**Laura Dockery on the SavvyCast**

**Jamie:** Hi friends! This is Jamie and welcome to the SavvyCast where we'll talk food, family, beauty, health, relationships, and more. Join me for conversations designed to help us live our best and savviest lives. So grab a cup of coffee and let's talk.

Hello everyone! And welcome to the SavvyCast, whether you are watching on YouTube or listening on podcast. Welcome, and I'm so grateful that you're here today and I'm here with one of my very best friends, Laura Dockery. Laura, hello!

**Laura:**  Hey, Jamie. Thanks for having me.

**Jamie:** You're so welcome. Okay. I'm just going to preface with Laura is a friend of-- we're knocking on the door of twenty-five years, Laura.

**Laura:** Definitely.

**Jamie:** Yes. Um, Zane and I were young marrieds. Laura and Jimmy were married, young, marrieds. We met at church. We became instant friends. I think you're an Enneagram eight. Like I am. Do you know, do you happen to know?

**Laura:**  I do not, but it wouldn't surprise me if we were the same Enneagram. We've got very similar personalities.

**Jamie:** Right. And you speak with such authority and that's one reason I liked you instantly. I thought, "I can listen to her. She knows of what she speaks on most things. So anyway, we have been fast. Well, I mean, long friends and we now live apart. Laura, just briefly tell everyone where you are, what you do, and then we'll get into all the fun things.

**Laura:** Okay, great. I'm in Montgomery, Alabama, and I have an interior design studio. I have two girls that help me. They're both named Alex and you can imagine the confusion that causes, and they are wonderful assistants. And we do a lot of jobs locally, and on Lake Martin, and actually have some jobs in North Carolina.

Now I've worked in Florida and Georgia. So we're not stuck in this area, we can go everywhere. In fact, I just finished a job in North Carolina and I never even saw the interior of the house. I did it all from floor plans. So just so you know that design does not have to be something where you have to be on site in order to address issues, and you all know that too, because we did your gallery wall from afar.

**Jamie:** Yes. And that's literally one of my favorite things in my home. Okay. And for those of you who maybe, maybe follow me on Instagram, you've seen this wall. I had this wall that just never looked right. And Laura did an intaglio collection. How many intaglios do we have? Eight framed intaglios?

**Laura:** Eight, correct.

**Jamie:** And they're just beautiful. And it's my favorite space in the, in the room. So anyway, so you did that, you did a few other things for me and never even set foot in the house. So, yeah. Okay. First of all, tell us how you got into interior design.

**Laura:** Okay. I was a fine arts major and studied intensely color for four years, and I was a painting major and a printmaking minor.

So graphics, color, design work has always been in my background, and it all started-- I did my own home and people started asking me to help them pick out paint colors. A few years later, I had a full-blown design studio. I've had my design studio now almost 20 years, which is amazing. I can't believe I've been doing it that long.

 I do have a designer with me that is a graduate of Auburn. So we have someone who is a designer that works with me as well. That is fully capable of assisting me in many ways, but I've just started by being asked to help with paint color, which is still one of my favorite things to do.

I love paint colors, and I know a lot of people hate them and they're intimidated by them, but it just happens to be one of the things I really enjoy.

**Jamie:** Well, Laura, and for those who may not be following Laura and you are on Instagram, follow @lauradockery\_design and you will see her beautiful, beautiful work. And Laura, how would you define your particular aesthetic. And I know you do work with people with their own aesthetic, but how would you define yours?

**Laura:** I would say that it is classic and timeless, but also with a little bit of a transitional flair. I love to blend antiques and newer pieces together and layer them and also consider other people's things that they have in their homes that are important to them and special to them that they like to keep and work with their things that they have that are existing. But it's really just a layering sort of timeless classic look.

