

PICKING THE RIGHT PROFESSIONAL

PAIGE WAPLINGTON, CEO OF THE IID, TELLS YOU WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN CHOSING YOUR INTERIOR DESIGNER

Hiring a professional interior designer can sometimes be difficult, says African Institute of the Interior Design Professions (IID) CEO Paige Waplington. The fact that this professional will be creating the space you live in makes it an even bigger deal, she says.

It's one thing making sure your interior designer is a professional – it's ensuring they're the right professional for you that makes all the difference. Out of a choice of two, she says,



“There is a big difference between an Interior Designer and an Interior Decorator. They both play a very important role, but don't confuse them.”



St Leger & Viney

they might both be great – but it's hard to know beforehand who is going to be best for the job you need done.

First she suggests looking at the difference between professional interior designers and professional interior decorators. “They both play a very important role, but don't confuse them. You don't hire a plumber to do an electrician's job, even if it's the best plumber,” says Waplington.

“Interior decorating is focused on cosmetic aesthetics, working with the space as it is. Decorators will enhance a room by establishing a style and colour palette for it. They come in after the building process is complete, adding personality to the shell of a building as it is. Decorators are great if you want someone to sweep in and make your space fabulous, quickly. They're also perfect for that cherry on top, when you have a great thing going but it's going nowhere fast,” she says.

Interior design, she says, “is the beautiful marriage between architecture and decorating”.

Interior designers are qualified to work with floor space, creating the sense of flow that is best suited to the lifestyle and habits of its occupants, says Waplington.

“The function of the space is extremely important, as is aesthetics. Beauty and function are brought together to deliver something extraordinary.”



Achieving this, says Waplington, requires a designer to read construction plans; co-ordinate function and aesthetics, creating a seamless interior that “works beautifully and looks amazing”; and project-manage – from designing to ensuring all designs are implemented correctly.

They're best involved in a project from the start, working alongside the architect, she says. “Designers have to hold a qualification for the work they do. Their work involves lots of technical elements and working with building plans.” 🏠

“Professional interior designers must be able to adapt their styles to each client, varying as needed. After all, you are unique and your house should reflect that.”

WHEN HIRING AN INTERIOR DESIGNER, SAYS WAPLINGTON, KEEP THESE POINTS IN MIND:

1. Remember that you can never distinguish a great service provider from a terrible one by comparing prices. Great work will cost you, but shoddy work can also come with a quote that's sky-high.

2. Look at credentials. When you're meeting with interior designers, it's easy to assume they hold the credentials that validate their job title. If you are serious about hiring a professional, external governing bodies like the IID are helpful. Guilds and organisations are usually the best way to get assurance that you're hiring a professional. Use their websites or referencing platforms to locate a professional in your area. You don't want someone learning by trial and error in your home while they rack up a bill you could retire on.

3. Ask for a portfolio if there's no website. The degree and paperwork behind your designer tells you they're capable, but who are they and what are they about? What projects have they completed in the past? This is where the portfolio or website come in handy.

Professional interior designers must be able to adapt their styles to each client, varying as needed, says Waplington. “That said, find a designer who can give you something out of the ordinary. After all, you are unique and your house should reflect that,” she says.



DÉCOR AFICIONADOS

Back row (standing, from left): Judy de Villiers from JDV Interior Designers, Wanda-Michelle Hadlow from Wanda-Michelle Interiors, Anthony Fourie from A-Z Design Boutique, Donald Nxumalo from DNX Interior Design and Bianca Suttner from Dolce Vita Designs
Front row (seated, from left): Elisha Annandale from Decor Identity, Michael Prinsloo from Michael Prinsloo Designs, Rhona Aves from Seva Design, Lara Roets from A-Z Design Boutique and Farzeen Dockrat from So Ya Designs

Abri de Villiers Architects and JDV Interior Designers

Design and build the perfect home inside and out



JUDY DE VILLIERS & ABRI DE VILLIERS
COMPANY OWNERS

A husband and wife team, Abri de Villiers Architects and JDV Interior Designers have your structural and décor needs sorted.



What is Abri de Villiers Architects' design philosophy? To be honest, practical and new, while respecting architecture, construction principles, the environment and our clients' requirements.

