

# THE LAST WORDS

## Decorating Do's and Don'ts

Interviews by  
JANE MARGOLIES

No rules—but timeless, unforgettable advice. Twelve designers share their favorite words of wisdom.

**“If you have pets or children, white rugs and upholstery are just not in the cards.** People love the way they look but never realize that you have to hermetically seal your household to keep them clean.”

MARKHAM ROBERTS

**“Travel as much as you can, and stay on the alert for inspiration wherever you go—you could find a great floor plan in a museum’s period room, or a color in a painting.** And don’t just rely on your camera. If you draw something, you’ll really absorb the detail.”

DD ALLEN

**“When you test paint colors in a room, make big patches** so that you can really see if you need to go darker or lighter. I make mine 3 feet by 3 feet.”

MARY DOUGLAS DRYSDALE

The late, great Antony Childs once said to me, **‘Be true to yourself, and trust your instincts.’** We all have different points of view—that’s what makes each of us special—and our rooms should be a reflection of that.”

DAVID MITCHELL

**“Respect the architecture of a space.** That’s not to say you can’t be surprising—I might use period furniture in a modern room, but I’ll make sure the lines and silhouettes are appropriate. The whole room has to hang together.”

MARIETTE HIMES GOMEZ

**“Color is best used in small spaces that you pass through.** A dramatic color in a room where you’re going to be spending a lot of time might feel too heavy or dark, but if you use it in a foyer or pantry, it makes the whole house feel colorful. **It also makes the house feel bigger,** because it turns a space you might not notice into one that catches your attention.”

JOHN BARMAN

**“A photographer I worked with taught me the importance of the axial view.** When you’re looking down a corridor, you want a wonderful object at the end of it to draw you forward—a sculpture, a chandelier, anything to define the space and pull you in.”

NANCY BRAITHWAITE

**“Start a room with a classic furniture layout that’s functional, then add in funky pieces** to loosen it up, relax it, and keep it from feeling too formulaic.”

THOM FILICIA

“One of my mentors always said, **‘Just because you can doesn’t mean you should.’** Great projects are the ones that show a little restraint.”

HEATHER HILLIARD

**“Today everyone likes rooms sparse, but for a living room, you need the sorts of chairs people can pull up together, so that they want to come into the room and sit down and chat.”**

PAULA PERLINI

**“Invest in one great-quality piece.** It sometimes hurts in the beginning, but you end up having that piece forever, and it can really carry a room, or even an entire house.”

DAVID KAIHOI

**“Spend the money to make openings between rooms as high as possible—**anything to get away from the standard, squat 7-foot-tall door. It really creates a sense of openness, lightness, and grandeur in a space.”

SUZANNE LOVELL