**Jamie:** Okay. I will say your Instagram is phenomenal, but your kitchens, the tiles and the backdrops, I mean, the backsplashes your, your kitchens to me are over the top, beautiful, and timeless. And I mean, they're just exquisite. So if you don't follow Laura, @lauradockery\_design. So I put a Q & A on my Instagram. So my followers, Laura, have some very specific questions for you. And I think anyone watching or listening will glean a lot of helpful information as well I. I had a lot of these questions myself.

And I think since this is one of your favorite things, and this is one of the areas where most of us struggle the most, let's start with paint color. And let's start with white. White--that is one of the hardest colors. Is there a perfect white. What are some of the best? Just talk to us about whites?

**Laura:** Well, first of all, I will tell you that it is a little difficult to take one paint color and translate it into any interior. And the reason that is, is because paints are affected by what's around them. Colors are affected by what's around them. So if you have a really cool white, for instance, and it's, you have a lot of sunlight exposure. And it's a bright white, it's going to seem very sterile. So if you have a lot of natural light coming into your room, you would want to see a white that has a little bit more color in it. And when I say color, that doesn't mean that it needs to read as a tan or a gray or a yellow or blue, but it just needs to have a little bit more depth to it than just a plain white in interiors with a lot of natural light I use Sherwin-Williams Natural Choice. I use Sherwin-Williams Aesthetic White.

**Jamie:** Now, when you say that the ones you're giving us now are when there is lots of natural light?

**Laura:** Yes. And there's also a really pretty one by Benjamin Moore. That's called Swiss coffee. It is a little bit more color than a plain white. And it's great if you have an all white kitchen and you're tired of all white, but you want to keep your kitchen bright.

You can use Swiss coffee on the walls, and then you have a little bit of a contrast, but it still keeps it real clean and fresh. But those are some of the ones that I use if you have a lot of natural light. If you don't have a lot of natural light, Chantilly Lace by Benjamin Moore is lovely. It's very crisp and clean. There is White Dove, which is a little bit warmer, but it doesn't read as a yellow or cream. It just has a little bit more warmth to it than Chantilly Lace. Origami White by Sherwin-Williams is also another really good, neutral, natural white, and all of those are pretty fail-proof. But I love to suggest to people to just go get a poster board, get a tiny try-out or a small quart made, paint the poster board, and move it around your room, and see if it feels comfortable with what you already have.

**Jamie:** Just get the sample, get them to mix you a sample?

**Laura:**  Get a sample. It's the best way to do it and just move it around your room and put it in a spot that gets a lot of natural light and one that maybe doesn't get as much light and see how that color plays against what's in the room that you already have that's existing, and you do need to be mindful of your trim. That's a particular thing too. Do you paint your trim? Do you not paint your trim? Do you get that question?

**Jamie:** Yes, I did get that question and I want to move into that, but I do want to ask you one thing. It's sort of a self-serving question, but I think it will apply to a lot of people. We're finishing our farm, our pole barn, and I'm choosing the color and we're going to do the whole entire thing.

You know, two bedrooms, one color and we're living the floors concrete, you know, it's a pole barn. But there is some light, but if you are just going to do one color and, and we do have white honed marble, what would you pick if you're going to put something in the whole house, meaning, and for anyone listening or watching, you're going to have some areas with light, natural light, some not. So what's one that will pretty much cover all the bases?

**Laura:**  I love Natural Choice by Sherwin-Williams. It is a go-to for me and as is Aesthetic White. Those are two great whites that will work well with a white countertop and concrete floors. They're a little warmer than a very, very stark white, which I think will be nice with concrete floors. I think he would love it.

**Jamie:**  Perfect. That's awesome. Moving on to trim, same color? Contrasting?

**Laura:**  Well, there, this is a little bit more complicated than just a yes or no answer. First of all, I don't ever enhance trim unless it's something that is worth being enhanced. If it's a small trim, if it's a small base board, it really is better just to paint it out.

You don't want to highlight something that is not super special or spectacular. If you have beautiful, heavy trim or it's carved or something special. Then I would definitely paint, paint it a contrasting color because I think you do sometimes want to draw attention to it. Do you have to paint it a contrasting color?

