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## How to Create a Luxury DIY Design Project

By Ann McDonald



The Moraga dining room, featured on *ivillage*, includes a custom dining table, vintage re-purposed chairs, menswear upholstered seats, new lighting, smooth textured walls and custom colored paint, designed by Ann McDonald, Couture Chateau [www.couturechateau.com](http://www.couturechateau.com) Photo Peter Medilek, Inc. [www.petermedilek.com](http://www.petermedilek.com)

existing pieces, this process enables you to be precise about your intent. Without it, a design project will never be luxury. It simply won't.

Step two: Make good choices.

We sourced a vintage dealer for solid wood chairs that could be modified and refinished. With well constructed product, you can change anything. Solid wood can be lacquered, refinished, repaired, repainted, rebuilt - heck, it can even be stripped and chipped.

Step three: Customize.

Your home should reflect you, not someone else. The intent is to enhance your life. Your home should be a refuge and encourager, a place of safety and order. It's hard out there! Creating spaces that nurture us is important. It can be as simple as monogramming a favorite sham, adding trim to a pre-fab drapery panel or painting a colorful line in a groove on a piece of furniture you love. Whatever it is, make it you.

Step four: Concentrate.

What does excellence look like for your DIY project? Proper hand sanding, distressing and curing of custom finishes cannot be rushed. Write down the details and you can roadmap your professional outcome. Remember, we eat the elephant one bite at a time.

Step five: Complete.

What should your completed DIY project look like? Prepare for that completed look from the start. Honestly address realistic timelines, proper supplies and appropriate work space. I always consult clients undertaking DIY to

When setting out to complete a transitional suburban redesign for two stylish Moraga homeowners, my design team took some color risk so the space would feel fresh. We said goodbye to beige, hello to gray.

The project, which was featured on *ivillage*'s "16 Beautiful Fall Decor Trends 2012," encompassed several rooms. For the dining room, a neutral envelope with saturated brown walls was pulled together with a punch of gray. The 5 Stage Custom Gray Lacquer on the vintage repurposed dining chairs with blue undertones and menswear stripe upholstery shared base hues with the rug border, custom wall color and table finish so the eye read them compatibly. Three ceiling spots were designed to center on the custom table and art lighting highlighted a collection on the walls.

In conjunction with the dining room, we also tackled a lackluster entry hall by reworking the wall texture and molding and building a custom console table from historic columns. In the master bedroom, custom architectural details, additional paint treatments, custom furniture and bedding were added to maintain the chic aesthetic upstairs.

The luxurious space absolutely sings at night.

As a designer, I believe two things: First, luxury lives in all of us. Second, everyone is capable of designing their own home beautifully; sometimes we just need encouragement.

Every project has that moment when you want to throw in the towel and retire your staple gun, but the following steps will help you walk through your own Lamorinda Luxury Project, do-it-yourself (DIY) style.

The first step? Set clear goals.

I believe luxury must answer these three questions: What do you care about? What do you value? What is your intent? For the Moraga project, the client wanted a beautiful space without too much distraction. What are your goals for the space at hand? At the beginning of any project, start with a blank slate. Remove the finish on a chair you want to repaint, clear the room, clean the space. Write down the specific things you need to do to create that blank slate. Much like applying makeup, you need to clean your face before applying more. Even if you intend to use your

budget three times the hours they think, purchase all the proper supplies before starting and create a formal work space as if they were completing the job for a make-believe client. It's all right to use your garage to refinish a piece of furniture, just treat it as a formal studio during the time it takes. Preparation means you won't be putting anti-scratch pads on your new dining chairs as friends walk in for a dinner party! Take pride in being the strong finisher and move forward in life.

Isn't that what life is all about anyway?continued on page D8



Ann McDonald is the Founder/CEO of Couture Chateau in Orinda, a luxury interior design firm. She is an associated member of the International Interior Design Association (IIDA) and the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO), and was recently quoted by Elle Decor on Luxury Now. She teaches design seminars: "How to Run your Project like a Pro" in addition to blogging on design: [www.couturechateau.com](http://www.couturechateau.com).

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[back](#)

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