

Decorating 101 – Function

OK, you've probably all heard the line, "Form follows Function" and basically it means you should make sure the room functions for you first, and then worry about the form or the decorative part. The truth is, a pretty room is good for the soul, but if it just sits there and doesn't help you live your life the way you want it to, eventually you will be very unhappy with the room and the whole effort will have been wasted. So let's do the hard work first and we'll end on the fun stuff!



To get your room functioning right for you, you have to decide what you want it to do or to be. In other words, create a list of activities you'd like to be able to do in the room. As an example, in this combination living and dining room, this family would like to gather for conversation and refreshments, nap on a rainy afternoon, dine of course,

but also use the table for cards and games. So, this is how our homeowner wants this room to function. Now we need to consider what it will take for each activity to be accomplished.

To do this, start by creating a "needs" list. As you are considering what you will **NEED** to make your room function for you, consider everything, including what lighting might be required for the activities you've selected. Would a new piece of carpet or area rug enhance the function of the room? (I know an area rug sounds decorative but it can cut down the noise or echoes in a room so it performs an important function!) Jot down art and accessories at this point if you have some definite needs as well.

In the example room, to be able to gather for conversation and refreshments, I think they have the furniture covered! There is a lovely seating area and a dry bar that appears to have plenty of storage for wine and glasses. The seating area has tables to set refreshments on, and although there is ceiling lighting, I think one lamp is not enough to really light an area this large.



The same goes for the dry bar. Wouldn't a wall mounted or buffet lamp be nice here? If you agree, then it goes on the list. While in this area, I would also jot down that it is hollow in this large room with all hard surfaces and I know I'm going to need to add some softness in the way of an area rug, some pillows on the furniture and maybe a throw for those rainy day naps! Those are the items required for the space to

function effectively but you might also be thinking about something on the walls in the way of artwork and a few nice pieces on the tables. The more detailed you can be here, the better chance you will have of creating a budget that works.

In the dining area, it appears on the surface that this area is in great shape. The furniture is brand new and it's dressed beautifully. However, wouldn't it be nice to have a storage piece of some sort here to hold linen options? Different centerpieces? Games and cards? Sure it would, so add storage to the list. As we find the storage, we'll know better what we will need for the walls, but it's so



obvious the walls need something that I would add art to the list as well. A floor plan would help to determine if an area rug would fit in this part of the room, but it would be nice to help cut down on the echoing and make this space feel more comfortable and homey. Write it down for now so we can get everything we think we'll need onto the NEEDS list. Also, keeping everything in mind, on the ceiling there is a white plate that appears to be covering the electrical for a pendant fixture. This would be a must to allow comfortable dining, gaming and playing cards....onto the list it goes!

The only thing left for our list is the evaluation of the current pieces. So, yes, we didn't have to write down a sofa and loveseat because they exist already in the form of a sofa and chaise with a nice chair and a half. **BUT ARE THEY THE RIGHT PIECES?** This is the point that you have to be ruthless. Ask yourself, are these pieces really going to work for the functions I have listed? If a piece isn't really working, if it's too large or too small for the space, get rid of it by moving it to another area of your home that suits it better. This is also a great time to trade furniture pieces with family or friends. It's a fun way to get "new" stuff that may work better for you without spending a dime!!! If you have determined that something isn't working, add it to your needs list that is quickly becoming the **SHOPPING LIST!!**

Activities	Needs
Watching TV	TV entertainment center
Naps	Comfortable sofa
Sewing projects	Table, storage &
Homework	good lighting
Inventory	Shopping List
TV	Entertainment center
Sofa	Table, storage & good lighting

Here's an example of the lists for a different room. Once the activities or functions for the room are listed, jot down what each activity would require.

Take inventory of the items that are on hand that are working well for the room, and those items that are left on the NEEDS list then become the SHOPPING LIST! Give it a try; this process may open your eyes to something you never thought about before.

The next chapter in Decorating 101 is all about floor planning. Creating a floor plan is the best way to make the most of the space in your room while at the same time creating balance, finding your focal point, and making sure you have a good traffic flow. Check it out next month!

Shari



© 2009. mattandshari.com, all rights reserved.