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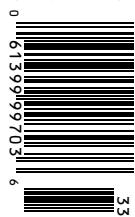
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Design Is Never Done

Krista Salter explains why renovating is like nurturing a piece of art

While travelling to New York City this past month, I was struck by a slogan I saw printed on a canvas bag. It stated: *design is never done*, and I agree wholeheartedly. Renovating and decorating a home is like nurturing a piece of art. It starts with a vision and slowly, through execution, it takes shape. I learned this valuable lesson from my own first home renovation. If you read the Spring issue of *Hamilton Interiors*, you may be familiar with the experiences I endured during the renovation of my century home. I lived to tell the tale, and I am here again to tell you there is light at the end of the tunnel. I have now been living in my renovated space for a year and a half and there is still a long list of 'to-dos'. Little by little, projects are being completed, but it is certainly taking longer than I had expected.

In the beginning, I wanted everything to be complete and per-

fect. My mother refers to this as "model-home-itis". It's a term she has coined referencing my idea that my home must look perfect from the get-go. I can't help myself and I come by it honestly; after all, I am a designer by trade. However, the reality was that I have Champagne taste on a beer budget. This led me to be more creative and innovative while trying to make my home look like it belongs in a design magazine. I was happy to take on this challenge and I have learned a lot throughout the process. Here are four helpful steps toward tackling your continuous renovation projects, especially for those adventurous souls who are living in the space during the transformation.

Focus on one room at a time

To avoid being overwhelmed, focus on one space at a time. Choose the rooms you use the most, as these spaces will change *how* you



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live. By working from room to room, I was able to fight the urge to go on a shopping spree to outfit my entire home. The kitchen was at the top of my list because it would be the most costly, and also the improvements would have the biggest impact in the home. Decide on what area needs the most TLC. Do you need a comfortable bed to have a sound sleep? Is a guest room essential? Do the kids need an allocated TV room to keep your sanity? You decide what the priority space is for yourself and your home and place all your attention in that room until complete.

Budget

As always, you need to know your resources such as time, money, etc., in order to complete your project. I like to start with the most expensive projects, working towards the least expensive. This allows for a cushion of money if I exceed the budget on my first major project.

Your budget can also help fuel your creativity. Where are you able to cut costs by repurposing vintage finds or reusing old materials from a friend's project? In my case, I decided to salvage some old cabinetry from an existing kitchen that was being renovated by a family member. This helped save money for the overall budget. Upcycling is ideal, not only to save on cash, but to help keep your environmental footprint at a minimum. Visit online classified ads or Habitat For Humanity's ReStore to find gently used materials for your space.

Plan ahead but don't buy ahead

Before my renovation started, I had decorated the entire house in my head. I wanted to purchase big-ticket items such as a sectional sofa and other various pieces of furniture. However, I restrained my desire and waited until I moved in and lived in the space. This helped avoid spending money on other frivolous items but I also realized that a lot of what I already owned actually worked well in the new space. So before you go on a crazy spending spree, plan out your space and then wait and see if you still need all the items you thought you did.

A key piece in planning ahead is creating a detailed plan. In my case, this meant ensuring I designed the kitchen layout according to the cabinetry I would be repurposing. Planning ahead allowed for a perfect fit for the retrofitted cabinetry and a seamless installation. I was able to identify where I needed additional cabinets and also plan for the colours and finishes on the cabinets, floors, and backsplash.

All told, I lived without a functioning kitchen for almost six weeks! It was worth the wait and the kitchen is now my favourite room in the house. It's cozy, up-to-date and allows me to entertain efficiently.

Be patient

Like me, I know you want your first home or new space to be flawless from the get-go, but there is no need to stress over such lofty pursuits. If you are doing the hands-on work, it will likely take longer than if you hire someone, so stick to your plan and don't forget to take some time for yourself and enjoy the process. Be proud of the work you have accomplished and take some time to breathe before starting the next project.

My backyard was another space that needed some major attention. Since I had to excavate a large part of the yard to build a foundation for the addition, the backyard was left as a vacant field of clay for two years. There were moments when I wanted to rush into the yard project, yet I knew that if I divided my attention between projects indoors and the backyard, it would prove to be difficult. This is where I practiced my patience. Instead, I waited until this spring, when there was enough time and money to execute the design planned for the yard. As with the kitchen, I planned out the space ahead of time with budget, labour and materials in mind. Again, I sourced out some gently used materials, such as the interlocking stone, to save on cost. I hired professionals to excavate the dirt for the patio area, which was essential. It alleviated many hours of hard labour and included the removal of the dirt from the property. When needed, I enlisted some hard-working friends and paid them with food and drinks to help us get through this process. Although challenging, the yard project was a learning experience that taught me many new skills. Now I know how to tamp gravel, lay interlocking brick, fertilize soil, lay sod, dig fence posts...and the list goes on. With my backyard oasis almost complete, I was able to enjoy the remainder of the summer, with a smaller list of 'to-dos' for next year's season.

Although design may not ever be done, and 'to-do lists' can go on for miles, don't fret! Follow these four simple steps and get started, one project at a time. And if you find yourself really struggling, call me!

For more details on the renovation of my home, be sure to read my blog, the reno projects, therenoprojects.com, where I expose the process in greater detail.



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