



The Curated Home

GIBSON



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# The Curated Home

A FRESH TAKE ON TRADITION

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# Primer

Working with clients is a bit like dating—you really have to get to know the person you are going to spend time with. Before embarking on any project, I sit down with my clients and ask them questions—a lot of them. This helps me determine budgets, styles they might like and not like, and learn what the overall goals are for the way they want the spaces in their house to function. The following are a few things to consider before designing or simply tweaking your décor, as well as things to consider before making any purchases.



## DETERMINE YOUR STYLE

How do you want a space to feel? Here's a trick to help you home in on your style: take a look at your closet. Do you prefer tailored pieces or do you prefer looser and more comfortable items? Do you gravitate toward certain colors or patterns? Another way to help you determine your style is to think of key words that define how you want a space to feel. Traditional, formal, elegant? Playful, humorous, inviting? Monochromatic, streamlined, modern?

Take note of design inspirations in every facet of life. I often use these as a starting point to discuss with clients. Even if you don't regularly leaf through the latest design magazines, something has certainly put the design bug in you if you're reading this book. Recall a hotel in which you've stayed or restaurant in which you've dined that particularly struck your fancy. Perhaps it was a minimal interior from your trip to Japan or a clubby bar in New York furnished with worn leather chairs.

## FIGURE OUT WHAT YOU DON'T LIKE

It is a lot easier for people to express what they do not like. By putting dislikes into the equation, we can eliminate some things and narrow in on others. For example, a bold large-scale print might remind you of something in your childhood that you do not want to see in your own space. Or a wingback chair might bring back memories of being sent to time-outs for pulling your sister's hair. Likewise, a certain color might evoke feelings of a past design trend that you aren't eager to repeat. These memories and reactions are very personal and individual, but also define our tastes.

## THINK ABOUT OPTIMAL POSITIONING

What is the optimal place to position yourself in a room? Where does the light come in, or where are the views best? How does the space look from the spot where you will likely be sitting (or standing, as is the case perhaps in the kitchen) most of the time? This line of questioning may help you decide on furniture purchases and placements. For example, you may want to avoid walking into a room to immediately face the back of a tall piece of furniture, such as a high-backed chair or sofa. Lower profile seating (or a bench with no back) will make a space feel more open and inviting when you enter. Do you want your desk or computer facing a window or the door? What do you want to see when you first wake up—a fireplace, a window, a favorite painting? In addition to thinking about how furniture pieces relate to one another and the room, you'll want to think about the traffic flow: how people enter, exit, and navigate the room. For example, in a living room, make sure people can easily get in and out of the seating group without having to awkwardly tango around a side table.



opposite: Using a variety of blues—all dark—helped us achieve a moody and clubby atmosphere in a Marin County library.

top: My travels to India have provided infinite inspiration.

center: Samples are important to get the feel (literally) of a fabric—and determining the right balance of textures in a room.

bottom: Picking the perfect shade of blue requires many, many swatches!