How would you describe JDV Interior Designers' design philosophy? I create ultra-luxurious spaces for diverse clients and for all types of activities.

What sets Abri de Villiers Architects apart from others in the industry? We design and build projects. Therefore the design process only concludes when the construction of the building is completed. And the client is part of the process from beginning to end.

What is the first thing JDV Interior Designers likes to do when meeting with new clients? I listen very clearly to what the clients' needs are because the project is their project and I am there to incorporate their ideas with good interior design.



"Be brave, use your own style and build from there. That's where your uniqueness lies." – Judy de Villiers

When designing, what does Abri de Villiers Architects keep in mind regarding the project as a whole? Somebody must live or work in the building I design and build, so it's my responsibility as a designer and builder to make sure the inhabitants relate to the building.

When it comes to interiors, does JDV Interior Designers feel people are still very trend-driven, or is there a move towards developing personal taste and style? I definitely feel it's a bit of both – we get inspired by trends, but when it comes to a client's personal space they tend to have their own style and add trend ideas and items to it.

Trends aside, what is the one thing you'd like readers to take on board when decorating? Be brave, use your own style and build from there. That's where your uniqueness lies.

What is Abri de Villiers Architects' stance on the future of eco-friendly building and design in South Africa? Eco-friendly design has always been important in the design of buildings. The concept isn't new – maybe a little forgotten in the past. By using simple principles, like orientation, shading and ventilation, the designer can design eco-friendly buildings that would not have a major influence on the budget. The challenge in South Africa is not to focus on the green aspects that the high-end buildings allow, but to design all buildings to be eco-friendly. This is a major challenge as a big portion of our population still burn fuel for heating and cooking.

For JDV Interior Designers, good design is ... a well-proportioned space, sufficient contrast in texture and colour and knowing when the design is complete, not to over-design ...



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A-Z Design Boutique

Walk into the home of your dreams



LARA ROETS AND ANTHONY FOURIE
INTERIOR DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURAL SPECIALISTS

An interior design boutique and architectural specification company services high-end residential clients and incorporates unique stylised décor trademarks.

How would you describe your design philosophy?

Our clients must live superiorly in their new dream home compared to their current one, fulfilling all expectations on every level of comfort, inspirational design and practicality.

What is the first thing you like to do when meeting with new clients? We like to get to know the entire family really well, so we have a three- to four-hour briefing session with all members, including the kids. This gives us insight into their personal living requirements, and we thrive on bringing these dreams to life in each room of the home.

When it comes to interiors, do you feel we're all still very trend-driven or is there a move towards developing personal taste and style? Trends repeat every decade or two, but it's the mix of clients and their designer's personal taste that brings each trend, or reoccurring trend, into a developed personal style.

Would you agree there is a greater appreciation for local design and craftsmanship? In the past decade, definitely. We support local manufacturers as much as possible, and our clients certainly appreciate local craftsmanship within their home's design schemes.

Trends aside, what would you like our readers to take on board when decorating? Make allowance in your budget for a professional designer; they will save you time and money. If you can't engage with a professional, be sure to fill your home's design scheme with excellently manufactured quality items for longevity.

Good design is ... creating environments that encourage the ultimate living experience.



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Decor Identity

Individual design concepts, tailored to suit clients' needs



ELISHA ANNANDALE
INTERIOR DESIGNER & ARCHITECTURAL CONSULTANT

Decor Identity is an award-winning interior design and decorating studio with more than 13 years' experience in the industry.

What is your design philosophy? We always try to create a space or a home of high quality. A design that each client feels they can live in, and be involved in the decisions to make them happy and comfortable in the space they call home. It must reflect the client's taste, personality and budget.

What's the first thing you like to do when you meet with a new client? I think it is very important to get to know your client and understand their view and their specific needs. You can't design a space if you don't know who will be living in it or what their design ideas are.

When it comes to interiors, do you feel we're all still very trend-driven or is there a move towards developing personal taste and style? It's important for us as designers to know what is new and happening in the world of design, colour and trends. But that being said, most of our clients are moving towards developing spaces using different elements more in line with their tastes and needs.

