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The Block 2015: Shayna Blaze’s Top 13 interior tips

3 April 2018

You've watched her judge the room designs and stylings on *The Block* for the last six seasons and here are some of Shayna Blaze's top tips for interior.

Shayna spoke at the Business Chicks 9toThrive Expo held at Sydney Technology Park on 24th October 2015. The two day event was designed to celebrate women in business and to help them improve.



I was lucky enough to attend on the Saturday and enjoy the expo as well as listening to Shayna’s talk about how to find inspiration and how to work with the images you see in interior books and magazines for your own home. Below are the ten key points she made.

1. Dance outside the pages

Interior design has always been a popular renovation tactic as it’s the easiest and cheapest way for people to freshen up their home or workspace without purchasing a new one. Its popularity means there's an abundance of sources of information, from reality TV such as *The Block* or Shayna’s other show *Selling Houses Australia*, to magazines like *Belle* magazine, formerly helmed by *Block* judge Neale Whittaker, or the magazine that crosses over to TV, *Better Homes and Gardens*. On top of that, there are loads of books, including works from Shayna and Darren Palmer. It seems like there's a book, TV or magazine to suit every person's budget and style -- and that's before you consider the ever-expanding landscape of the internet, and in particular social media such as Pinterest and Instagram.



All these different outlets can offer ideas, but they can also create insecurity. How do you achieve the perfection that is shown in the magazine pages or on social media?

Shayna’s advice is to not try and aim for that perfection, as most to all of those images are staged and not representative of how people actually live in the interior. As she put it, “Dance outside the pages” -- use the images and the information as a guide, and allow your home to speak for you and celebrate your uniqueness. What do you want in your home?

Feedback, whether it be a relaxing atmosphere to unwind after a stressful day or an inspiration atmosphere so you can get work done or an energetic atmosphere so you can enjoy your kids and family



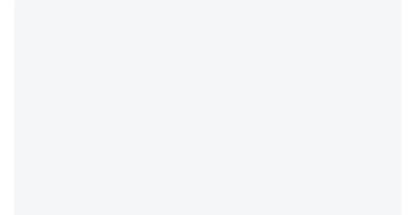
whatever mood or feeling you need to make your day that little bit better. When you're designing your home it's about creating that overall mood.

2. Snapshots or Vignettes

When you are creating this mood in your home, you are then also creating what Shayna called snapshots within. Often labelled "vignettes" by trendy interiors types. Shayna noted that a vignette should be a snapshot of you.

Shayna's snapshot

Shayna shared a snapshot from her own home with the audience and explained the different meaning behind each item to illustrate what a snapshot or vignette should contain: items that make you happy and reflect you.



The first item is a book about fashion that belongs to Shayna's daughters. It's a really inspiring book and contains information about fashion trends from the fifties and seventies. The reason Shayna includes it in her snapshot is because her daughter is in New York so she doesn't get to see her every day but when she looks at the book, she thinks of her daughter.

The roses in the picture were included for two reasons: their colour worked with the book and they happen to be one of Shayna's favourite roses at the moment. When she looks at the roses they make her smile and feel fantastic.

The coral is a reflection of her honeymoon to the Cook Islands with her husband, and they make her think of her husband when she sees them.

This snapshot was actually taken of Shayna's living room coffee table, so all these things that have such a positive impact to Shayna's mood and reflect her personality are on show in her home and also within view whenever she is in that room.

When you are creating your own snapshots for your home, make sure they are a reflection of you and your personality and life. Be inspired by the pictures, snapshots, vignettes and flat lays you see online or in the magazines or the books but personalise it and make it yours. Don't try and make a carbon copy of the designs you see; make it speak for you instead.

3. A home happens in a lifetime

This was one of the key pieces of advice I took away from Shayna's talk.

Your home is a reflection of your personality-- it's about layers, it's about the colours you choose, it's about the textures you want around you at different moments in your life. A lot of people talk about wanting something that's classic and will last a lifetime, but then also feel pressured to be "trendy" and reflect what's hip and cool at the time. These two are complete opposites. You need flexibility in pieces you want to last a lifetime which doesn't

Feedback



You change so much over a lifetime that you cannot purchase pieces at a certain time of your life that are on trend at that time and not expect that your tastes or the trends may change over time. Shaynna said at the talk “interior is about working in the stages of your life.” It's about starting from a base that is classic and choosing pieces that speak to you personally and suit your own style.

