

Fabulous FURNITURE 200

Designers help bring styles together in home

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Ever ask close relatives what they think of furniture pieces you may purchase? Did you try to describe the piece or the room to them?

Sometimes it is difficult to describe what look you are trying to achieve with a room and how to best mix or match design and styles to make it all fit in various transitions.

"There needs to be something that ties the different rooms together," said Pat Roubie, district trainer for Ethan Allen. Ethan Allen has stores in Auburn Hills, Birmingham, Livonia and Novi. "Colors are

probably the easiest way to do this."

Just a splash of red can be used in one room, then that color can play a larger role in the next room, Roubie said. "For example, the bedroom could display red throw pillows, red flowers and there could be red in a painting. Then in the next room, the sofa could be red or it could be presented in an area rug."

A kitchen painted red is a "beautiful look," Roubie said.

But homeowners need to be careful when approaching design themes. "When you are transitioning from the living room to the dining room, you want to try to stay within the same style," Roubie said. "It's a very delicate balance and you really need help from a designer."

"It's a mistake they make sometimes, which they try to do on their own. It can work or it can be disastrous."

Joe McCambridge, manager of product design for Baker Furniture in Birmingham and Milling Road, a division of casual furniture for Baker, said combining Italian, French and English styles is easier than combining American furniture.

"They all derived from each other," McCambridge said. "The Italian borrowed from the French and so did the English with some slight changes, but they all work well together. American style is different because of the use of mahogany and the scale is a little bit more robust." American furniture tends to have more red in it, too, he adds.

A design consultant can help a customer avoid "making costly mistakes" in choosing the wrong styles or colors. "A design consultant can help them make the most of their space," said Roubie. "Sometimes they want to update their look. Consultants can help them decide on a sofa or accessories."

People sometimes aren't aware of how furnishings can suit their lifestyles. "A family may need something more durable with small children or a piece that won't show wear and tear easily."

Neutral colors usually are the best to obtain easy transitions from room to room and can be long-lasting "to get your money's worth," McCambridge said.

Sofas and leather furniture colored in neutrals also help create a casual environment that's easy to build on. "Rugs also can change an environment or mood. It's a nice way to change the environment and not take it to the curb," McCambridge said.

"Most people want the deep brown tones in furniture. You're

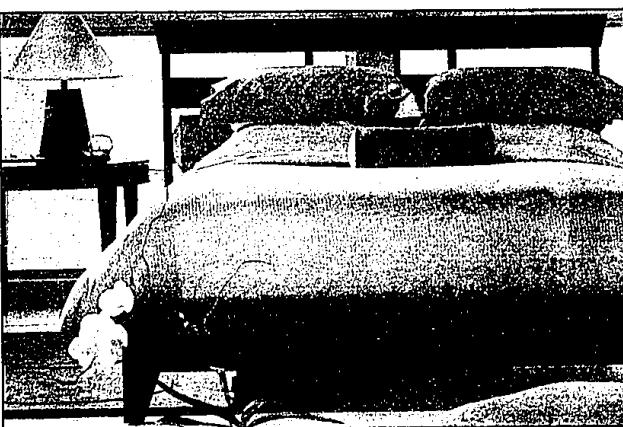


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Sweet dreams: This queen slat bed is dressed up nicely with sheets, duvet and pillowcases from the Minerals Collection.

seeing less red and less black. There's an ease of mixability. Most people like to blend instead of taking it all out and replacing it. You can switch out a chair without disturbing the whole house."

Designers also can give an independent opinion, said Roubie. Family members may not give an honest answer because

they don't want to offend, or they give an easy answer. "Designers can help accessorize what pieces go together. They are good at coordinating fabrics. You want to mix patterns and texture and you want them to coordinate nicely."

Designers can help you plan budget and spend accordingly, in one year to the next.

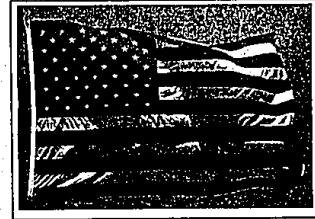
Above all, they give you a coherent game plan. "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail," Roubie said.

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