

Decorators tell you

how to get more decorating for your dollar

BY PATRICIA CORBIN

House & Garden asked leading designers to give their ideas on how to get more out of the decorating dollar, particularly today with rising costs. All the designers had definite views, bringing their personal thoughts to the problems of decorating and giving specific ways of getting more for money spent.

"Everybody has to work within a budget, no matter how rich he is," says Joseph Beaswell, "and whenever you spend money, you should spend with caution." He agrees, as all the designers do, that a total plan is necessary. "It must be like the script of a play, every facet thought out with a projected timetable—and that means all levels of living in terms of a lighting program, a color program, a furniture program, and so on. After all, living creatively, in harmony and peace, is the best value for your money."

David Easton and Michael La Rocca define value as twofold: getting your money's worth in dollars, and getting your money's worth in esthetics. "To get the most out of money, you have to define yourself: How do you live, what do you want? We have to have a reassessment of values, in ourselves and in our surroundings. If you want to buy value, remember, the simplest things are the purest, and the most valuable."

"Put more thought into what you buy," says Nancy Coles and John Robert Moore II. "Style is less, you must have value in yourself. Use your personality and grow with a room. Purchase what you have, add to that with care, and do not be inhibited by what other people have or what other people like."

"In decorating a room you can save money by using some pre-conceived ideas," explains Ronald Bricks. "For instance, some people think that windows and beds should always be covered up, but often that isn't necessary. Particularly, if there is pretty light from the windows. And when pillows and sheets are coordinated with handsome blankets or comforters."

Angelo Douglas believes that there are personal money savers that will always give a big effect for less spending: wallcoverings and slipcovers. "Whether you have a tiny apartment or a big house, you can cover more space with patterns; and for fabrics, think of using sheets. They're still the best bargains for materials. For a bedroom you can use a top sheet for a bedspread, have it quilted and it doubles as a comforter. I think, too, that inexpensive pillows can make a big decorating statement; you can have them as small as pillowcases or as large as mattresses. All the variables can be used in a room to make it easy and warm with color."

Architectural designer Martin Lipsitt says that large masses of color and texture can bring the most daring transformations with the most modest results. "Most of us make changes in our surroundings to keep up with the changes we're constantly making in ourselves. It's a process that never stops, and getting the most change for the least amount of money is a nice habit to get into. You can cover a lot of decorating ground quickly by the lavish use of beautiful but less extravagant materials. Use pol-

ished cotton and woven straw instead of polished steel and watered silk."

Betty Sherrill agrees: "You want to get maximum effect for your money, and paint can do it. Floors can be painted, stenciled with patterns and protected with polyurethane. Windows needn't have expensive curtaining—you can use slim Levolor blinds. Bringing color to a room is always good value; you can do it with books, pillows you make yourself in needlework or patchwork; or have one colorful pattern and use it on all the sofas and chairs."

Alexandra Stoddard, author of *Style for Living* (Doubleday) says that few fine possessions give quality to a room, and a plan of action would be to go from room to room, removing the mistakes and clutter. "Put things in shopping bags and either give them to charity or sell them. Rooms shouldn't be clogged up, because there is no space for people. Everything should be gleaming and meticulous—fresh paint, polished floors, clean windows, flowers and green plants. A room should be party-ready every day. It's not how you spend your money on new possessions, the most important thing is spending your money to maintain what you have. Get the Mr. Fix-its to repair and refurbish."

David Barrett has advice for the young with few possessions: "Don't buy anything trendy. Basics are best, like solid upholstered furniture, comfortable and long-lasting."

Ellen McCluskey thinks that one of the best values for a room is what goes on the walls. "When you walk into a room, you see everything at eye level. It's important to cover dull architecture with paint or patterns and to concentrate on the 'eyes' of the room: the windows and pictures. Prints and drawings can be made important with matting and beautiful frames. Windows can give an uplift with gay chintz."

In Robert Metzger's opinion, background is all important, too. "Color and fabric can give the most impact, make the most success of a room." He advises anyone thinking of changing or adding to a room to stay away from gimmicks and tricks, and to concentrate instead on permanence and classicism. "Every purchase must be evaluated carefully, and in order to choose, you must familiarize yourself with everything available. Nothing should be a whim."

Vladimir Kagan is firmly against what he calls "disposable decorating." "Put your money in permanent items, furniture that will be an attractive treasure as it is today—nothing frivolous, but things that are utilitarian, comfortable, that possess good style and excellent quality."

"If you get poor quality construction in furniture, even though it may look good and cost less, then you've spent your money uselessly," says Robert de Saravalla.

Mark Hampton thinks that a lovely piece of furniture may be expensive because of its great quality. "If you want one extravagant thing, you have to count it as an investment on a long-term basis."

"The best quality is the most you can get for your money," is Mario Buatta's advice. "If you buy a really well-made piece of furniture, you know your dollars are well spent because that furniture will last." He also prefers slipcovers to upholstery. "Upholstery gets soiled so fast that I have sofas and chairs covered in cotton twill, then slipcovered, and everything can be easily taken off and cleaned."

