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# Add Character

*Go beyond the ordinary with home decor*

*By Danielle Gillespie*



Above: This antique door at Portera in Pasadena came from a convent near Seville, Spain. Portera's owners are researching the meaning of the shield or crest held by the man depicted at the top of the door. Photo: Portera

An old-fashioned Italian lamp sits next to a contemporary couch. A traditional Indian rug lies under a 21st century coffee table. A modern door handle opens an antique Spanish door.

Such subtle touches give a home a personality of its own, but for a new homeowner, it's often difficult to know where to begin.

Before purchasing any furnishings or decor, homeowners should first consider the architecture of their home, says Dina Morgan, who runs interior design company Dina & Partners in South Pasadena. "Architects have a vision for the interior space so you should respect it," Morgan says.

The rooms in a Mediterranean-style home should contain some Mediterranean furnishings or decor.

There should be a common theme throughout the entire living space so that as friends and family move through the rooms, it feels like they are in the same house. This gives the home a comfortable atmosphere because all the objects seem like they are in their natural space, Morgan says.

"It's important to think in terms of the whole package," says Morgan, who has 23 years of interior design experience and is the department chair of interior design at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising.

One way to decorate a home is to start by choosing colors and materials for the flooring, ceiling and walls and then to add furniture, rugs and paintings. Another method is to select an object that will be the centerpiece of the room and design around it.

Either way, "it's a layering process," Morgan says. "It's like getting dressed in the morning. You put on one item of clothing, then another, and then your accessories, and they all go together."

All the layers of the room should complement each other. It's important not to just fill space with stuff, Morgan says.

“(Homeowners) have to be willing to try things and be willing to edit themselves,” Morgan says.

While options are abundant when it comes to home decor, combining new and classic furnishings from different cultures in one living space can be an elegant way to distinguish a home.

Antique Spanish doors are lovely in a home with a Mediterranean theme, but they can look stunning in a modern home as well, says Soraya Dancsecs, co-owner of Portera, a Pasadena-based antique Spanish door company.

Portera, which opened in December, carries more than 1,500 doors from the 15th and 19th centuries. The doors, which are made of walnut, chestnut, oak and pine, come from castles, old farmhouses and churches in Spain. The majority are from country estates. Craftsmen restore the doors to match the style of that time period using beams or flooring from that era.

Of course, the main entrance is the first place homeowners think to put an antique door, since according to Dancsecs “The front door is the focal point of the home.”

Although this is always a good choice, Dancsecs suggests homeowners also consider using the doors, some of which have intricate paintings, like artwork to decorate the interior of the home. An antique door at the end of a long hallway is a unique way to add character to an otherwise drab corridor.

“They can really add beauty to your home,” Dancsecs says.

Antique doors are also perfect for rooms that are kept closed the majority of the time such as coat closets, basements and laundry rooms. “It can be a beautiful solution to hide a room from guests,” Dancsecs says.

A contemporary or traditional rug can also add a nice touch to the dining, living or bedroom. Homeowners should consider the dimensions of their furniture when purchasing a rug, Morgan says. Rugs have distinctive patterns so homeowners should determine which part of the rug will be visible after furniture is placed in the room.

Those who neglect these details could end up buying a rug with a beautiful center medallion for the dining room and have an oak table covering it.

Lifestyle is also of great importance. If homeowners have a pet, they might consider buying a rug with a pattern on it, which can better hide dirt and hair, says Gordon Pashgian, partner of Pashgian Brothers.

Homeowners should also work with rug companies to make sure their needs are met. Pasadena-based rug company Pashgian Brothers will custom-make rugs so the colors match the home decor, Pashgian says. If clients like a particular rug, they can have it made for them in any size. Pashgian Brothers, founded in 1889, sells Oriental rugs from countries such as India, Iran, Pakistan, China and Afghanistan.



Above: An antique Serapi, circa 1900 sold at Pashgian Brothers in Pasadena.

Photo: Pashgian Brothers

Furniture is an essential part of every home, and with so many options, it can be difficult to choose. Vanni Vezzosi, owner of contemporary furniture company Soluzioni, suggests homeowners think about their needs first. If they have a small living space, they might want a piece of furniture like his walnut coffee table, under which ottomans can be stored. If they often host dinner parties for large groups of people, Vezzosi recommends they purchase a table that's supported in the center rather than with four legs in order to seat more people around the table. Vezzosi will custom-make furniture to fit any dimension.

Homeowners shouldn't forget the outdoors. It's also important the patio furniture complements the rest of the decor, Morgan says.