

31st Bucks County  
Designer House & Gardens



Seven Gables

238 WEST COURT STREET DOYLESTOWN, PA



April 30 - May 28, 2006

Proceeds benefit Doylestown Hospital and Village Improvement Association Projects

# Designing a Room in your Home

## I DIG YOUR BONES

By Irwin Weiner, ASID

Before designing your space, look at the shapes and planes of the room. This is often referred to as the bones of a room. Often, the more special the architecture of the space, the easier it is to decorate. You wouldn't need much to create a beautiful room if it already had high ceilings, arched windows, tall columns, a coffered ceiling, and a wonderful view. The trick is to create a space that's equally appealing without great architectural interest.



## BE MOODY

Decide on the mood you'd like your interior to have: formal and intimidating, weird and funky, laid-back, or contemporary. Personally, I prefer an interior to be elegant, youthful, witty and inviting. A few samples of whimsy and personal touches such as photographs and items found antiquing or flea-market shopping help add to the unique quality of an interior. In addition, adding pieces that tell a story or are inherited make a space feel like home.

## FLIP YOUR LID

Remember that the ceiling is a blank canvas. If possible, raise the ceiling, either by creating a tray into the attic or adding a prefab dome. Adding beams for a rustic look or a crown molding for a more elegant feel, can go a long way to enhance your interior. I often use a door casing flat on the ceiling to give the interest of a crown molding while making the walls seem taller.

## I DON'T LIKE MOLD, BUT I LOVE MOLDINGS

Wall moldings are like an artist's pencil on a page. Parallel moldings can create a mid-century feel and classically shaped boxes can make a room feel traditional, dressy, and antique. Unless a room is very large or formal like a foyer, moldings should be painted the same color as the walls to

maintain their subtlety. I know it's tempting to emphasize them, but painting moldings a contrasting color can make them look like they'll jump off the wall and chase you back to Home Depot.

## RISKY BUSINESS

Take risks and trust your instincts but don't buy impulsively. Select furniture that is unusual but makes you feel that you can live with it for a long time. Purchase the most expensive pieces you can afford. Don't forget that what's expensive today, is inexpensive tomorrow. Remember how many times we've regretted not buying that one chair we passed up in an antique store a few years ago because it was too pricey? Tables with sharp corners and objects that look as if you'll hit them if you talk with your hands, as well as chairs that appear too delicate, create a feeling of unease. The goal is to live in a space that is inviting and has a sense of calm. Lay out your furniture carefully, both with an eye to making the best use of space and to facilitate the function of the room. Rooms can often be used for two purposes, such as a dining room-library combination.

## YOU LIGHT UP MY LIFE

An even spread of light without any glaring light bulbs is ideal. It's relatively easy to have your electrical outlets wired so that they operate from a single wall switch. Being able to turn all your lamps on and off from a single switch is convenient and likely to happen more often than going from lamp to lamp switching them on and off. Use soft white light bulbs rather than clear for lighting fixtures as they soften the shadows cast on walls and ceilings.

## CRITICAL COLOR

I often select a color scheme by looking at a printed fabric whether on a necktie or a picture of wallpaper or fabric in an interior decorating magazine. If I have many interesting items such as artwork, architectural elements, a great view, etc., I use less color. Color is an inexpensive way to add drama and punch to a room, especially where there is limited interest. Color is also easily changed later on. Painting walls and ceilings a strong color can add interest and personality to a room. I often paint a powder room, foyer, and/or dining room in strong colors as these rooms are not lived in as much as bedrooms and living rooms which usually require a more calming palette. Like food, color is

a matter of taste. At the end of the day, one should feel comfortable in the colors one's in.

## A DELICATE BALANCE

Like Black & White, Yin & Yang, and Sweet & Sour, a room should be balanced. Some balancing tricks I recommend:

1. Add a touch of a hot color in a cool room such as red flowers or a bright painting to counterbalance blues, grays, or beige.
2. Stain a floor almost-black when using light colored furniture and/or rug.
3. Incorporate comfortable and inviting furniture with formal upright seating.
4. Mix your skirts with your legs! Not all furniture should have legs – or not all furniture should have solid bases and/or skirts. A few chairs with legs in a room with a few solid bases and/or skirted seating pieces create a pleasant mix.
5. The top half of the room should be as interesting as the bottom half. Most furniture is 36" tall, or less. Artwork, tall furniture pieces and window treatments bring one's eye up so that the room is seen as a whole.

Enjoy!

## About Irwin Weiner

Irwin studied architecture, graphic art, and interior design before starting his own residential design firm in 1988. Irwin's interiors have been featured in many publications, including *Architectural Digest*, *Elle Décor*, and *Art & Antiques*. Irwin divides his time between projects in New York and Bucks County where he lives. Irwin's room from the 2005 Bucks County Designer House is featured in Schiffer Publishing, Ltd.'s book *Designer Showcase: Interior Design at Its Best* by Melissa Cardona and Nathaniel Wolfgang-Price. More of Irwin's work can be seen on [www.irwinweiner.com](http://www.irwinweiner.com)