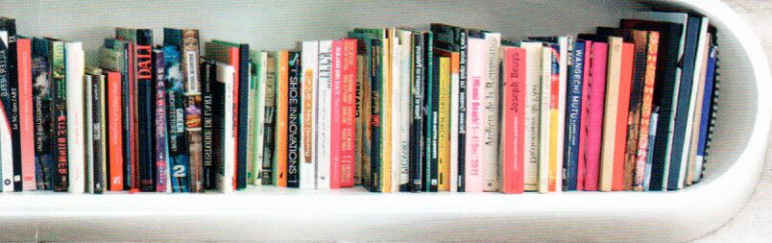


SPECIAL ISSUE

FALL 2017/WINTER 2018

NEW YORK design

hunting
By Wendy
Goodman



900 of the City's Best
Architects, Designers,
Upholsterers, Painters,
Antiques Dealers, and More

Ask the Experts

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The Contractor Whisperer

Jean Brownhill

Founder and CEO, Sweeten

What does Sweeten do?

We like to say we're renovation match-makers. We help homeowners find great general contractors, and once they're matched, we make sure projects are completed on time and on budget. We ask for references, research licensing, and conduct background checks.

What about the intangibles, though?

Once the technical measures have been met, the homeowner has to ask, "What's my communication style? How have I been successful in the past when faced with

a similarly costly and stressful decision? Did I work best with a person who was super-fluid or someone who was really structured?" Then set the communication expectation up front, modeling whatever style you want during the estimation and bidding.

Any tips for navigating red tape?

In New York City, before you even get to the Department of Buildings, you need to get approval from your co-op or condo board. People don't anticipate the amount of time that can take. Ask a board member so you can plan that

TRICK OF THE TRADE

"Don't move the plumbing rough-ins. It adds 10 to 15 percent to the budget, and nobody walks into a new bathroom and says, 'Wow, you moved the toilet!'"

time into your renovation—that will be the most wide-ranging variable. We've seen some people send an email with a napkin sketch that's approved in a day; other folks have a three-month process.

What can a homeowner do when a project doesn't go as planned?

If you feel like your project is starting to go sideways, over-communicate to stem the tide. Have a clear expectation-setting meeting with your general contractor. It's like a therapy session: *The past is the past; here is our action plan going forward. Do we all agree that this can be achieved? Can we all do this together?*

What's the best way to transform a space on a budget?

Redo the floors. You're essentially changing every square foot of your apartment, touching

every room, with one renovation; \$15 to \$35 per square foot is what you should expect to pay in New York City for good wood flooring.

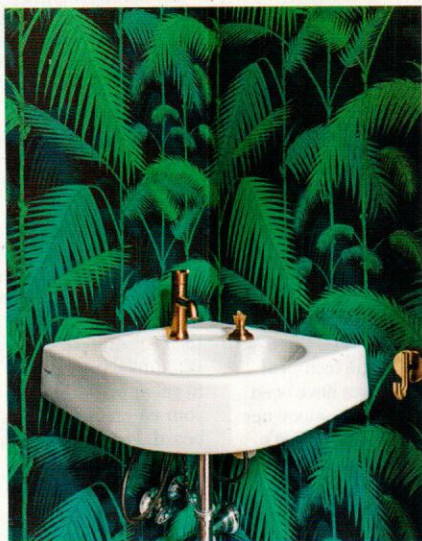
Is there a rule of thumb for items you should always splurge on?

Anything you're going to touch on a daily basis: faucets, the toilet, handles. There are so many ways to value-engineer by choosing different materials, limiting the scope, reducing your time or quality expectations. What's important to know is the emotional motivation for the renovation. If your dream is to luxuriate in your tub on weekends, spend on the best tub you can afford—then don't buy the Lutron light fixtures.

DAVID WALTERS

sweeten.com

Bold wallpaper and brass touches in a Brooklyn townhouse renovated with Sweeten.



The Framer

Jed Bark Founder, Bark Frameworks

Where do you start when framing valuable art?

First, do no harm. The second thing is preservation. Whatever environment we make for the work will probably be its home for decades, so we want to be sure the materials we use will, in fact, protect it. Third, we have to ensure that the techniques we use are reversible, so that, 40 years from now, the work can come out of the frame and be in the condition it was in when we installed it.

What do a lot of people do that they should avoid?

Framers should never mount works. You're

adhering the art to a board, and that's almost always irreversible. If a collector brings us a work to be mounted, we'll ask if that's what the artist wants. We'll call the gallery.

How big of a threat is natural light?

No work should ever be hung so sunlight passes directly over it. Light changes the microenvironment inside the frame, causing swelling and contraction that ages the work very quickly. UV-blocking glazing—either acrylic or glass—should always be used, but even with the UV removed, sunlight is three times as damaging as incandescent light.

Any other environmental factors to consider?

Heat and humidity. A difference of 18 degrees Fahrenheit doubles the rate of chemical reactions, so going from 60 to 78 degrees doubles that risk of damaging oxidation. Materials used in framing absorb and release water, so if the art is going to the Hamptons or the Caribbean, we might install humidity-indicator strips on the back.

What's something not worth framing that people insist on framing anyway?

One time, some friends of mine gave me their son's high-school diploma to frame. [Laughs.] He went on to much more important things—it's a high-school diploma! Every ten years, they'd ask me about it and I'd just sort of mumble. I just thought it was stupid. I've still got it, and he's 50 now. D.W.

barkframeworks.com; 718-752-1919



For this Edgar Degas drawing, Bark built a rose-gold-gilded frame. It's based on the frame of a Caillebotte, which was derived from Degas's own frames.