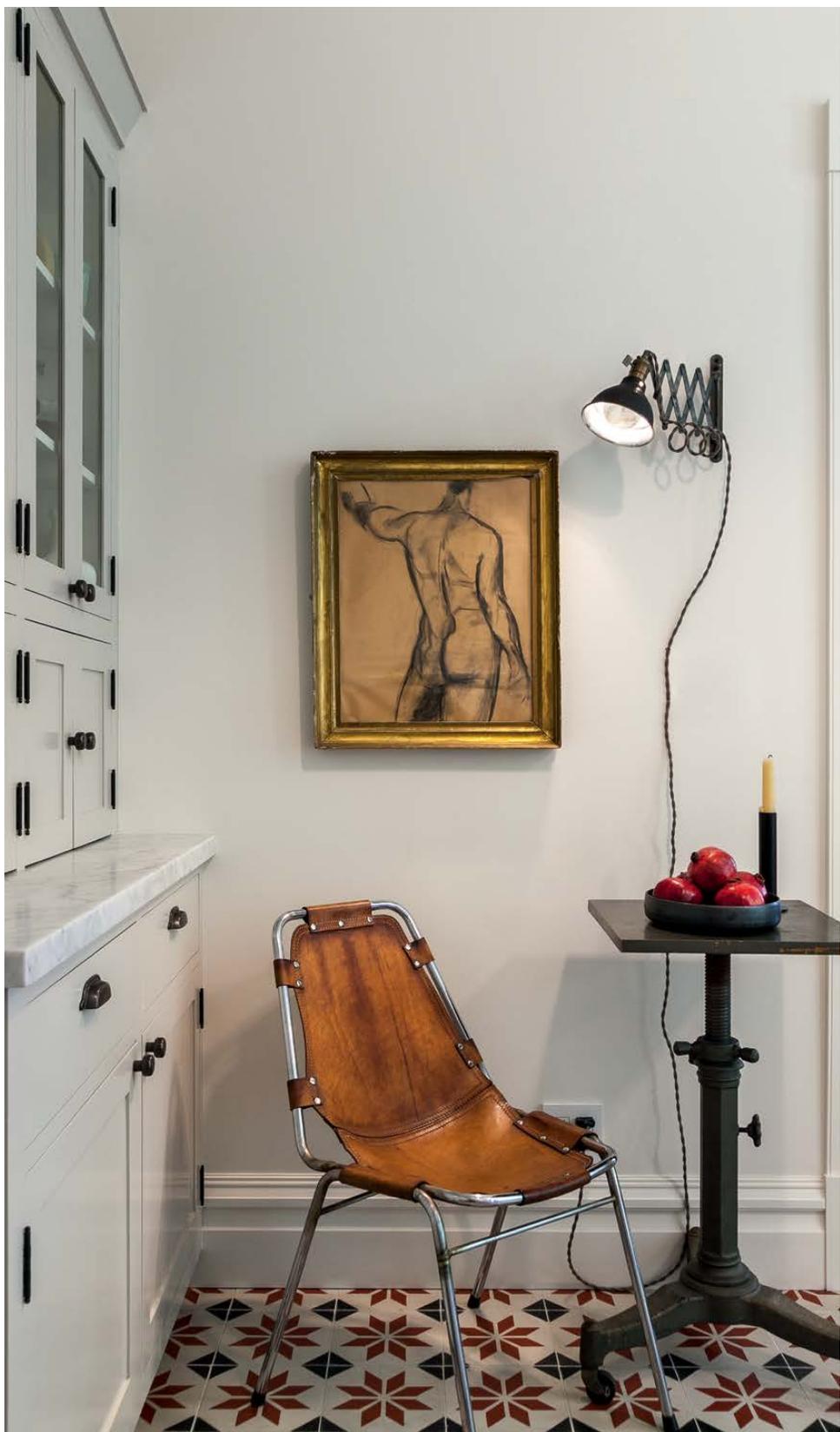


above: We channeled the colors of the Atelier Brancusi in Paris for the floor and painted cabinets in this kitchen. There was even a pop of gold which came to fruition with the brass faucet.

Whenever you can request samples from a vendor, take the time and effort to do so. A product in person can be very different from what it looks like on your computer screen.

right: Placing a chair in this kitchen allows for a spot to leaf through cookbooks.

opposite: Since this kitchen is very long with no center island, planning out the positions of appliances and the flow of how you will cook and work in the space is key. The pendant lights are from a salvage yard in Portland, Oregon. The floor tiles are from Cement Tile Shop.





# Dining Spaces

Dining rooms take on many forms—from spacious rooms to nooks off the kitchen. No matter the size or style, a dining space is meant to be a place to gather for everyday meals and special occasions.

My fondest childhood memories are with my family in our dining room. White roses freshly cut from the garden were a common sight, while different tablescapes were conjured for varied occasions, from birthday parties to elegant Saturday evening dinners. There always seemed to be an event or holiday being celebrated in the dining room.

These clients are fearless, as evident by the Ellie Cashman's large-scale floral wallpaper, green leather Saarinen Executive dining chairs and Apparatus chandelier.

## CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS

Since dining rooms are typically underutilized and are predominantly reserved for special occasions, consider alternative options for this space, such as lining a wall with bookcases to create a library-like feel. The dining room table can make a great space to use as an office. Much of this book was written sitting at the dining room table with my laptop, with photos and concepts spread across the surface. (Copious amounts of coffee and wine were involved as well.)



This dining room is the centerpiece for this large family; there are always events and family gatherings.

The table is meant for the outdoors, but why not break the rule? And if you can't decide on one style of seating, mix a few different styles with a commonality (like the tone of wood).



