

APRIL 2011



# HOME MAKEOVER

DISTINCTIVE DESIGN,  
LOCALLY SOURCED

Respect: Redesigning an Arthur Erickson kitchen

Gold-metal winner: A glittering office makeover

Design first: What to expect from a design professional

First love: Jillian Harris' home-decor hobby

## BATHING BEAUTY – A BATHROOM WITH A VIEW ▼



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# Design first

All too often, we hear stories about design projects starting “on the fly,” and of homeowners left feeling frustrated, stuck or like giving up as a result – sad.

As professional designers, it’s our duty to coach and instruct you, the client, before any work begins on your home. Not only does a “design first” approach guarantee a better outcome, it also addresses all aspects of a new build or renovation and reduces cost. It’s cheaper to do some preliminary work on paper than it is to experiment with a builder.

From the very first meeting, it’s up to us to discover who you are, what’s important to you and why you need us. We need to listen, take inventory and translate your dream into something tangible. In fact, it may be more accurate to say that design comes second. Listening and building a relationship based on mutual trust is, in fact, first.

As the first hour passes, the excitement mounts. If we’ve done our job and painted a picture for you of the possibilities, you should start to see what could be; if you’re not moved by the discussion, we haven’t been successful as designers.

In order to determine what you need and want, we must try and learn everything we can about you in that first meeting: what’s your home like? What kind of car do you drive? What are you wearing? Do you have children? Do you like to entertain? We’ll likely fire a lot of questions at you – some quite personal (where do you prefer to install the toilet-paper holder?).

Keep in mind: it is personal. It is emotional. It is important that we “read” and understand you well. It’s easy to build a nice home, yacht, hotel or office, but to design something that’s completely tailored to suit your needs, taste and lifestyle requires skill, not to mention attention to the most minute detail, from appliances to paint colours to lighting to countertops.

A designer once noted: “Your environment must nourish you. If things are not working right or are in the wrong place, you will be robbed of energy. Over time, it will rob you of a lot of energy.” To this end, pre-planning is the critical first step to a great, harmonious project.

This idea of “design first” needs to be better advocated in our industry. If you, the client, entrust us with your hard-earned money, we designers have an obligation to listen to you, to take you seriously and to be the best possible stewards of your assets.



As the client, you deserve to know what you can expect working with a professional designer. It’s our obligation to properly prepare and design your project first. It’s the only way we can fulfil – better yet, exceed – your expectations. Every time.

## DESIGN FIRST CHECKLIST

Before beginning a project on your behalf, a professional designer will first determine the following:

- What are your requirements?
- What are your daily life patterns? How are you going to use your new space?
- How will you interact in the space?
- How much space do you need?
- What furniture do you own and wish to take with you?
- Do you have children? Pets?
- Do you entertain and enjoy cooking, or do you need a good phone station to make dinner reservations? 📞