

# DECORATION

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# Inner Space

The definition of a room



Marie-Noëlle Swiderski, a design professional since 1993, set up the Blanchard Design House in Dubai in September 2006. Her aim "to comfort her soul with beauty".



There are times when we feel fed up with what we have. We want to change something but are not sure what or how and what it would entail. This is also true in a home, where spaces can feel slightly frozen in time, habitual and predictable. It is nice to feel you have entered an entirely new dwelling within your own, comfortably familiar, home. An easy way to refresh a room is to rearrange the furniture before you actually decide to change it, remove or add anything else.

Space planning is one of the most impactful aspects of an interior designer's job and, done properly, will define the room's impact.

When our team at Blanchard considers a room's furniture layout, we know we must bear in mind several points, almost equally important. The first and obvious concerns the room's size and shape: is it long and narrow, is it square, does it have angled walls and awkward corners? Is it cavernous or boxy? The answers to these

questions will lead to considerations of spacing between pieces of furniture, leaving enough circulation between them to get through without being too far from the pieces you need to access. They will also lead to potential decisions of doing without one piece or adding another, as some alternative layouts will preclude certain arrangements, for lack of space, wrong proportions or discordance between pieces. Second would be the number of openings the room has. Indeed

windows and doors, whether for passage or storage, bring on their own challenges. Furniture should not block circulation, some pieces not be too far from sources of light, and sill height and window dressings will equally impact on available distance. Third to consider is the purpose of the room. One should allow for as flexible a layout as the room will allow, if it is to be used for entertaining for example, or may serve dual purposes (ie. a formal and an informal option, or a playroom and bedroom within one).

Space is not elastic but at the same time can reveal itself quite generous in its interpretations. I mean that the same room can have very different atmospheres, reveal very different identities, depending on the use made of its area. You will agree that a room where every inch is allocated to a piece of furniture or ornament, is more reminiscent of a boudoir or Victorian parlour. It lends itself to a more 'set' atmosphere, where is little room for change let alone movement. Rooms such as this are welcoming in a lovely, slightly chaotic way, because the eye never knows where to stop and is quite literally constantly distracted – they call to mind a cackling afternoon tea, with gossip bouncing on the upholstery. One needs to be careful, however, not to use up all the available space, so as not to leave a stifling impression. In contrast, a more pared down, airy layout, allows for circulation and, funnily enough, reflection. A certain serenity is infused within a room that breathes, that leaves pauses in its allocation of voids and solids. An adagio rather than a allegro, let's say. There again, care must be taken not to leave too great pockets of emptiness, which can then lend to the room an air of unfinished business and even coldness.

As always, once all these elements have been taken into account, it is essential to keep the layering and the balance between all pieces. Some height to complete the floor occupation will lift the room. Some delicate pieces on legs will alleviate the presence of heavier pieces, fully upholstered or on plinths. Pockets of light should be created, as they will define moods, interest and purpose. Focal areas will thus need to be developed, so the room retains a rhythm rather than having a general assault on the senses. And as much as I am a stickler for symmetry, I have to admit that the merit, nay magic, lies in a successfully eclectic space layout.

