

INTERIOR MOTIVES

Choosing right designer is a matter of trust



NAOMI STONE LEVY

Choosing an interior designer — whom should you trust?

This is a very dicey subject, and must not be treated lightly. The skills of the designer you choose are foremost. However, because you will spend a lot of time together you must establish a happy personal relationship. People totally unknown to me at the outset of some undertakings have become warm and personal friends. Years after the completion of other work I have also been rehired for subsequent "re-dos" or even larger projects.

If the designer you think is right for you gives you short shrift on time spent together you are in the wrong hands. He or she must understand you, and interpret your needs. Keep in mind they aren't going to reside in the completed endeavor, and shouldn't be dictatorial in their preferences. Having said that, you now must locate a designer who can show work they have done in the past. You don't have to love this specific job. Keep in mind that client has also interjected their taste. Nevertheless that job needs to demonstrate the knowledge and skills of the designer. Knowledge and skills are vital ingredients to your

success. A recommendation from past clients will surely speak volumes.

There are prodigious reasons to make a contract with whomever you have chosen. They have educated catholic taste, and can discriminate between right and almost right. They should have in their credentials a degree from a university or a certified design school. The more history of art and other cultural courses in their curriculum the more competent and qualified they obviously must be. Your conversations with them will reveal a lot.

There are sources available that aren't available to you, and that is their distinct advantage. Being on the design scene daily they are aware of an inordinate number of singular pieces of furniture. Even more important, they know where to locate fabrics that are awesome when combined and which are rarely from only one showroom.

He or she should be pragmatic and able to actually save you many dollars. Eliminating costly errors is only one example. Superior workshops are another ace in the hole of your designer. These craftsmen and women are so in demand they won't accept a one-time job from an outsider. These skilled people are able to execute the tasks at hand. As an example, I very recently had to rescue a client from an ill-fitted cushion on an exquisite wing chair. It overhung the

deck of the chair by almost two inches, and was further threatened by well cords with a "permanent wave." The client simply didn't have adequate resources.

A fine workshop will only use quality material, which is of critical importance to me. Perish the thought of using a fine fabric on a chair that ends up compromised by "cheaper" inferior and inadequate cushioning and padding, which cannot be detected after the final fabric is applied. There is an approved way of tying springs, vs. the cheaper factory "nailed on" coil that is unforgivable in a fine chair or sofa. This cardinal sin may not be realized until much later when the piece "sags." Quality cannot be overemphasized.

If you select a sofa that is too large for the space it will occupy, that becomes a very costly error. The sofa may not be too long, but it may appear ponderous or otherwise incongruous — the error of an amateur. Scale (remember my ad-

monitions about scale?) and impeccable taste are at the command of a very competent designer.

I can visualize many readers saying, "Naturally, she is tooling an interior designer. What does she have to lose?" Only my treasured reputation for honesty and integrity is endangered.

As a final comment, the Michigan Design Center on Stutz Road in Troy has a list of designers to recommend. Your friends also have their favorites. My word of caution is "do your homework." You have a lot at stake, and discretion should be your watchword.

To be continued next week.

Naomi Stone Levy, a Franklin resident, is an interior designer and a former secretary of the American Society of Interior Designers. You can leave her a message by dialing (313) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then her mailbox number, 1897. Her fax number is (810) 644-1314.

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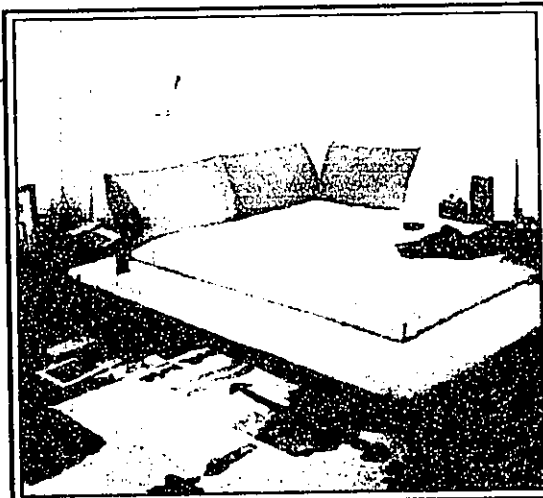
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