light sources on dimmers. Just trust me on this one.

When natural light is not in your favor, do your best to get the most out of what you have. Use lighter colors in your paint + furnishings, opt for more reflective finishes such as a satin or semi finish on the walls, gloss tile vs matte, and of course the trusty mirror placed strategically to reflect natural or artificial light.

Painting a lighter color with a more reflective finish on the ceiling, and slightly darker on the walls will help to create visual height to a room that doesn't have it (like basements). We tend to interpret rooms with lower ceilings as being darker.

In summery, create visual layers in your room by blending colors/shades of one color, differing textures and materials, and creating multiple lighting sources.

ISSUE NUMBER FIVE

PERSONALITY

let yourself shine through your space

the issue

Who lives here? Does the room tell me a story of the people who actually live, breath, love + laugh there? Or does it look like page 32 of the Pottery Barn catalog?

Don't be afraid to tell the story of you and your family when you think about your design. That is what takes your space from a house to a home, and makes you fall in love with the final result.

how to get it right

1 Step ONE: **Trust yourself.** Have I mentioned not to buy "the set." Ok, in case you missed it; Please don't buy the set. We've already gone over how it does not help you with scale + balance, color + texture, or visual layers. But most importantly it doesn't reflect YOU! **Your home should emit all of the joy, love, and craziness that makes up you and your family.** When you look at the things around you there should be memories, stories, or a feeling that bubbles up inside of you. Ok, maybe not with every piece in the room, but with a fair amount of it.

We all have an inner voice directing us towards what we like. Listen to that voice, learn to give in to it and work within it. Your home doesn't have to look like the polished magazine rooms, or the uber cool modern Instagram vignette. **Your home should be YOU, plain and simple.**

In truth, that's what a good designer does. We pull on cues from you and then run with it. Maybe we push your boundaries a bit, but that's because we've done this room designing thing a time or two before and we're a bit more comfortable with it than you are. The look, the end result, is still being driven by YOU; how you live and what makes you happy.

So don't be afraid to use that funky lamp your grandma had that you always loved, or the weird mug you got when you were road-tripping. Display books that you actually enjoy reading and not the ones that just take up space. Or maybe you're not a book family but you have a quirky collection of things to fill up a wall or shelves.

Step Two: **Add life to the room by actually adding life**... like a plant or two, or some fresh flowers. Succulents are great for those of us (ah-hem, me) that have brown thumbs. And even if you can't keep those alive (yup, still me), there are some fantastic faux options available these days. But if you go this route, please use in moderation, and blend (there's that word again!) with something fresh. Cut flowers, or green sprigs from the yard work great (and they have an expiration date so you don't feel terribly responsible for it as you would otherwise.)

And photos, please add some smiling faces to your space. Old and new. It's good for the soul.

p.s. have we met yet?

Hi! I'm Loralie - a Southern California girl born and raised and my design aesthetic reflects that simple and beautiful ease.

Interior design has been a part of me since I was a little girl. I was drawing floor plans to scale when I was in the 3rd grade and proudly proclaimed I would be an interior designer in the sixth grade. I followed that dream through college to receive my Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Interior Design and went on to work for some of the most talented Los Angeles designers and well known clientele. I worked my way up from design assistant to senior designer, loving the process the entire way.

Now as a mom myself, I love to create homes that are centered around a family lifestyle while holding onto that elevated aesthetic that we all crave. I describe my style as gracefully modern and strive to create spaces that feel both fresh and inviting. I believe you can have everything you want out of your home, and I want to help you get there.

Loralie Hayes
Blue Spruce Interiors

still feeling stuck when it comes to your home?

Whether you're looking for full-service design or need support as you execute on your own, I'd love to work with you.

book your free consult call now!