Trends aside, what's the one thing you'd like readers to take on board when decorating their homes? That they try to use what they have but avoid over-cluttering a space. Also, to follow a few basic design rules – like creating a focal point, colour and proportion – while always remembering the space should work for them and not everyone else.

Good design is ... making use of simple design rules and your taste, put together to reflect your personality in your space.

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Dolce Vita Designs

An interior architecture, design & décor firm



BIANCA SUTTNER
OWNER

Bianca's signature is inspired and motivated by Italian style, sophistication and passion without neglecting the pillars of design philosophy.

How would you describe your design philosophy? Dolce Vita Designs, meaning 'the good life', believes in creating interior spaces that inspire and motivate clients and their guests to excel or relax in their surroundings.

What is the first thing you like to do when meeting with new clients? I like to spend the first 30 minutes asking them about their lifestyle, needs and desires. Engaging with the clients on a personal level allows them to relax and open up about more than just their interior design or décor requirements, which assists me with 80% of the brief. Certain keywords direct me to a solution without the client having to elaborate further.

When it comes to interiors, do you feel we're all still very trend-driven or is there a move towards developing personal taste and style? In my 14 years in the industry I have never believed in following trends. I design according to Frank Lloyd Wright's design philosophy: that form and function should be one, joined in a spiritual union. But I do think that fabric designers are trendsetters, as they dictate what colours, textures and designs (themes) will be rolled out each season.

Trends aside, what is the one thing you'd like readers to take on board when decorating? Never compromise on quality and your ultimate design solution! I would suggest that the client rather wait to decorate or design a space than install an alternative because it is more affordable or readily available.

Good design is ... unobtrusive.

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DNX Interior Design

An interior design firm based in Kramerville, Johannesburg



DONALD NXUMALO
OWNER AND INTERIOR DESIGNER

Beginning in 2012, DNX Interior Design has designed residential homes, corporate offices, apartments and boutiques.

How would you describe your design philosophy?

I would describe it as very client-centric and a source of joy. We are an organisation that thrives on providing happiness to all our clients, be it for an entry-level project or a multi-faceted undertaking.

What is the first thing you like to do when meeting with new clients? I always crack a joke first and talk about a whole load of things besides the project. By the time we start talking about the project, the client is relaxed and our design process just flows.

When it comes to interiors, do you feel we're all still very trend-driven or is there a move towards developing personal taste and style? I have noticed a lot of interiors are quite trendy at the moment. I believe this goes for the industry because, just like fashion, trends keep changing and a lot of design houses have adopted this. What we do is a bit different – we always look for the personal touch and find ways we can combine that with modern styling and design.

Trends aside, what would you like our readers to take on board when decorating? When used properly, colour and lighting make a significant difference. Also, don't be afraid of wallpaper and 3D wall-boards. These create a different mood just on their own, and in turn create a beautiful ambience for homes.

Good design is ... Donald Nxumalo Studios.



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Michael Prinsloo Designs

MPD offers corporate and individual clients an exclusive, comprehensive service



MICHAEL PRINSLOO
OWNER

With over 17 years of experience, MPD provides a turnkey service with an emphasis on reflecting lifestyle in a unique way through relevant interior design.

How would you describe your design philosophy? My philosophy has always been 'clients first'. In other words, I put the practical needs of our clients first, followed by design function and form. Interior design has to have the wow factor but, most importantly, it has to work for clients in their everyday lives.

When it comes to interiors, do you feel we're all still very trend-driven or is there a move towards developing personal taste and style? Great interior design is timeless. So, even though we keep a close eye on global trends, we always put a bit of 'Michael Prinsloo flare' into our clients' designs – which is more of a contemporary look than a classic one. This is what MPD has become known for and why clients choose to work with us.

Would you agree there is greater appreciation for local design and craftsmanship? I have always been a massive supporter of local suppliers and talent, whether it's furniture, soft furnishings or art – we always tend to shop locally first. The talent that is coming out of SA now is world-class and what better way to showcase it than in our clients' homes?

Trends aside, what is the one thing you'd like our readers to take on board when decorating? It doesn't matter how big or small the project is, it's always worth having a budget in mind before you brief your chosen decorator. This helps your decorator to get the most out of your budget in a way that suits your needs and their recommended style.

