

Staging vs. Decorating: What's the Difference?

Our clients often ask if there is really a difference between interior decorating and staging. After all, aren't the basic design principles the same, things like scale, proportion and flow?

Our answer to them is that the difference is in how those design principles are applied and for what end result. Interior decorating is about furnishing and accessorizing a space to fit your lifestyle and express your personal taste. On the other hand, staging is a marketing tool. Staging is about "packaging" a property to appeal to the widest set of potential buyers possible.

Staging highlights the positive features of the home while downplaying its less desirable aspects. A staged home will have much less in the way of furniture and accessories because the goal is to showcase the home itself, not the stuff in it. There should be enough furnishings to create an environment that buyers can aspire to and feel at home in. Done well, staging can help a house connect with a buyer on an emotional level so that he or she thinks "This is it. This is the one."

Here are some specific examples of how staging differs from decorating:

- 1) In decorating, framed family photos are a favorite way to personalize your space. In staging, they are a no-no. Buyers want to visualize themselves living in the home, not visiting your home.
- 2) Vivid paint colors on the walls are another legitimate way to express your unique style. But buyers will be distracted by bold colors and may not be able to see beyond them to appreciate the architectural features of your house. When staging, better to go with neutrals that everyone can appreciate.
- 3) Overstuffed furniture is cozy and comfortable, especially in the family room. But it has to go when selling your house. Big furniture eats up space, something that you want buyers to see lots of, so when staging, you need to pare down the size and amount of furniture in each room unless the rooms are very large.
- 4) For most people the TV is an integral part of the home, often the bigger the better. But the TV can often distract the eye from a more appealing focal point, like the fireplace. When staging the home, it's best to have a way to hide the TV, in an armoire, for example, or behind cabinet doors.