Robert Perkin cautions that decorating not done to a basic plan is usually decorating with waste. "If you do things hodgepodge, you're apt to make mistakes. His tricks for dollar saving are to invest in a few big pieces of furniture, instead of having more little ones. "You get a solid substantial room; and it looks more comfortable and settled." He also thinks that if you cover your soft furniture in one color it brings unity, giving the space a more finished look. "Cotton materials are the great bargains for curtains, slipcovers—less expensive and you don't spend as much for your fabrics as you do for your furniture."

"With labor costing more," John Rock says "the decorating dollar can go much further if you can do much of the work yourself. Old-fashioned elbow grease saves money, and anything you can make yourself will give you a great sense of pride."

Louis Brannaman has the last word: "If you are decorating, whether adding, changing, or starting fresh in a room or a whole house, then think of it as a project the entire family must approve of. If your husband doesn't like green or hates area rugs, then you better know it before you spend your money. Rooms are for people and what they like. The greatest saving can come about if you keep this in mind." ■



Critics Saint. Cells



To make one room serve as both a living room and a dining room—a space 20 by 23 feet to work with—furniture has to be versatile. The round table, **I** (foreground), is covered with a quilt during the day, but at meals can be set to seat eight or as a buffet to serve twenty or more. For sitting and talking, big comfortable sofa parts are designed to move into interchangeable seating arrangements. Four corner armchairs, one armless chair, and two ottomans can be put together to make sofas; a long L-shaped section, or they can be put against a wall if there's a big party. Making the most of a wall of windows, walls and ceiling are glazed the blue of the sky on a sunny day, which seems to bring the outside right indoors. Canvas shades control the light and keep the room simple. Indoor trees and plants echo the leafiness of a tree-filled square five stories below windows.

**Living room-
dining room-studio
with pull-around
furniture
and an open
arrangement**

How to make a room lea



Gilles Saint-Celis

many lives



Making one room do the work of two while still preserving a sense of lots of space to move around in is essentially what owner Marie-Pierre Cicco and designer Gilles Saint-Celis have achieved in her living room-dining room on these pages. Beside furniture that moves and unfolds, walls that look like the sky, ceramic treasures collected since childhood found on trips lend the room warmth. For instance, Marie-Pierre de Cicco's love of plants and baskets and Chin bamboo is just as important to the room as the 18th-century French commode, **1**. The sculpture on top by a friend, Bruno Romeas. A Chin cock on a pedestal near the window **2**, came from her family. A kilim is bought on a trip warms up the floor and gives it some pattern. Other pattern is provided by the quilt on the round dining table. At night straight-backed Chinese bamboo chairs **3** can be pulled up around, the quilt can come off, and the table set with a batik cloth from China. Often, however, the table is set up a buffet. Zigzags in pink and yellow provide more muted pattern in John Stephanides's canvas design that covers the big armchair. The light also contributes to the atmosphere. Lamps called "Rocks" sit on the floor by the plants. They are made of fiberglass, shaded to look like boulders when not lit, but at night, glowing from within, they help light the room. From Ablier A, Paris.

1999 100007

Critics Saint. Cells

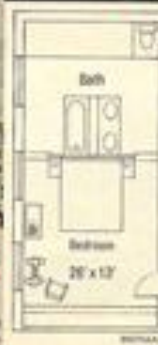
Room that leads many lives
All-in-one bedroom-study-bath



Taking a conventional bedroom (10 by 12 feet) and bath (8 by 12 feet) and treating them as one room frees much more space for living. The result is a place to rest, to read, listen to music, watch television, write letters, and do accounts. The beauty of the room, however, is that most of its different functions, apart from the books, **2**, are tucked away, making the space there seem larger. Lacquer white bookshelves and cabinets fit all along one end of the room. Television, record player, records, files, radio, and camera equipment all go behind doors in these cabinets. Part of the cabinet top folds out to make a writing and a typing table. The bed, **1**, with an American red and white quilt and another geometric pattern from Kenya, covering headboard and box springs, provides the color focus that ties the room together. A Calder *gouache* is more red and white, above the bed. Max Ernst drawing above the straw table. Two brass figures, left, by Hans Rudolf Griebeler. Red lamps, Boutique Denoise.

One wall organized for books, music, television, with an office-in-a-cabinet

Gilles Saint-Cills



Clever design clears the way for more space to live in especially in the bath part of the bedroom bath on these two pages. The large Tangerine-colored block that holds a tub and two sinks sits compact and hidden from view on the other side of a partition from the bed. **3.** This third of the room seems much larger than it is because of the way Gilles Saint-Cills has designed it—instead of having a mirror hanging in front of the two sinks and blocking the view out the windows just beyond the tub, the mirror went up on the wall partition to the left. **4.** Closets, drawers, and a toilet are all concealed behind doors to the right of the sinks and tub, see plan, left. The wall-high "scale" posters are by Jean Pierre Raymond. The Tangerine faucets come from Rubinetterie Zaccari in Florence.

Bath organized for a bigger-than-it-is feeling