

## Lights, Camera, Action . . . Design?!?

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(ARA) - "Reality" shows have saturated television programming, especially in the area of home and garden design. You can "trade spaces" with a neighbor, enlist a professional to recreate a high-end designer room on a budget or secretly call in a design team to remake a room as a surprise for a loved one. This makes for compelling television watching . . . especially when the transformed spaces and the shocked reactions of the room makeover "victims" are revealed. But these reality shows are not real. They do little to showcase the benefits of working with professional interior designers who can help you "trade spaces," "change rooms" or "design on a dime," but better.

Although some design show hosts have a formal education and professional background in interior design, many do not. The professional design talent would be the first to tell you that the magical world of television, with its strategic editing and instant gratification, is far different from the real world of interior design where good results require careful planning, patience and expectations.

Although a design show's budget may be \$500 to \$1,000, that amount doesn't include the cost of hiring and using professional labor. These shows have designers and multiple contractors on staff who make sure the inexpensive supplies are translated into aesthetically pleasing (although not necessarily functional, practical or safe) furniture, accessories, window treatments and wall coverings.

After watching episodes of these shows, some viewers may mistakenly believe that any home improvement project can be accomplished within a very limited price range and a smidgen of time, creating unrealistic expectations that can only lead to disappointment. Disillusionment will turn into delight, however, if you take the time to find and hire the right professional interior designer who can develop a design solution and practical budget specific to your needs.

Qualified interior designers can make a huge impact when it comes to home renovation and remodeling. Designers are creative problem solvers who can analyze lifestyles and needs, optimize traffic flow, organize and effectively use available spaces, select color palettes, and interpret personal preferences. And unlike most of the design reality shows, professional designers listen and adhere to their clients' needs and preferences before recommending a design course to take.

If you are an avid "do-it-yourselfer," a designer can set a cohesive renovation plan so you can tackle your own project efficiently, realistically and on budget. When a job is more complicated, a designer can assemble a team of specialists, provide access to a variety of resources that you might not be familiar with and seamlessly manage your entire project from beginning to end. Designers can be consulted for their skills and expertise at any level of need or any size or scope of project. You'll find that the collaboration between homeowner and designer leads to tremendous results, which will exceed expectations. Best of all, you'll be surprised at how little designer fees add to the overall renovation budget, especially when you factor in eliminating the risk of costly mistakes.

Design reality shows have made the world of interior design accessible to viewers of all ages, income levels and cultures. People are learning that a well-designed space increases functionality and contributes to a family's sense of well being. You should view these shows as a source of inspiration and entertainment, but work with a professional interior designer to create a home you can live in and enjoy for years to come.

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