

# TOP 10 DECORATING DISASTERS



by **ADENE LUCAS**  
Accent on Design

**When reminiscing about my childhood,** I often think back to the yellow and brown room with orange carpet that I grew up with. The problem with bad decorating choices is the poor impression that is left. Sure there are countless other memories, but I still groan when I think of our old formica kitchen table with the vinyl seats trimmed in yellow piping. Enough said.

To avoid traumatizing your friends and family with poor decorating choices, I have come up with the following Top Ten Decorating Disasters. If you see your home in any of the sub headings please seek professional decorating help.

## 1. SCARED FURNITURE

When deciding on furniture placement, keep in mind the goal is to create an area where conversations can take place. When the furniture is shoved against each wall it creates physical and psychological distance. If you are unsure of how far is too far, eight ft. is a good rule of thumb. When deciding on furniture placement, begin with the largest piece. Your home should be welcoming for friends and family, and furniture placement is very important in creating that feel.



## 2. PLASTIC GREENERY

I cannot stress it enough, the top of cupboards look better bare than with dusty plastic plants along the top. Please refrain from this horrible decorating practice. It never looks good and screams "I don't know what to put up there". Try ceramic vases or place large objects in groups. Items that are grouped off to a corner in an asymmetrical style look interesting. Negative space is always a good thing. You do not need to fill up the entire area along the top of the cupboards. Even something quirky like a ceramic fish draws your eye and can be used as a conversation piece. Plastic plants get dusty and that's about it!

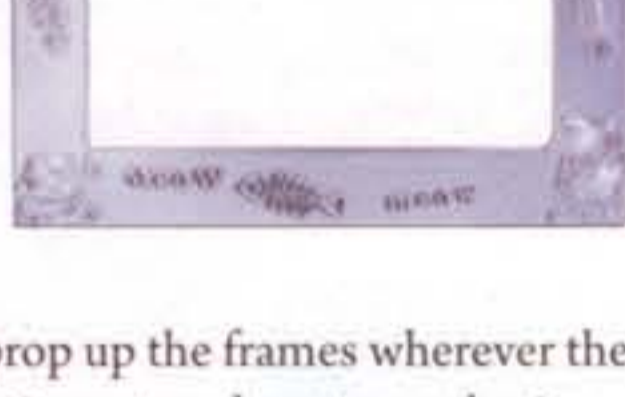


## 3. INEFFECTIVE LIGHTING

Lighting should enhance the look of a home and not detract from it. Dimmers work wonders for the mood of a room because no one likes to be under the glare of a bright light. Task lighting is one thing, but ambient lighting is another. Just think about restaurants where the light is dim and the atmosphere is cozy. When the restaurant is closed and the cleaners are doing their jobs, the lights go up and the atmosphere is gone. Don't try to light the room with one fixture, especially if it's over a dining room table. Keep that fixture about three ft. above the table. Remember, the best lighting is layered and includes task, ambient, decorative and accent lighting.

## 4. TOO MANY PHOTOS

Everyone has photos of special people, events or places in their homes. Because displaying them can be tricky, some people just prop up the frames wherever there is a spare ledge. To really have an impact and create a cohesive look, create a gallery wall in your home. Select the same finish for all of the frames, then display all of the framed photos on one wall or ledge. The spacing should be the same through out. Centre the largest picture and build out from that image. It's also a very inexpensive way to display your original art. To accommodate more photos, try grouping similar styles by stacking odd numbers on top of each other.



## 5. FEELING UNBALANCED

Balance is one of the key principles of good design. If a room has a grand piano and grandfather clock on one side, and a glass table on the other it tends to feel lopsided. Create balance by placing furniture based on the visual weight of the piece as well as the space it takes up. Be very conscious about placement. If it is a struggle, try taking a picture of the room and analyzing how the weight distribution looks.

## 6. POWDER ROOMS

I always enjoy trying a new restaurant, and discovering the powder room is as beautiful, perhaps even more so, than the actual restaurant. I could do a whole column on the powder rooms that are worth seeing in Calgary, but I digress. You can create that same wow factor in your own powder room. Start by removing the dreaded towel rack that most two-piece baths have. There is no need for an entire rack, since there is no possibility of a shower. A towel ring adjacent to the sink is enough. Also remove the builder-grade mirror and the exposed, white bulbs, which certainly don't create the wow factor. Choose a rich colour of paint, a framed mirror, new light fixtures and a few accessories and voila you have THE powder room.



## 7. ART = EYE LEVEL NOW STOP!!

You can ruin a beautiful piece of art by hanging it too low or too high. Eye level is relative so a good rule of thumb is to hang art so that the focal point is at about 5 ft. 6 inches. There are all sorts of gadgets on the market to "help" you hang art. If you own a lot of art, it's best to hire a professional. If you really want to get technical measure 60" from the floor, then add half the height of the framed picture and subtract the height of the wire. Now say that three times and spin around. Seriously, hire a professional from an art gallery or a designer.

## 8. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

When there is very little furniture it's called minimal, when there is too much it's called crowded. Many homeowners buy sets of furniture for a large house, then scale back and keep the furniture even though it does not fit the current home. Don't be afraid to split the furniture set. An over-sized chair can be placed in a guest room or the love seat in an office. Too much furniture in a room just feels stuffy and restricts the flow of the room. The major pathways in and out a room should be four to six ft. wide. You also need to allow at least 12 inches between the sofa and coffee table or ottoman.

## 9. THEMES

I am not a big fan of using themes in rooms or houses. Have you ever looked into a little girl's princess room, then discovered that she is now 15-years-old? What about the Santé Fe home or the safari room? All of these looks are perfectly acceptable, but when you spend your money on a theme, remember that you will soon need to spend money to redo it or your home will look very dated. If you really like a particular style or theme, that's fine – just use it sparingly, for instance, in a rug, an accessory or a piece of art.



## 10. LIFESTYLE

This is not the most obvious decorating faux pas, but it is one of the biggest. When people do not consider their lifestyle before decorating their homes, they are making a big mistake. A white shag rug looks amazing on the floor, unless it's spring and you have a toddler and a dog. Be practical when making big purchases for your home. A decorated home should be seamless and livable. It's nice to be inspired by decorating magazines but if you are going to break out in a cold sweat every time someone sits on your top grain leather sofa with their buttoned pockets, is it really worth the look?



You don't have to sacrifice style for function, just try to be aware and decorate accordingly. You want your home to look nice and you want to be able to enjoy it. ☺

For more information contact Adene Lucas at 403.651.7491 or visit [www.accentondesigninc.ca](http://www.accentondesigninc.ca)