

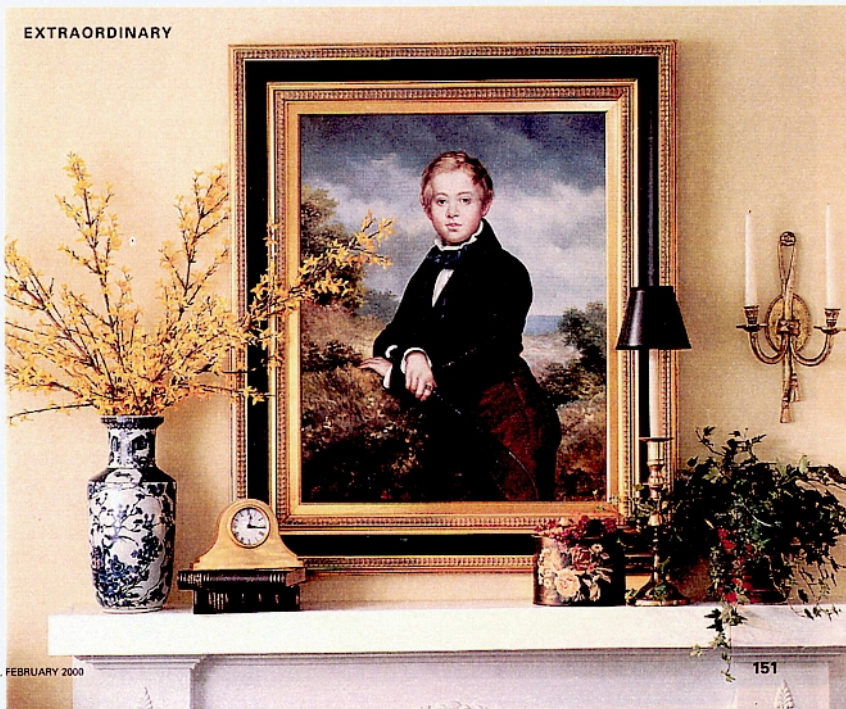
by Catherine Kramer
and Sharon Overton

“Shop your house” before you shop the mall if you’re in a mood to redecorate. You may already have much of what you need to freshen up your rooms, says Kitty Starling, one of a new breed of designers known as interior “arrangers,” who help clients find ways to work with what they own. Her first piece of advice: “Strip a space to nothing, then build it back up”—layer by layer.

making Arrangements

One-dimensional arrangements are a common decorating mistake, says Kitty Starling. To add interest to the mantel display (above), she weaves in objects of varying heights and textures (right). Blooming branches fill the vase, and a stack of books gives the clock stature. A shaded candlestick, and cachepot round out the new arrangement.

EXTRAORDINARY



Hiring an Interior Arranger

Interior arrangers, such as Kitty Starling, offer one-day decorating and design consultation. They work with clients' existing furnishings, suggesting new ways to arrange furniture and display accessories. They also provide such services as prepping homes to sell or decorating for holidays and parties.

Interior arrangers typically charge by the day or by the hour. Hourly fees may range from about \$75 to \$175 an hour; a three-hour minimum is typical.

The Interior Arrangement and Design Association (IADA) provides training and certification for members, many of whom also are members of the American Society of Interior Designers. For information, contact the IADA, Box 777, 6333 E. Mockingbird, Suite 147, Dallas, TX 75214-2692; 214/826-2474. Or, you can visit their Web site at www.interiorarrangement.org.

To discover clues to a client's decorating “personality,” interior arrangers act as detectives—prowling attics, garages, and basements for forgotten items. “Homeowners are amazed because I’ll go through old boxes of china that they haven’t opened since they were married and pull out pieces that look great on display,” Kitty says. Sometimes she even surprises herself, as with this grouping (below). A quick tour of the house turned up a carved lamb to tie into the framed picture, blue-and-white porcelains to play off the lamp, and stacks of books and boxes to give the display needed height. 🏠

EXTRAORDINARY



making Arrangements

making Arrangements

Like furniture, lighting should be balanced for a pleasing effect. In the living room, Kitty arranged lamps in an imaginary triangle. If you have two lamps, place them diagonally across from each other rather than on either end of the sofa, she says.



Kitty (*below*) put her design philosophy to the test several years ago when she and her husband, Chip, moved into this Marietta, Georgia, bungalow. She took a fresh look at her old furnishings, then reworked them to fit the smaller space.

The key is to think of objects in terms of their overall shapes and to concentrate on how they relate to the room and to one another, she says. In modest spaces, such as the living room (*above*), the tendency is to push furniture against the walls to create the feeling of an open central area. Instead, Kitty recommends bringing furniture into the room for intimate conversation groupings (*right*) or angling pieces so that traffic moves around them. Find the room's most prominent feature—whether it's a fireplace, large window, or piece of artwork—and arrange furniture around it to give the room focus. An area rug also can anchor a grouping.



Successful decorating appeals not only to the eyes, but to the other four senses as well, Kitty says. "I've found that if a room is missing something, I simply try to figure out which sense is missing and add that in. It can make a tremendous difference." Incorporate touch by mixing items of varying textures, including rough and smooth or hard and soft; sound by playing soft music, hanging wind chimes, or opening the windows to let in nature's noises; smell by arranging fresh flowers or lighting scented candles; and taste by putting out a plate of fruit or bowl of candy.



ORDINARY



ORDINARY

To give the hutch display (above) greater impact, Kitty massed a collection of blue-and-white porcelain (right). Then she added a few unrelated items, which now stand out instead of getting lost.



EXTRAORDINARY

A simple, symmetrical centerpiece (upper left) is fine for dinnertime. But between meals, Kitty creates tablescapes with a point of view or theme, such as the nature-based vignette (left), which incorporates four of the five senses. Red toile "cozies" soften the strong lines of Windsor dining chairs.



EXTRAORDINARY



BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS, FEBRUARY 2000

Kitty also includes what might be considered a "sixth sense" in her decorating: memory. It can come through antiques with a rich, timeworn patina; from an eclectic mix of accessories that look as if they've been collected over time; or from specific items with special significance, such as bronzed baby shoes or vacation snapshots. Massing collections gives them greater impact, even if the items aren't particularly fine. For clients, Kitty often frames groupings of children's artwork. "I try to bring in someone's personality," she says, "and this is a great way to do it."