

HOME

3 Tips (Including Virtual Reality) For Avoiding Home Improvement Blunders

NewsUSA

(NU) - Sponsored by GAF - Want proof of how carefully you need to weigh the alternatives before making upgrades to your home?

Look no further than the Florida couple who last year decided to have their house painted to look like artist Vincent Van Gogh's famous canvas "The Starry Night." It wasn't just that it was such an odd choice for an exterior that it attracted tourists - sort of the local answer to New York's Madame Tussauds - it was that the city of Mount Dora took them to court over it.

"Graffiti," the city called it.

"First Amendment!" countered homeowner Lubek Jastrzebski, an immigrant from Communist-era Poland, who argued that the city code didn't address house colors and aesthetics.

Yes, that's an extreme example of unintended consequences. But even though legally the homeowners wound up off the hook, anyone now contemplating shelling out significant bucks on home improvements should read on for some tips on avoiding costly missteps.

- **Don't paint your house brown either.** Since most people have it in the back of their minds that they'll eventually want to attract buyers other than those obsessed with Dutch post-impressionist painters partial to yellow and blue swirls, know that Zillow.com just concluded that medium brown and taupe were the worst exterior color choices in terms of resale value.

Both depressed the sales price by \$1,970 compared to homes painted white, an analysis by the real estate website of more than 32,000 photos from sold residential properties around the country found. "Greige," on the other hand - a combination of gray and beige - was the big winner, fetching \$3,496 more than its drab brown counterparts.

- **Tech is your friend.** It was two years ago that a noted design guru had this to say to the New York Times about online virtual reality, augmented reality, and 3D rendering tools: "It's definitely the wave of the future, because it allows the general population to make design decisions without feeling hesitant or insecure," said



Don't even think about painting your house purple.

Khoi Vo, a professor and the chair of the department of interior design at Savannah College of Art and Design.

Well, the future is undoubtedly here, with programs like Room Sketcher even allowing you to play architect by creating your own floor plan, furnishing the space, and then visualizing your work in 3D.

But say what you're interested in is boosting your home's all-important curb appeal with a roof upgrade. The Virtual Home Remodeler from GAF (gaf.com), North America's largest roofing manufacturer, lets you experiment with different looks by first either downloading a photo of your own home or choosing from among the many styles - everything from Victorian to ranch to French country - pictured on the website.

"It's an easy way to see what would look best with your home," said Paul Dellanno, assistant marketing manager at GAF. "Because what may work for a ranch-style house may not work for a Tudor."

Once you've picked a house style, the process continues. Do you prefer the Antique Slate color shingles from the company's Camelot Shingle line you clicked on, for example, or the Golden Prairie color ones from the Glenwood Shingle line?

And the house trim and exterior walls? White or something more daring?

As Dellano explained, "you can even check how the result looks at different times of day and seasons."

- **Be wary of fads.** "It looked like Darth Vader had moved in," is how a writer for Realty.com described the latest trend of painting houses black in her Brooklyn, New York, neighborhood.

Word to the wise: The classics are classic for a reason.