

keeping it simple

With so much choice in home renovation products, how on earth do you decide?

The word renovation sends most of us spiraling into equal parts excitement and dread. To visualise the big picture but successfully mastermind tiny details is a true art. Decisions you didn't dream of will be required, concerning products and processes of which you may currently be ignorant.

Renovating is not unlike getting married. It pays to know unequivocally what you do and don't like; to realise that those trends you adore now may or may not last. For those of us who prefer to personally lead a home project (as opposed to employing an interior designer), immediately apparent will be the mountain of information and plethora of choices.

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But how to start? Trawl the internet first? Hot-foot it around shops every weekend for months? The best beginning may be neither. A thorough search of your own taste and motivation comes first, because this is all about you. Do you know the ideal scale of your alterations or additions? Do you have an exact figure to spend? Do you want the renovation to make the space seem bigger? Funkier? More elegant?

An equally great renovation precursor – one which helps to both broaden your horizons and hone preferences – is a visit to a Home Ideas Centre. The centres are year-round, static home-show exhibitions with no entry fee.

The Home Ideas Centres function almost like some clients' living rooms for the renovation's duration, according to national sales and marketing manager Vicki Grainger. People leave with wads of brochures to take home and discuss, slashing their internet search, shop haul and product-sourcing time.

Surely such exposure to choice could be stressful? Couldn't confusion result? Vicki disagrees. "People often realise we're here half-way through, and wish they'd come here before starting a project. Others know about us and call in as much as a year before beginning work, to have ample time and space for proper planning," Vicki says.

The selection process

List exactly what you want your renovation to achieve. Commit to paper specific functional aims like, 'cost-effective warmth throughout,' before moving onto aesthetic, stylistic preferences and favoured products. Think about open homes you've visited; magazine features you've admired. What did you envy and why? If you loved a particular deck or piece of furniture, note it down. A scheme can be designed around it!

Spend a little internet time on interior/exterior design sites. Home, building and design magazines all have their own sites. Dream a little. Try www.resene.co.nz, www.interiorsonline.co.nz, www.makeover.co.nz and www.shoppinginstyle.co.nz for starters.

Think about how eco-friendly your choices are. Are you considering solar water and underfloor heating, use of grey-water, optimal double glazing and insulation levels?

Quickly eliminate looks/styles/products you don't like, or which don't answer your overall aim. If you really love a particular finish or product, stand firm and question those who try to persuade you otherwise. Don't capitulate easily and then suffer regret!

Remember that details like trims and door-handles set an overall style, so give their selection due consideration and time; don't discount their importance.

Be happy to be individual in your taste. Adding a bold, confident or luxury item to your scheme will often lift an otherwise average renovation to new heights!

If you and your partner can't agree, resist compromising over one room in favour of each making design decisions about different spaces; an approach that's often more successful.

Choose the highest-quality products you can. Think about what will be stunning long-term. Take whatever time is needed to do it once and do it right. **H**

 Resene Artefact

 Resene Noosa

 Resene Quarter Silver Sand

words Liesl Johnstone