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4. Investment or lifetime pieces, and how to choose them

Shaynna talked about her clients that want "lifetime pieces" that are heirloom items they can pass on to their family. Shaynna mentioned that “..the psychology that goes into making sure that piece is going to work for 20 years is actually quite frightening.” And she was right, there is so much involved.

For instance if you choose to purchase a lounge as your investment piece, which is quite common, you have to make sure the fabric will last and withstand all the changes in life and lifestyle that you will go through in a lifetime. You have to make sure that the stuffing in the couch will last through all that as well, and you want to make sure that it's comfortable.

It's all these elements that make up investment or lifetime pieces: they have to work with your shape, your body and not just the look of the piece. Shaynna advises that “the look becomes one of the last things you do when you are looking for lifetime pieces.” You should spend a bit more and purchase investment pieces because when you purchase a lot of cheap pieces you will need to replace them sooner so in the end you will end up spending more. Shaynna recommends that your lifetime pieces can include “a couch, a chair, a light or a rug” -- these are all portable pieces that can be moved around the house to different rooms at different times. The key to any lifetime or investment piece is that it is flexible, it's classic but it also still speaks to you and your personality.

Another tip when it comes to choosing your investment or lifetime pieces is to take time making your choice., Don't buy something the first time you see it; go back and see the piece a few times. If it's still there and you still love it buy it; if it's no longer there then it wasn't meant to be. It's about your connection with the piece, you may love it one day but go

back a week later and realise the colour isn't for you, or the fabric isn't what you thought. When choosing investment pieces it's about getting something that you know you'll want in your space in the long run.

5. The stage - our home is our stage

Your home is the stage in which you perform the play that is your life. Your home is where you get to be 100% you. This is what you need to keep in mind when you are designing the interiors of your home. Enjoy looking at the pictures in books or magazines for inspiration but remember that no-one lives like those pictures. All those images are staged to look their best without any consideration of the day-to-day
Feedback its of actually living in them. When you see design images of living areas you never see clutter



Understandably, there are people that don't like clutter in their living area. These people are sometimes referred to as "neat freaks"; they always want things to be as close to picture perfect as they can get. This is possible even in the most chaotic of lives -- you just need the right support in your design. If you don't like clutter and like to keep your area clear, make sure you have plenty of storage in all rooms of your home so that you can put things away when they aren't being used. If you have these supporting elements in your home you can then choose what parts of yourself you put on display on a regular basis, maybe you just put a few cushions out and a particular throw for spring and then in summer you change them around.

When discussing first impressions and how people like to design their interiors, Shayna points out that "your home should be an invitation." It should be put together in such a way that it invites people to come in and enjoy your space and get to know you and your home. She referred again to how we present ourselves day-to-day when we are getting dressed. We always think about the impression our outfit creates. Your home is no different. You want to be at peace with your home, you don't want to walk in and feel like you are fighting a battle with the objects in your home because they just don't fit with you.

TRY THIS - SEVEN MINUTE CHALLENGE

Shayna shared with the crowd a challenge she was told about by a friend of hers that is a professional organiser. It's called the "Seven minute challenge", and the basic aim is to be able to clean a room that quickly when you get that random call or text from a friend who says they are in the neighbourhood and are dropping by. You need to clean up quick because the way you present your home to guests is different to how you live in it day-to-day.

How it works is you set a timer for seven minutes and go around the room and tidy up, put things away and make it look the way you would want for guests. It's about putting away the clutter that builds up day-to-day like the TV remotes, those magazines or books you're half way through but not quite done with, and the odd random chip packet. If you can't clean up these things within seven minutes it may be time to review what you have in the room and look at getting rid of things to make a less stressful existence.

You can even make a game out of it for the kids give them each a tub and set the timer and ask them to clean up all their toys or mess they may have laying around. Shayna asked the crowd to try out the seven minute challenge and let her know on social media how it worked for them.

