The Reality of Reality Home Improvement TV Shows

Rick McAlexander  January 02, 2018

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(Newswire.net -- January 2, 2018) Eugene, OR -- Two home design gurus walk you through a home that needs a little updating. They show you some ideas such as how to put the finishing touches on a refurbished kitchen or a new window treatment. In the process, you see high-tech renderings of the home as it will be when all the updates are finished. Digital graphics and illustrations flash across the TV screen and you start to think to yourself, “Wouldn’t it be great to have those same visuals for the new home I want?”

It seems so simple and so easy to get all the flash and tech for a construction project on reality home improvement shows. In just a few days or at the click of a button, designs are there in 3-D with virtual walk-throughs … but that’s not reality. The reality is that the design portion of your construction project will take more time and consideration than they show on TV, and any high-tech graphics will be costly.

“Reality home improvement shows aren’t based in reality at all,” said Rick McAlexander, CEO of Associated Designs Inc., in Eugene, Ore. “From a design perspective, watching these shows makes you think that the design and all its pieces are done right there while you are walking through the house together. But it doesn’t work like that.”

In reality, construction or home design projects are built around 2-D drawings, blueprints, and hand sketches. They are a time-consuming endeavor that takes weeks if not months to finalize. Designers take you through all the solutions, exploring every possible amenity, material, and layout to bring you the home of your dreams. Even a small townhome can be a complex project taking hours if not days of iterations and solution gathering. TV can make the construction process look like a snap. From concepts to permits to finished product, it’s all done in a matter of weeks.

“There’s this illusion of a design being done at the push of a button, as if I’ve done it instantaneously, which is not possible,” said McAlexander. “It takes hours, weeks, and even months to put all those ideas onto paper. High-tech graphics are cool, but even all the data needed to input into the computer to make those graphics is complex and time-consuming, not to mention costly.”

That doesn’t mean that the technology isn’t there to use high-tech graphics like the ones shown on reality TV. It most certainly is possible to have a 3-D rendering of your new kitchen – if you can afford it. What is hidden in the world of television is the amount of time it takes to generate those graphics and 3-D walk-throughs. You ultimately spend more time and money on creating the pretty picture than on the value of the project itself, said McAlexander.

“And this is a familiar discussion at a lot of home design firms,” he continued. “Clients walk in expecting to see a high-tech digital design with all the trimmings, and they want to see it now. If they were available as efficiently as they are portrayed in reality home improvement shows, I would advocate for them 100%. I would much rather be able to show my clients these 3-D models of the design solution and give them a virtual tour of their new home because it does help people visualize the design. But again, it’s not a simple click of the button.”

Time and costs play a factor in any construction project, but so do budgets. There’s only so much the typical homeowner is willing to spend on the design of a new home or a remodel project, and it’s usually much more tame compared to what is discussed on reality home improvement shows. On television, suppliers get special consideration. When they sign the dotted line, they know they will also get promotional exposure by virtue of their products being used on the show. The costs, therefore, are downgraded.

“There is a disconnect when it comes to budgeting for a project like the ones they show on TV,” said McAlexander. “The budgets on TV, in my opinion, are laughable because they are not steeped in reality. The actual cost of materials, design elements, fixtures, and those high-tech graphics, can be hefty. Every little detail counts.”

Reality home improvement shows are not all bad. You can still watch them and be inspired. The biggest opportunity...
they provide is for you to see a wide range of styles and features that you can consider for your next construction project. That unique pantry or bathroom update may be just what you’re looking for in your dream home.

Simply keep in mind those bells and whistles that make great TV have not truly found their way to the reality of current construction.

“The more time you give the design process, the happier you will be with the results,” said McAlexander. “By taking time to analyze your lifestyle and living patterns with a design professional, the space you create will serve you well in the years to come.”

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