

Interiors

The inside scoop on creating your dream house.

If your home has a value of several million dollars or more, you should seek the same level of counsel and guidance when designing the interior that went into the architectural planning. It is important that you allocate a proportionate amount for the inside spaces in your initial budget.

"I think it's really wise to focus on custom interiors," says James David Petersen, director of Interior Design at Wadia Associates, a New Canaan, CT, residential design and planning firm.

Here are trade secrets and tips from the seasoned designer, whose numerous notable projects include the White House's private living quarters under the administration of President George H. W. Bush, the Beacon Hill townhouse of Senator John Kerry and his wife, Teresa Heinz Kerry, and the American Embassy in Paris.

Invest in rich custom or antique rugs (1), (2), (5).

Standard-size carpets won't do in a room that requires very substantial floor covering. "Today's new houses demand very, very beautiful old rugs that were originally made for palace-size rooms of the American Belle Époque and for European châteaux and great houses," says Petersen. While he has designed custom rugs for clients, Petersen says he prefers to search out rugs that already exist. "The world is loaded with gorgeous antique rugs, and I love how they get when they are old – the colors are often faded because they were made with vegetable dyes that in time have aged to the most fantastic, mellow richness." One can expect to pay upwards of \$100,000 for such a rare find.

Hire master painters (1), (2), (4), (5).

A superior custom paint job requires work done by master technicians, consisting of correct time allocated for skim coating and preparing the walls. Entrance halls, foyers and grand stairwells are favored locations for creating special paint treatments such as marbling or masterful murals. Generally Petersen tries to keep elaborate paint treatments to a minimum. The current trend is toward a sparer aesthetic, which, Petersen believes, is offset by the exquisite custom woodwork that is evident in new-house construction. "Good custom woodwork and good bone structure will take you a very long way in creating an elegant, finished look," says Petersen.

Fill in the blanks (all photos).

Decorate large expanses of wall – with pictures, mirrors and lighting fixtures. Mounting groupings of large prints such as botanicals, maps and architectural renderings framed with impressive mats will help absorb some of the wall area. The addition of gilded brackets with large porcelain pieces will accent and provide added dimension to flat framework.

Treat yourself to window dressing (1), (2), (5).

Exquisitely made, finely trimmed, perfectly proportioned curtains are the ultimate decorating luxury. Custom-made window treatments should always complement the architectural character of the house.

Keep the home fires burning (2), (4), (5).

Unused fireplaces look like idle stage sets. Newer construction homeowners might want to consider having a faux painter apply an uneven black wash or paint over too new brickwork.

Photos courtesy of James D. Petersen.