No. I also frequently paint the walls and the trim the same color. I just use a different finish. So I'll use either a washable flat on the walls, which is a very velvety finish or a wa-- excuse me, an eggshell. And then I'll use a semi-gloss on the trim. And the difference in the finishes will give you a contrast.

**Jamie:** Like for instance, we do not have high ceilings here in our house. So for those people who maybe have nine foot ceilings, doesn't painting the trim and the wall the same color-- but of course, the trim will be a semi-gloss. Doesn't that add a little height rather than chopping it up?

**Laura:** It does.

**Jamie:** Okay. Okay. So that's a good tip.

**Laura:**  Definitely with lower ceilings. I would definitely consider painting all the trim and the walls the same color.

**Jamie:** Okay. Ceiling, do you paint that ceiling white or do you paint that a flat version of whatever you choose to do?

**Laura:** I do, I do paint it if I want to keep it very neutral. I painted the, a flat version of the same color as the walls and trim. I do use a lot of color on ceilings though. I use very pale grays, pale blues, pale blue greens very frequently because it's a very peaceful and serene color for the eye. I don't use it everywhere, but often use it in bedrooms or areas where people spend a lot of time if they're white. If you use a lot of white, sometimes it's, it's good to break up the color as a whole.

So I would say if you, if you want to have a touch of color, a master bedroom ceiling is a perfect place to add just a touch of color.

**Jamie:** Oh, that's wonderful. I can envision that. Laura, one of the questions and I also had this because we just finished our laundry room. I wish I had asked this before-- well,I did ask, and you told me. White subway tile. Now this, this listener said bathroom, but I would think this would apply anywhere. If you use white subway tile, what color of grout? Or no visible grout?

**Laura:** Well, it depends again on what's arround it. I just did a bathroom and we had kind of cream on the walls and the cabinetry, and the countertop was lighter.

And then the subway towel was lighter. So we went with a little bit darker grout, but if you have slate charcoal, gray floor, you may want to go with a light pale gray. If you want it to stay well, real, clean and pristine, you can just use a white grout, but it does depend on the surrounding area and what else you're using in the room.

It's hard to say, to pick a blanket color for everything. But I do like a little bit of contrast between my tile and the grout, because it, it emphasizes the actual tile.

**Jamie:**  But if you want it to disappear and look more solid, you're going to want to match your grout to your tile?

**Laura:** Absolutely,I want to match the grout to the tile. If you, and the other way you can do that, if you want it to be more solid is just ask your tile installer to do a smaller grout joint.

**Jamie:**  While we're on stone and tile. Speaking of, let's say countertops or a big, huge island. Let's talk about marble versus what most of us choose if we don't choose marble, quartz.

Am I correct? Because I was just choosing for our pole barn. The stone quartz was more expensive than marble at least where I was shopping.

**Laura:**  It depends. It depends on what marble grade you're looking at. There are some marbles that are more expensive than quartz. Marbel is a very difficult thing to use in the kitchen because it's one of the softer countertop materials and so it etches with vinegar, tomato juice, lemon juice.

If someone drinks wine, it can stain and have a red wine stain, or, you know, there's a lot of things that marble is not good for. Some people don't mind that. They like a natural patina. But if those things bother you, marble is not a good choice for you. Quartz is an excellent choice for anybody if you love to cook or you're messy, or you have small children, because it is the toughest countertop material that's available that has a natural stone feel and look.

**Jamie:**  Yeah, I absolutely love my quartz. I have London Gray honed. Love it. Love it. Love it. And it is virtually indestructable. Now I have London Gray honed, and I love London gray so much, which to me it doesn't look gray. It's-- it looks just like a rich, deep, creamy, white. I've taken it in some other places. And I have it polished in the bathroom.

What is your advice to someone who's torn between honing and polishing a stone? And I guess marble is in a class by itself, so do you want to address, I guess, quartz and then marble?

