

Styled Spaces

Design Diary

Summer 2013



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Hello

Anna,

"Summertime and the living is easy..." -- or so the song goes. Not true if you're doing your own DIY home project (which I've come to think of as "**D**arn **I**t's **Y**ucky"!).

You may recall that I shared with you the first two stages of our home reno in my [Winter 2011](#) and [Spring 2012 newsletters](#).

Now, Ryan and I are foregoing a social life as we move full steam ahead with our DIY project.

This issue of Design Diary is dedicated to all of us who undertake DIY projects - by



Objectives

Any home renovation project (DIY or otherwise) needs to start with a clear set of objectives.

Ryan and I both know that our current home is not our "forever" home. Renovations we undertake must be done thoughtfully to ensure we get the best return on investment.

Secondly, scope is important: we have a budget plus we wanted to be able to do the work ourselves.

Reality is equally important: we have pets; we love large family dinners; and Ryan and I already know we work well together on home projects.

Armed with the above, our DIY adventure, which started last spring, continued with bringing the swing of a hammer to our [original space](#)...

sharing the process, I hope I can make it smoother for others. (Of course, you can always [contact me](#) to help you.)

In subsequent newsletters, I'll include the beautiful results so we can share that together too.

Vanessa



Before and after pictures from Styled Spaces client work appear on [my website](#). I hope you'll stop by!

[Fresh Ideas](#) - designer advice for your DIY projects: renovate with confidence.



Step 1 | The Vision

To increase our home's resale value, I knew we needed to have a main floor powder room. Additionally, to fit our lifestyle, we wanted a comfortable area to hold large family dinners.

Our aim, then, was to rework the wasted space taken up by a long hallway, a large brick hearth, and the no man's land in front of the fireplace that is the pathway to access the kitchen.

My Life | DIY Fashionista

"Dress for success" was never more true!

A far cry from my usual business attire, this DIY project demanded a look that was far less fashionable.



Gloves, protective eye wear, face mask and clothes suitable for hard work and wear-and-tear are all on the 'best dressed list' for anyone doing hands-on DIY work.



Step 2 | Opening Up

As part of this project, the front hall pantry was eliminated. We had to re-create this very necessary storage space somewhere else. We did this by redoing the kitchen cabinetry: first, the upper cabinets now go to the ceiling; second, we improved the under-counter storage (instead of shelves, we have used drawers).

Much consideration and planning went into the table vs island deliberation. Ultimately we chose an island that will comfortably seat our large family gatherings. I'll be sharing photos and a description on our kitchen renovation in an upcoming issue.

Shoes need to be both supportive and protective -- there are always nails and other items on the floor, and you'll want supportive footwear when climbing ladders.

(Even at this early renovation stage, our dog Lucy and cat Louis have given up on keeping themselves clean. So have we: mucky pups 'r us!)

Here's another tip I can share after learning the hard way: brick dust and construction dust are particularly hard on long hair! So one more cover-up I'd suggest is a ball cap or shower cap.



Lucy



Step 3 | The Fireplace

Initially, we thought we would leave the brick on the face of the fireplace and repair the left hand side that extended around the corner. The high cost of bricklaying would not have been a good return on investment for us when we took into consideration our home's resale value.

Removing the brick was my job. Dressed in protective gear, and with cold chisel and a framing hammer in hand, I divided the work into 3 sections. The total project took me 8 hours plus the clean up time.

The brick is being re-purposed for another project.

We replaced the upper half of the fireplace with drywall and it will be painted. Then we'll add a mantel, put on our own stone, and tile the hearth. Our estimate is \$700 - well below the original estimate of the bricklayers.

Step 4 | Flooring

At the far right, you'll see the drywalled upper half of the fireplace. The lower half is ready for fireboard and stone.

You can also get a sense of our new, open - and far more social - space!

You may also notice that the ceiling fan/light fixture is gone. It was poorly positioned: it was too close to the fireplace and took up valuable space of our 8' ceiling height. We used a properly positioned, flush-mounted pot light instead to highlight the fireplace.



Although we were hoping to retain the existing flooring, we needed additional hardwood and it's no longer being made. We found a well-priced laminate that is pet friendly (dog nails won't scratch it) and that works well for cleaning up tracked-in footprints (both 2-legged and 4-legged).

Next up | Kitchen

From the picture shown here, you may be asking: "Is there any hope?" Yes, there is!

We're well underway, and in the next issue you'll read more about our:

- new cabinets
- kitchen island and seating
- repositioned appliances (me & a jackhammer!)



Until next time, enjoy your summer!

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Thanks for reading! Watch for the next issue of Design Diary