



# THE HOUSE WHISPERER

STORY DIANE SAWCHUK | PHOTOGRAPHY AMY ZAMBONIN

**W**e've all done it, bought a piece of furniture or accessory in an effort to bring a room together. When that doesn't work, we try again and add something else. Or this time we paint the room... maybe buy new window coverings.

And so, in for a penny, in for a pound; our increasing frustration and dissatisfaction is directly proportional to the additional expense. But we wouldn't consider hiring an interior decorator because, you know... the expense.

Add up the cost of all those regrettable furniture and accessory purchases, your time wasted travelling from store to store and you'll quickly realize that money could have been better invested on the services of a professional – who would have produced the polished look you were after all along.

Seasoned designer and decorator **Catherine Pulcine** says no matter how many episodes of *Property Brothers* you may have watched, taking on a project can be daunting for the simple fact that decorating is so much more than buying items we like and putting them in a room; so many other considerations must be taken into account to create a balanced space.

"Just because you can go out and buy things and then combine the furniture and accessories you like in the colours you prefer doesn't mean it's meant to go together," she says. And after 27 years in the business, Catherine's talent to put together texture with colour and take into consideration placement and proportion comes second nature to her.

The senior designer and owner (along with husband Jerome) of **Decorating Den Interiors – The CPI Team**, Catherine has improved the living space of homes from one end of Ottawa to the other, making her one of Ottawa's premiere designers in solving decorating dilemmas. She and her team have demonstrated a skill for interpreting the goals and must-haves of clients and then translating them into the end result of a space that's a true reflection of the homeowner's personality.

"I'm not there to inflict the latest colour, the latest style on a client," she says. "We ask a lot of questions and we truly listen to what they're saying. And if you listen with a genuine interest, you get a pretty good picture of who this person is, or who this family is, what they want from this and how the space fits into their lifestyle. We really do try to make it their space, something truly for them. And it's such a joy to have a client say, at the end, 'How did you do that? How did you know that's exactly what I wanted?'"



of service, Catherine points out: as well as having professionals coordinate every aspect of your project, from measuring, product selection and ordering as well as installation, her clients aren't required to travel to showrooms, where it's easy to be overwhelmed with the number of selections to choose from. But more important, in this truly custom design process, all colours and textures are selected in the environment they are meant to appear and there is no guesswork where lighting or proportion is concerned.

It's this simple: after an initial complimentary consultation, in which the budget is determined, the hard work commences at Catherine's design studio. There, plans for the space are created, with either a floor plan or a layout, as well as three-dimensional drawings, giving perspective to the space. All the selections are made on behalf of the client, from the paint colour to the fabric sample, from flooring to fixtures and quotes from

contractors are received if necessary. Everything is itemized, including the service fee, so the client knows exactly what the cost is.

And clients appreciate a project that's as streamlined as this one, Catherine says.

As well as being a benefit to their clients, the partnership proved to be a successful one for The CPI Team itself. In their inaugural year, Catherine's company was honoured with Canadian Franchise of the Year and achieved the coveted Chairman's Circle, which recognizes the top 10 selling franchises in North America. The firm has gone on to win these honours every year since, in addition to being named North American Franchise of the year in 2014.

Most recently, Catherine was a Dream Rooms Competition winner in the Living Room category last spring. Judged by the editors and publishers of major homes, women's and trades publications across North America, Catherine's was one of 300 entries in that category. **OH**

And while it may be that the big reveal of a space with the wow factor results in many repeat customers for the 18-year-old company, the initial draw has to be the ease with which a project takes shape and gets off the ground.

Four years ago, Catherine's company, The CPI Team, joined North America's largest interior design franchise company. Collaborating with Decorating Den Interiors – a custom in-home designer service with more than a million clients in the U.S. and Canada over its 47-year history – gave The CPI Team access to hundreds of suppliers. From that point, Catherine and her staff were able to continue to offer clients top quality home décor products including window coverings, wall coverings, accessories and artwork, furniture and flooring, but in a completely unique way.

In essence, Decorating Den Interiors – The CPI Team now brings the store to the client instead of sending them to a number of brick-and-mortar stores.

There are multiple benefits to this kind



Catherine Pulcine in her design studio at Decorating Den Interiors – The CPI Team, with interior design assistant Rebecca Rennich.