**Laura:** And marble you can do the same. It's kind of across the board, whether you want to do honed or polished. And my rule of thumb is that especially in a bathroom, if you have polished material on your floors, which we know would need to be smaller with grout joints so that we don't have a slip hazard, but if you have a polished material on the floors, then you would want a different contrasting finish on your countertops. Unless you like a lot of shine and glitz and glamor. And that's wonderful. I like to have some contrast between the materials. If my floors are honed, then I like a polish countertop, but there's nothing wrong with doing both.

It's, again, all a personal preference. I just think it elevates the quality to make it look like it's been more curated with different finished materials. So I prefer to mix those. So, if you have a, a polished subway tile in your shower, and your floors are polished. Then it's nice to have a honed countertop or flip those around, but just find a way to incorporate more than one finish in your bathroom and in your kitchen. If you have a really high polished or shiny backsplash, then honed is definitely going to be a better look. I think it's going to give the eye a break.

**Jamie:** Right, okay. Give us one or two of your favorite quartz stones and then your favorite marble.

**Laura:**  Okay. I think for marble, it's going to be Calacatta, but I, and I love Alabama Marble, Alabama white. It's a great local product. Not as easy to come by as it used to be.

**Jamie:** You know what, on that note, because our farm is in Sylacauga, where that is mined. And they are saying that they-- possibly Alabama white has dried up.

**Laura:** That's terrible.

**Jamie:** Yeah. And then whatever I have looks very much like it, I want to say it's Calacatta Gree--

**Laura:** It's very similar.

**Jamie:** Okay. But yes, Alabama white. So what else? Calacatta-- that is another favorite.

**Laura:** Then the, as far as the quartz material, a lot. There's several different whites that I like. I like the ones that have more irregular veining and aren't designed specific in patterning because they look a little bit more natural. And then, and I don't know the names off the top of my head, but I'll be happy to send those to you so you can put them, attach them into this.

There's another one that I really like that I can't think of the name of either. I have them in my library, but I can't think of the name of it, but it actually looks like concrete. So when it's honed, it's very handsome. It looks like concrete. It's a great neutral product, but it's not as light as some of the Calacattas and some of the whiter ones. So somebody who's a little bit intimidated by an all white kitchen, it's a great alternative.

**Jamie:** Okay. Well, I'll put all of this in the show notes for anyone listening or watching. Now, Laura, is granite still a thing?

**Laura:** It is, and I see people using granite more in vacation homes, like a mountain house where they may want more pattern. People seem to want to visit it, but not live with it, if that makes sense. If you want like a really specialized interesting granite, you may not want to look at it every day in your kitchen that you're in every day. But if you go to vacation home or you have a powder room or something that you want to, want to be really special and spectacular, that's where I see people are using granite more, not as much in a kitchen. I think people are really enjoying the calming feel of a quartz or a lighter stone type material other than granite, because granite does tend to be a little bit busier. So I think for that purpose alone-- that reason alone-- people are using them in smaller amounts, in a powder room or a vacation home.

**Jamie:** Okay. Laura, I had several people ask about gray. Is it going away? And then they asked about color trends. You know, gray, we've lived with gray for so long.

**Laura:**  We have. Gray has been around seven or eight years. The shelf life of a color trend usually is about 10. So if that gives you any insight. That doesn't mean that gray is going away. I just think personally that gray will take a less strong role in interiors. And I think you're going to see it mixed in with more warm colors, like honey and camel. And I'd like to think about like a man's camel hair suit, like a coat with a pair of gray slacks. Classic. It'll always be pretty together, but I don't think gray in the next couple of years is going to be as influential as it has been over the last year.

**Jamie:** And then you do think things are going warmer?

**Laura:** I do. I do. And I think people are branching out into more color. I do see color a lot more.

**Jamie:** For people renovating their kitchen or building a home, are white kitchens still the thing? White kitchens are going to be around for awhile and it's gonna be fresh and classic.

