

Love

where you live

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACOB SMITH & CHRIS THWAITES

Make space for creating beautiful memories

When your space is well designed, walking into a room is like being embraced by an old friend. You feel instantly comfortable and at ease. The process of design should feel the same way, says Jean Bisnaire, owner of Niche Decor.

How do you live?

Many people think they need to start the design process with style and colour. Not so, says Jean. "It's most important to first understand how you live. What do you do in each room? Do you entertain frequently? Where do people naturally congregate? And if people stay the night, where do you put them?"

These questions are important at your home, but they take on a different flavour when designing a secondary or summer residence. "At the cottage, life tends to be more casual and there are often more people coming and going. Everyone lives and entertains differently—your cottage decor is the perfect opportunity to showcase who you are."

If it's a space that's new to you—one that you're building or have just purchased—think about how you want to be able to live in

it. And if you're renovating or just refreshing a space, reinvent your rooms so that you can inhabit them the way you want to.

Don't forget to consider the landscape and the climate, too. If you're by the water, do your furnishings need to be able to withstand damp swimsuits and wet dogs?

Do you use it year-round or only in the summer? If it's a summer-only cottage, your furnishings must be able to acclimatize to cold winter

temperatures after you've closed up for the season.

"Your lifestyle priorities will help create a room's story and will set the tone for how

how you'll use a space, then you can move on to incorporating the colours and styles that you love.

"Most people can identify what they like, but have difficulty choosing a particular style because there are so many different variables at play," says Jean. He suggests

the tried-and-true method of creating an inspiration book. Add images of colours, furnishings and rooms that appeal to you. But don't forget to

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you're going to start the decorating process," says Jean.

What do you love?

Once you've determined

Jean Bisnaire,
Owner of Niche Decor



include your interests, too. What foods do you enjoy? What kind of music do you listen to? What activities are you drawn to?

Your interests in other areas can often determine your design style, explains Jean. "You'll begin to notice patterns that will help clarify your style. What colours draw your eye? Do you respond to traditional or modern styles? A more casual or formal feel?"

Also consider existing items that you want to incorporate or keep in a room. "Cottages that have been passed down through families often have nostalgic pieces with special importance. Or maybe you have an antique or piece of artwork that you love. Those can and should be incorporated into the overall design. It's those special items that give a space life and meaning for the people who inhabit them."

30-minute design myth
Reality TV design shows can give you some good



ideas, but designing a great space takes more than 30 minutes. "We like to develop a relationship with our clients to understand the best way to pull together all the elements of their life into their living space," explains Jean, who draws on

more than 20 years of design experience to advise his clients. "It should be a fun experience that results in a room they love, not just one that's good enough."

A space that doesn't feel quite right can be the

unfortunate result of a room pieced together with big box store furnishings. But a good designer can help you avoid costly mistakes. "Good furnishings are an investment but they don't have to be expensive," says Jean. "Classic, well-built pieces stand the test of time and can still be incorporated as your space evolves. And when you use our room design service, you get both expert advice and exclusive discounts that help make your space both beautiful and affordable."

When choosing a designer to work with, meet with

them to get a sense of their personality and style. Being able to relate to your designer, and vice versa, is important. If they don't understand what you want and don't have the knowledge or experience to make suggestions you might not have considered, you'll be left with a space that doesn't quite fit.

And that's a shame, says Jean. "Your decor should be a beautiful backdrop for creating memories. If you love it, you'll love to live in it, too." **DS**

BY DAWN HUDDLESTONE



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