Good design is ... showcasing a client's individuality.

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Seva Design

An independent design company that creates aesthetically pleasing features



RHONA AVES
OWNER

Founded in 2015, Seva Design is renowned for its creative, inspiring and tasteful mix of furniture and accessories.

Tell us about your background. For the past three years we have been involved in the design of homes, offices and retail spaces, sourcing and negotiating the best pricing for high-quality finishes. We pride ourselves on our ability to provide a service to suit any budget, yet at the same time not compromise on the quality of our work.

How would you describe your design philosophy? I love contemporary design, but also appreciate opulent finishes, with comfort being the focus.

What is the first thing you like to do when you meet with new clients? I like to get to know what works for them, as well as their family dynamics.

When it comes to interiors, do you feel we're all still very trend-driven or is there a move towards developing personal taste and style? I believe there is room for both, but I love putting a personal touch in the mix.

Would you agree there is also a greater appreciation for and support of local design and craftsmanship? I am excited when I get to see what local suppliers have to offer. I make a point of visiting their factories and showrooms to see the dynamics of their operations. I believe they can compete with the best in the world.

What is the one thing you'd like our readers to take on board when looking to decorate their homes? Sometimes clients feel that a decorator could be too expensive and would prefer to save by doing it themselves. If that's the case, I am able to advise on a consulting basis, making the client feel like they did most of it themselves. I take the hard work out of finding the right pieces to complement their design style.

Good design is ... watching the joy on a client's face when a project comes together better than expected.

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So Ya Designs

An interior design company offering custom-made furniture



FARZEEN DOCKRAT
OWNER

Embracing her creative side, former accountant Farzeen Dockrat specialises in creating interiors unique to her clients.

How would you describe your design philosophy? Simplicity is essential, but no one has ever met their demise because of a little sprinkle of gold.

What is the first thing you like to do when you meet with new clients? My purpose is not to plant an idea in my client's mind – I need to get to know the person and for them to get to know me in return. Progress through mutual creativity is the ultimate objective.

When it comes to interiors, do you feel we're all still very trend-driven or is there a move towards developing personal taste and style? I do not fear trends; rather I fear the power of trends. They have a tendency to halt our ability to want what we like, and instead end up liking what we're told. However, trends give us a glimpse of something new. There is plenty of room to merge both personal style and inspiration.

Would you agree there's a greater appreciation for local design and craftsmanship? South African design and creativity is one of the reasons I got into this field. By embracing Mzansi, we are all assisting in easing the discovery process and stimulating the machinery that helps unearth our local design superstars.

What's the one thing you'd like readers to take on board when looking to decorate their homes? No matter the size of the project, allow your space to be an extension of your personality. That way, it will remain unique and timeless.

Good design is ... aiming for a "wow" factor without breaking the bank.



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Wanda-Michelle Interiors

An exclusive and thoroughly extraordinary interior design company



WANDA-MICHELLE HADLOW
OWNER

Awe-inspiring innovation, elaborate detail and phenomenal inventiveness are the hallmarks of Gauteng-based maestro of design, Wanda-Michelle Interiors (WMI).

How would you describe your design philosophy? I believe an environment should cocoon its inhabitants, offering a soul-soothing reprieve from the world. For me, this means soft neutrals on textures that beg to be touched, lighting that seduces the soul and artworks that inspire dreams.

What is the first thing you like to do when you meet with new clients? I like to establish a connection on an emotional level. Working with a client, particularly on their main residence, is a journey of discovery. The deeper the connection with the client, the closer you get to their desired outcome.

When it comes to interiors, do you feel we're all still very trend-driven or is there a move towards developing personal style? Although I wouldn't classify my own style as trendy, I find myself drawn towards the latest colours and textures, new innovations and style that adds a "pop" away from the mundane. Trend evolves and renews and adds a measure of anticipation for things to come. It's important, however, not to be defined by trend rather than one's own unique style.

Trends aside, what is the one thing you'd like our readers to take on board when decorating? That individual furniture pieces may, in their own right, be sculptural and create a focal point; but it's really about the layering, the elements around it that are necessary to create the whole.

Good design is ... a sublime and sensuous coming together of form and function, a celebration of an idea given the freedom to "become".

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