

VISION

What is the most important element of interior design?

Beauty. But a practical approach is essential. Homeowners must be able to hang their coat, sit comfortably and put down a drink. They need storage, file drawers and a desk where they can handle the family finances. Good design is more than selecting wonderful fabrics and colors. Function is the foundation of good design. When good design is achieved, the result is beautiful.

Do you use a different approach when designing a suburban family home, a downtown condo or a vacation retreat?

All projects start with the same focus: the setting, the architecture and the client's lifestyle. In a downtown high rise, for example, there is going to be a dominant feature to consider, such as a view of the lake. In a vacation home, the climate and setting dictate design and material choices. If you're at the beach, shag carpeting isn't a good match, but in the mountains, a thick plush carpet in front of the fire can be wonderful. In Chicago, with the hot and cold extremes, there's a greater opportunity to use a variety of materials.

How would you suggest that clients prepare for their first meeting with you?

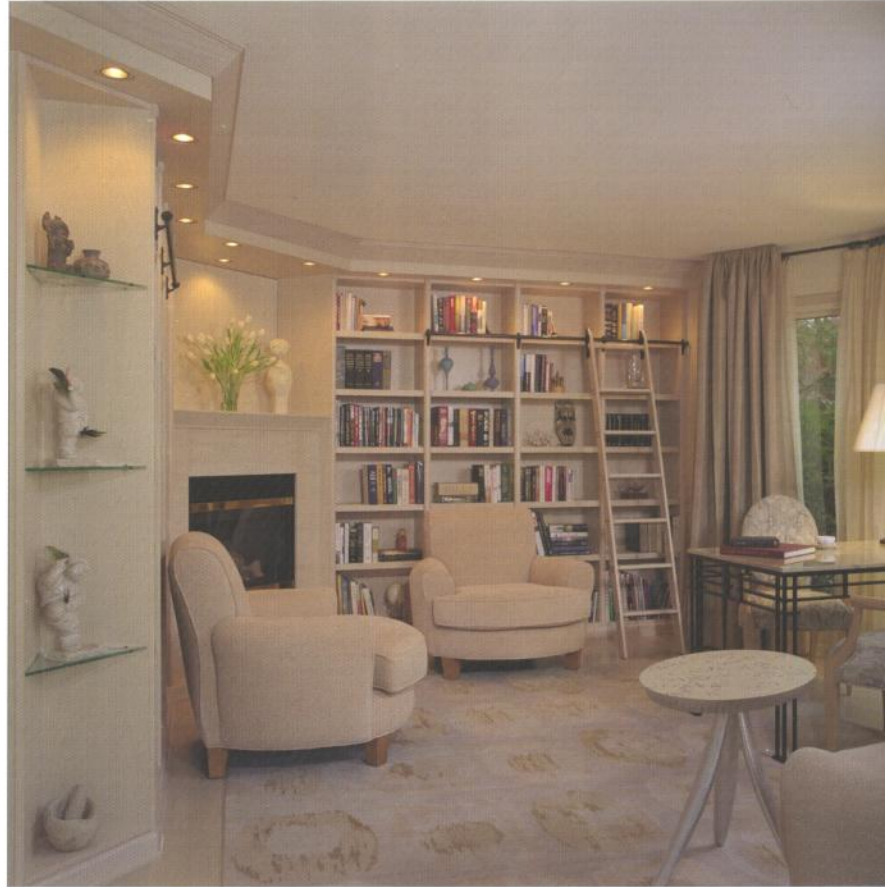
Come to the meeting ready to dream—your mind open to new, exciting ideas. Let this first conversation be about your heart's desire. We'll discuss your lifestyle, your concerns and your expectations. We'll also talk about the wonderful possibilities of living in a home that is a self-expression.

What advice do you give clients?

Do what makes you happy. A home should reflect your personality and enhance your individual lifestyle. Good design should bring out the best in you and let you enjoy your life. Don't worry about what family and friends think of your style, materials and colors. I encourage my clients to take risks, and I won't let them make mistakes. Trust me to lead you through the process to a magical outcome.



Janet McCann, A.S.I.D.
Founder and President - McCann Associates



The room: A small, undefined space that opens to the foyer. The solution: Create a sitting room where the homeowners can read or spend some quiet time. The look: a sophisticated room with a fresh, contemporary feel.



The room: A powder room that opens to the entry hall. The solution: designed the vanity to look like a stylish dressing table, complete with two lamps and a large mirror. The look: simple elegance.



The room: A living room with dual entries to the hall and family room. The solution: A layout that's open and inviting from both entries. Dark wood punctuates monochromatic fabrics. The look: understated serenity

REDEFINING HOME

Tailored, traditional details add warmth to a contemporary home



Upholstered walls in deep red give the library immediate warmth and vibrancy.

Photography - Lynda Oyama Bryan

Can a 1960s contemporary ranch be the heart of a woman searching for a brick Georgian?

When the Winnetka home came on the market, three young children liked what she saw: a terrific neighborhood and a verdant setting where oaks shade the yard and deer settle in for the afternoon. When the exact style she wanted, she knew she and her husband would make it their own.

To help with the transformation, the homeowners hired designer Janet McCann to imbue the home with texture and warmth. The designer started in the library, upholstering the walls in red fabric and designing custom crotch mahogany bookshelves to achieve a rich look. On the walls, a contemporary painting by Chicago artist Ed Paschke mingles with a painting of the homeowner's great grandfather. "When clients use personal, meaningful details, the results are absolutely magical," says McCann.

To soften the contemporary edges of the living room, McCann raised the height of the baseboards, added crown molding, and encased the ceiling's rough-hewn beams in wood and painted them white. She also redesigned the fireplace in custom limestone. The room is spacious and bright with white walls and subdued fabrics. Color comes from accessories, such as a bright red Chinese basket. Floor-to-ceiling windows run the length of the room, offering a view of the landscaped yard designed by Scott Byron & Co. McCann left the windows bare to maximize the view, though she hid sun shades powered by remote control above the windows.

This house may not be the Georgian the homeowners wanted, but the important thing is that it feels like a home. The designers report: "It does, and it's beautiful."



The living room's custom limestone fireplace is a McCann design.

Photography - Lynda Oyama Bryan



Photography - Lynda Oyama Bryan

TRANSITION ROOM MOVES KIDS FROM BATH TIME TO BEDTIME

Interior designers can help define space. When the homeowners found themselves with an extra room near the master suite, McCann suggested turning the space into a quiet family room where mom and dad could gather the kids to read or play games after their nightly baths. The designer calls

it a 'transition' room. Says McCann, "This room is away from food and TV, and that helps make things a little easier for parents who want to spend some quality time together while making the transition from bath to bedtime a happy one."