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6. Capture not copy

Feedback Did this was a key tip. Rather than copying any inspiration literally, you should take its essence



have match it exactly and put that piece there and that colour there; put your own personal stamp on it and use it as it was meant as inspiration.

“ How many people have over 20 pairs of shoes? That's a lot of money isn't it, and they make you feel good because you can swap up your outfit and you can change it. So what's wrong with having 20 cushions scattered around your house, that you can move and change, and accessorise?

- Shayna Blaze

7. Where do I find inspiration?

As we've noted, there are plenty of sources of inspiration for design, from social media, magazines, TV shows and books. But with all this information it's about working out how to use it. You have to take the information presented and zone in on it to see how you can make it work for you and your space. Look at what has been use in terms of texture, colour and even specific items. Will this work in your space and work for your style?

If you are struggling to find inspiration, look at how you get dressed in the morning. Shayna frequently referred to the correlation between how you present yourself daily in the clothes you choose and how this can be used when making decisions about your interior. She even gave advice on how to use your outfit choices to shape your interior choices;

“...if you don't know how to get inspiration look at how you put your outfit together. Is it about a basic dress first and then shoes that bring out the highlight or is it about impact in your dress and you do very quiet shoes that don't make any impact at all or does it all pick up monochromatically and work together?”

8. Enhance the inspiration

This picture is one of the examples of where Shayna finds inspiration. She talked about how she loved autumn and spring. She said “you see things come to life and you see different colours and the lighting is different.” It's about taking something from the things that inspire you and inserting it into your interiors, in regards to this image she used the colouring for a display she did a few years ago, where the leaves weren't part of it but she matched or closely match the colours to highlight the setup. It shows you can take inspiration from the smallest and simplest elements -- it's about using these things in your own unique way to create your space.

When looking at the elements of the pictures and items that you find inspiring, look at the colour palette used and see how you can work it in another way. Can you shape it to suit your own personal style or work with the colours and textures already in your home? It's about replicating in your own way the colour palette. the tone and balancing that with your space.

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HAVE FUN WITH COLOUR!

Colour in interiors is a big passion for Shayna. She spoke about how when you love a certain colour your home doesn't need to be filled with that colour so that it's all in your face all the time. Just have touches of it here and there. When you do place it, keep it in your eyeline when you walk into that space as it will always bring a smile to your face. Add your happy colour to your home as it will only bring happiness to your life.

When looking at colours for your home there are some other tips Shayna offered regarding warm and cool colours. Warm colours come towards you and almost embrace you so should be used in areas where you may want to enjoy the energy that comes from these colours. Cool colours on the other hand sit back and are a bit more quiet and relaxing so are better choices in areas you need the relaxation. This is why you often see cool colours featured heavily in bedrooms and bathrooms because it's all about relaxation, whereas warm colours are often in the kitchen or outdoors where you want to have great energy and be happy and fun.

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9. Has anyone heard about the focal point?

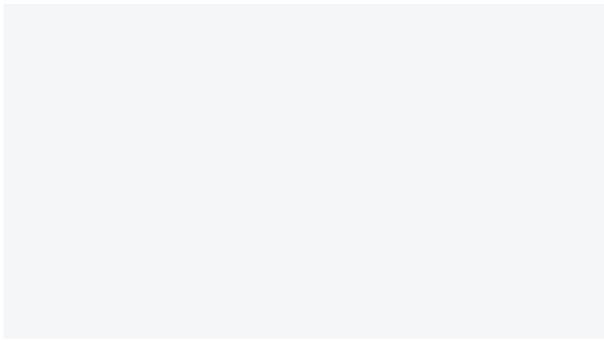
When making your design decisions the first thing Shayna recommends you do is work out what will be the focal point in that space. Will it be the artwork on the walls? Will it be the couch? Will it be the wall colour or a feature wall? Or will it be the accessories you choose to mix up the room with? You need to work this out first as this needs to be the main feature, and every other decision you make in the room needs to be a supporting character to the focal point you choose. Focal points don't always need to actually be at eye level -- you can choose to make your rug your focal point -- it's about choosing the one piece you want to make a statement with and having everything else support this.

