



COLLECTOR'S PIECE: GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR NEW HOME

By **Splash Staff** / **North Shore** / October 29, 2014

After a long search for the perfect piece of real estate, the fun begins — your choice in décor is what truly makes a house a home. Of course, furnishing your newfound square footage is more of a marathon than a sprint. A well-rounded interior combines aesthetics with function and juxtaposes high-end pieces with unique but inexpensive finds.

Before you splurge, take a step back. "Even someone with a modest budget can [use] design services to create a plan," says designer **Mitchell Channon** (Mitchell Channon Design, 5733 N. Sheridan, Chicago; mitchellchannondesign.com). Discuss what you're looking for in terms of style and function — "then, when you start to buy pieces, they'll be the right pieces." Begin with the necessities to build a collection over time.

Furniture should increase the function of the space and reflect the homeowner's personality. Channon says that spending a little more on a custom piece — rather than trying multiple, cheaper options that don't work — can save you money down the line, because it will make the space work better for you.

So what makes a piece collection-worthy? "Most high-end furniture is made-to-order, made by hand by craftsmen and made in the United States, which is surprising to a lot of people," says **Chuck Chewning**, creative director of Donghia Inc. (222 W. Merchandise Mart, Suite 631, Chicago; Donghia.com). According to Chewning, mass-manufactured items have several pre-made elements that make them easy to assemble quickly. Particularly with upholstered pieces, they're designed to mimic high-end furniture, but the quality isn't as long-lasting.

His advice: Create a balanced and collected look — focusing on personal style — but try to find something with a classic reference point, so that in 20 or 30 years it's archival and not out of fashion. "That's the difference between something trendy and disposable," he says, adding: "I believe in mixing furniture from different styles and periods."

Part of building such a collection is taking pride in acquired pieces. "With high-quality products that are more expensive, you buy something special and it brings you more satisfaction than something you can replace easily," says **Antoine Roset**, executive vice president of Roset USA, the North American arm of Ligne Roset (440 N. Wells, Chicago; Ligne-roset-usa.com). The world-renowned furniture company was started in 1860 by Antoine's great-grandfather, who believed that original design was an integral part of a home's infrastructure.

To lessen the intimidation factor of designer price tags, combine the more expensive pieces with bargains. "Spend the money where it's needed by investing in pieces that will hold up to daily use, such as a sofa and a rug," says **Yvette Bass**, design associate at Room & Board (55 E. Ohio, Chicago; Roomandboard.com). Choose a sofa that has a frame with a timeless silhouette and great upholstery. When it comes to rugs, go with 100 percent wool, which is naturally soil resistant. "A good rug will last a lifetime," she says.

Save on items like cocktail tables and side tables, Bass suggests. "An inexpensive or vintage cocktail table can be enhanced by layering it with books and accessories or by showcasing a beautiful lamp," she says.

Channon agrees. "If you have a limited budget, buy the better quality sofa, because there are lots of attractive coffee tables that [are] relatively inexpensive, that don't take the same kind of wear."

Most importantly, set a budget for each room and stick to it. "Meet with a designer or design associate and come up with a good space plan for the room, and find inspiration by grabbing images from blogs and magazines," says Bass. Just remember Channing's solid advice: "You're one-of-a-kind — and your home should be too."