

**Great interior design does not just simply “happen.”**

**It is brought to you by a designer who has had years of experience in the world of high fashion....**

**... a designer who has worked with demanding clients of iconic worldwide status.**

**An interior designer known for his passion, for both his art form and his clients.**

**Great design comes from the well-known designer:**

*Umberto Ciccolella.*

After 30 years of designing beautiful interiors for the rich and famous of New York and Los Angeles, Umberto headed south of the border eight years ago. After creating designs for high-profile clients in Puerto Vallarta, Buenos Aires, Punta del Este and throughout Central and South America, he has landed back in Puerto Vallarta.

While each country has stylistic differences, likes and dislikes, in the end all great design follows the same process. This process ensures the perfect result.

Below I will share my design philosophy with you. So, here we go. All the steps necessary to getting the results you want!

### **Our Initial Meeting**

Eleven critical questions must be discussed in the initial meeting and start of the design process. These are questions that only you and I can answer together:

- Who will be using the space and what are their various needs?
- How many people will be using the space and who are these people?
- What are your style and color preferences?
- How long will the space be used? Daily? Monthly? Seasonally?
- Is the property a principal residence, 2<sup>nd</sup> home or an investment?
- What does the client hope to achieve through commissioning the work?
- What is the scope of work?
- What is the budget?
- Do you have furnishing or are you shipping furnishings into the country?
- What is the time frame for completion?
- Are you comfortable with the design fees, payment schedule, contracts?

Great design looks amazing, beautiful, unplanned... but the truth is that interior design is a process. The perfect home looks as if it was born that way. The work behind the scenes in a great interior design is always invisible. There is a process that creates this wonderful environment which is achieved through great vision and style. A creative collaboration between the client and designer. With a great interior comes lots and lots of planning.

Creativity, collaboration and execution are the key.

### 8 key components of the design process:

- Concept
- Scope of work
- Budget
- Planning
- Specifications
- Agreement
- Execution
- Completion

### Details of each component:

**Concept:** Every project is unique, but these are the key elements Concept phase. It is critical to understand the client's vision to begin the process.

**Style:** Understanding the client's esthetic vision in design. It may vary from minimalist to over the top dramatic... or somewhere in-between. Blending the interior with the exterior architecture is highly important. Fusing the client's style with the realities of the project while creating a home that is grounded and unforced is an art.

Discovering the client's vision for this particular project is the keystone to success. Someone with very traditional taste might wish to stray from the usual and do something completely tropical due to the incredible surroundings. Color pallets, furniture, surfaces, spaces, architectural elements are all variables that can change with location and the type of property and how it is going to be used.

**Function:** How will the house be used? It is a primary residence, seasonal property, second home, or will it be rented out? If the home will be used as a rental property, this may influence the choices of finishes and fabrics. It is also extremely important to know the amount of people who will live in the home, and the size of parties that might be given in the home.

**Architecture:** The interior and exterior architecture are usually established, but it is important to fuse the architecture with the new design- whether that means staying true to the architecture or fusing or blending the architecture with harmonious styles. It may also mean renovations -adding or changing architectural elements to create a fresh look for the vision of the finished project.

**Color Pallet:** Color changes everything. Selecting the proper color pallet is crucial and will set a mood and style for the entire project. Working as a team and deciding on a range of color is a great beginning to any design project.

**Scope of work:** It is important to define all the work within the project and detail what each item entails with estimated costs for each item. With that information in hand, it is possible to determine a preliminary budget.

At times, a client has a determined budget and with that information, it is important to talk realistically about what can be achieved for a particular amount. This avoids disappointment and frustrations and clarifies the project. Other times clients have a set sum of money to work with and that is the budget. Even with a smaller budget, much can be accomplished.

**Budget:** The scope of work should make it easy to determine a rough budget. The budget should be determined only after all aspects of the project are determined. Changes and additions after work begins are not only more costly but can change the energy and outcome of the project. The more detailed the plan the better the outcome-

Designing and decorating your home should be exciting and enjoyable. As in most relationships, money can become a problem if things are not upfront and realistic. It is always good to allow contingencies for unexpected expenses, but the more detailed and clear the plans and budget are, the more you can rest assured that the project will come in on budget.

Payment schedules are usually based on progress. A clear understanding of the payment schedule is critical. The contractors should be on a progress payment schedule as well as the designer fees. The designer should be paid in phases different from the contractors, material houses or furniture companies. The contractors or “trades” involved in the project should also provide estimates of their work. Any city permit fees, need to be included in the budget as well as clean up, condo regulations and any other ancillary considerations. In addition, physical changes other than decorating may require an architect and the accompanying fees.

**Planning:** At this point, with the scope of the work and budget determined, it is time to put it all down on paper. That includes a 1<sup>st</sup> draft of the floor plans, estimated costs of all expenses for the project and timelines. It should include lists of all contractors, materials, furniture, lighting, fixtures, designers fees... everything needed to complete the project from start to finish.

This portion of the process gives the client a glimpse of the completed job as well as insight into whether the budget is within their expectations. This is the moment to discuss changes, cuts or additions. If this estimated cost far exceeds the budget, it's time to look at scaling back the project or make adjustments in how the money is being spent.

**Specifications - Research and Resources:** Researching finishes and sourcing materials/furniture, and then specifying them is critical to the design and budget. Contractors who provide quality workmanship on time and on budget are also of extreme importance. It clarifies what you're getting and the costs involved.

Thanks to the internet, it's easy to see all choices available as well as samples of color, fabrics, texture. This is the perfect phase of the project to resolve design and budget issues. There are endless materials, finishes and furniture choices; all great, but usually differ greatly in price. It's a good time to look at costs and perhaps change the scope of the work or change furniture, fixtures, finishes or materials to keep the budget in line without sacrificing the integrity of the design.

Changes made at this point will ensure you get the design you want without the problems of being over budget and overstressed. All these changes are on paper at this point and are quite simple to change. In the later phases of the project they are costly and sometimes heartbreaking.

**Agreement:** At this point the client and designer come to agreement as to what will be done. Final plans and itemized budgets are prepared and submitted to the client for approval. It's a final chance to address questions, concerns and possible changes. After consideration, the final plans should be set the agreement for the project signed.

**Execution:** With all the details finalized, it is time to talk about a timeframe, start date, work schedule, progress reports, communications regarding progress and reviewing the design. It's always a good practice to set up weekly updates or conference calls during the project. Open communication ensures that everyone is on the same page and up to date. Site visits are great but may not be possible; in that case, photos of progress or video clips are helpful.

**Completion:** Once the work is completed and approved by the client, the final payments are distributed. Depending on the project, accessories, household items such as linens, kitchen equipment, art, may be included in a turnkey project or done after the initial project is complete as a secondary project.

## In Summary

Hopefully this will give you some insight into how to enjoy the process of making your dream home into a reality. I like to refer to the saying "Well begun is half done," or in other words-- a good beginning assures success.

A good interior designer is successful when the finished product is your vision of comfort and style. Exactly what you wanted and cost what you planned to spend. It all comes down to the planning stages! Plan, plan, plan.... And then plan some more!

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

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