10. Looking beyond the picture

Another key piece of advice that ran through Shayna's talk was looking beyond the picture. She offered the two below images side-by-side as an example of this.

If you look at the two photos, they are from very different eras with the tiled floor in The Block Arcade in Melbourne being done in 1869, and the graffiti being a more modern addition to the Melbourne landscape. They are very different stylistically, with the tiled floor being classic and more formal while the graffiti is more relaxed and casual. But if you break it down to its simplest elements, the colour palette is great similarity you can see the greens, the blues, the reds, the yellows, the oranges and even the white concrete look in both





This is an example of how you can use a colour palette out of something you may not be able or want to recreate exactly and put it in your space in your own way that suits the tone and feel you want to create. It's about getting the balance out of the inspiration you find, look beyond the picture and see what in it you are attracted to. Is it the feeling or tone you are being drawn to or is it the colour and style that suits you more and once you have broken it

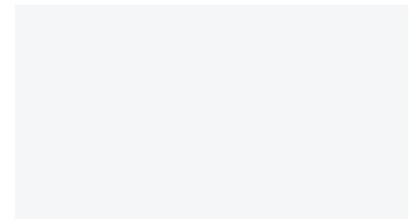
down to where you know what you love about it, use that to be inspiration in your home.

“*...if you're renting and can't put nails in the wall a screen can actually be one of your best friends cause you can actually hang art off it and create a different look in your own home.*”

- Shayna Blaze

11. Claim your space

One of the main things Shayna wanted all the people attending her talk to walk away with and think about was how they can claim their space. This is something that can sometimes be a struggle as most of us don't live alone and even if we do there comes times when we still have to share our space, whether it be friends, family, visitors or pets. The idea of claiming your space is an even harder task if you have children, as they have a way of taking over the whole home and claim it all as their own.



Shayna's assistant claiming her space.

Shayna's advice “find a corner, find a space that you can claim as your's and that is where you inject yourself into your interior.” It's about having that one space that is all you, where it's all about making you feel happy and inspired. While you want this feeling throughout your home, most homes are shared with others, and if your favourite colour is bright pink this may not be appropriate for the areas of your home your partner also inhabits.

This is especially important in offices, particularly if they're open plan. Even in these environments you can claim the small part of your office that is your space. You just need to make sure that everything that you touch works for you. If you have a mousepad decorate as you would like, with your mouse make sure it's comfortable in your hand and smooth for you to use. If you have a mug you drink out of don't just go for the cheap \$2 mug -- buy something that reflects your tastes.

Below is a table and lounge in Shayna's office in her studio. It has her Limoge teapot and teacup and saucer. When speaking about Shayna said “...yes it costs a bomb but it feels amazing when I drink from it and I feel good and that's my cup and don't anyone dare touch that because I claimed that teacup.”

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12. Cost versus reality



While goals are valuable and helpful, you also need to remember to enjoy your reality. You might aspire to huge house with a beautiful pool but don't forget to enjoy what you have. Inspiring yourself with these huge goals and dreams can push you to do better, but don't focus so much on these that you become disappointed with your current circumstances.

Enjoy your reality, embrace what you have and make it the best you can. Create the most inspiring space for your goals and dreams. Have these greater goals as an inspiration and a driver for making your world the best it can be. Shaynna also gave a great description of the difference between inspiration and aspiration;

“Aspiration is what drives you to something else, inspiration is something that's quite achievable, you can do that. So aspire to something, but be inspired on your daily life about what you can create as your reality at the time.”

13. Live as though Pinterest doesn't exist

Shaynna made clear that she loves social media and the access it gives to ideas from around the world. But this overabundance of sources creates a pressure to replicate the perfection you see in others photos and what they share. Make your rooms speak for you rather than them fighting you and your mood. Enjoy yourself and your interior.

The final piece of advice Shaynna offered:

“I just want people to have more fun in their homes. I want people to realise that it's about you, and it's about creating that real flexibility in your interior to excite you and make you feel different.”

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