### ANTICIPATE TRANSITION

Think about the sweet wallpaper with the ABCs or animals and the overall life that it will have. When will you or your child grow tired of this? Consider that childish motifs might not last into adolescence. I am not advising that you create boring spaces. You can accessorize a room with age-appropriate accents that can be gradually replaced over time. My approach emphasizes décor that will provide future flexibility. A space does not have to be designed to reflect gender. “Musical bedrooms” tends to happen with the announcement of a new addition: One child is shifted to another room to accommodate the new arrival. Fortunately, accents and trims can easily be changed. When neutral backgrounds are the backdrop, these rooms can transition with less hassle.



above: At first, gray walls might seem too dark for a kid's room, but when contrasted with a playful, green dresser from Room and Board, it absolutely works! The framed shadow box Boy Scout badges belonged to the client's father.

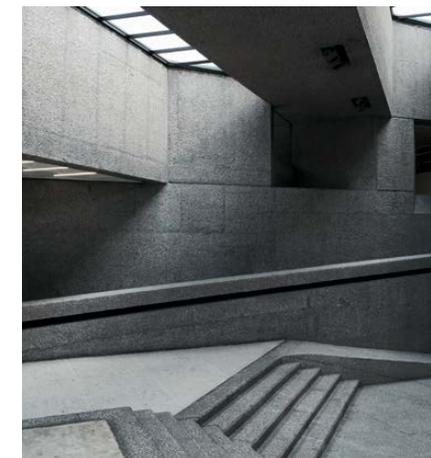


The inspiration for the channeling in the sofa came from two unexpected sources: the Museo Rufino Tamayo in Mexico City and a hot-air balloon ride in Africa. The Bradley Duncan piece is made of pegs; the 3D art adds interest and dimension.

## INVEST IN THE SOFA

When it comes to purchasing chairs and sofas (please do not call it a couch, which hurts my ears), this is not the place to “cheap” out. Invest in buying something that is the best quality that you can afford. But remember that quality and cost are not exactly synonymous, so do not simply opt for the most expensive thing you can find. People often make the mistake of buying “placeholder sofas,” meaning that they are less well made and will eventually (most likely sooner than later) wear out. I am no math genius, but if you add up all of those cheap sofas you’ve gone through over the years, you will most likely exceed the price of investing in a quality piece one time. Thank you to my third grade teacher, Mrs. Marshall, who told me math would come in handy someday.

Key furniture that is well made can last a lifetime. Consider how past generations recovered pieces rather than replacing them. I also advise people to not buy furniture in sets. There needs to be balance in a space. If your sofa happens to have a skirt, make sure that the chairs do not or vice versa. Similarly, you don’t want to have too many wooden legs that all look the same or have everything the same size or scale or even upholstered in the same material. You can create a far more interesting, layered, and balanced room by keeping these rules in mind.





# Powder Rooms and Bathrooms

Designers often liken powder rooms to jewel boxes. Their compact size encourages more risks and playfulness than, say, an expansive master bath. With powder rooms, you can break the rules, since the space doesn't necessarily have to relate to any of the other interiors in the house. Go bold with wallpaper or a paint treatment. The details—guest towels, nice soap, and fresh flowers (a small room means you can get away with just a single stem in a bud vase)—can inject personality.

Since we went bold with the wallpaper by makelike, we went simple with the mirror from Schoolhouse Electric. If the client ever decides to change out those elements, the marble countertop and subway tiles are classic, and will go well with practically anything.



Hexagons are a classic pattern, but in this bathroom it becomes more modern with the large, black tiles. The freestanding tub is by Badeloft, and we had the floating vanity and open shelves constructed in wood for an organic touch.

#### USE LAYERS AND DETAILS

Just like every other room in the house, bathrooms need to be thought-out. Unless the look you are after is a sterile hygienic lab (which is a preference for some), think of the ways you can add decorating details and layers to the functionality and efficiency of the space. How do you do this? Let's start with the fallacy that you need a medicine cabinet. Consider an alternative storage solution and swap out the mirror with something that offers some interest. This really breaks up the hard surfaces and is a bit unexpected.

You might want to tone down the antique glass mirrors in your everyday bathroom. At times it is nice not to notice every line and wrinkle, but in the case of your usual bathroom you do want to actually see yourself. And can we all agree that those magnifying mirrors should be kept in a drawer? Personally, I don't need any more of a fright first thing in the morning with my bedhead. I prefer natural light in bathrooms, but realize that is not always possible. Don't forget about layering lighting in the bathroom and adding dimmers.