So I don't think people who think, "Oh my goodness, color's coming back. I have to change my white kitchen." I think white kitchens are here for awhile. And the thing that's nice about white kitchens is white cabinetry is never going to go out of style. So if you get out of a white kitchen, you can paint your ca-- your walls without having to get into a tremendous expense.

But I do think that people are starting to get more brave with bolder colors. And if you get online and you Google "color trends 2021," you can find people who are using dark blues, dark greens, dark pinks on cabinetry or in the room as a whole, but it's not, there's more cohesiveness to the, to the color, whereas before it may be a dark, navy room with white gloss trim and white cabinetry.

Right.

**Laura:** --The cabinets may be navy. The wall may be navy, the trim may be navy. It seems to be more encapsulating rather than splotchy if that makes sense. Bold colors are definitely coming back.

**Jamie:** But don't, you have to have a very spacious, open home to pull that off? I mean, if you've got a small kitchen with a lot, well, you know, and isn't that going to just make it that much smaller? And make you feel closed in?

**Laura:** Well, if you did the whole room, then yes it would make it smaller. I like to do rooms encased in color. If it's like a study or media room or a powder room, but you can use darker, brighter colors throughout your house. It doesn't have to be just in smaller particular areas.

You can use it in a kitchen, it could be on the island only. And then your surrounding cabinetry and walls could be lighter. So you can use swatches of that color. But, you do need to be very, very particular about not doing splotches of color in every room, because it starts to look like an Easter egg basket.

**Jamie:** Yeah, yeah.

**Laura:**  I love to go from a light room to a dark room, but I don't want to go from a light room to several different colored rooms.

**Jamie:**  Right. Yeah.

**Laura:**  I think you just have to be very, very intentional when you decide you want to go bold with color.

**Jamie:** Okay. Someone asked how do you create a clean, elegant, decluttered space that still has warmth and character?

**Laura:** Well, the first thing I would tell somebody to do is edit. And I would take everything out as far as things that are sitting on your countertops or tabletops. Take everything out and go through and find the things that you love. And anytime you can do things in a group, rather than just sort of clutter, knick-knack bracket, whatever, all over the place.

Just pull groups of things together that you like and that you enjoy and, and, and cluster those on bookshelves or tables and take away the stuff. You can have a really pretty book with a family photo on it. And that would be all that is on the table beside your chair. Or I just think, edit is the biggest thing. It's not hard to do, but sometimes we get attached to our things. And I think sometimes if you just get everything out and then select the things that you just love. Always, another thing is a really pretty natural plant, like an orchid or something that's alive that that's a really nice way to add some life to your room without having to add more stuff.

And that's something you can rotate out seasonally. I know you use fresh flowers all the time. I love to use fresh flowers and greenery. There are some simple ways to do that, but you do have to be mindful to not have clutter.

**Jamie:**  That leads me to a question, a friend of mine was asking just my opinion on some things in her home a few weeks ago.

And she has got a voluminous amount, like flanking her chimney, her fireplace, almost, you know, to the ceiling open book cases, but you know, open shelving. And she says, I do not know how to feel. And I wouldn't know either. I mean, there were so many, and let's say you buy a home and it's got all of these shelves.

If you have to fill, what do you do? Do you knock them out and put something? I mean, because literally I would say she's got 20 to 30 shelves that she has to fill.

**Laura:** Well, if money is a concern, the first thing to do was to eliminate some of those shelves and some things that, that I have done in the past to do that is if you remove some of the top shelves or some of the shelves in the middle and hang a really nice piece of art in that space.

It can be big and fill up the space and then you can put a small plant or a sculpture in front of that and that area can be done. But you just eliminated at least four to five shelves. So art hanging in one specific place is a great way to do that. You can also hang art on the face of your bookcases and that gives an interruption to all those lines.

**Jamie:** Yeah. When you say on the face, you mean like it's on the very outer edge, covering up 2 or 3 shelves? It's on the front?

**Laura:** Correct, and you hang that in the very front and that's another way to break up all those shelves. The other thing you can do in removing shelves is to find large things. It could be a big pot or it could be a big sculpture or it could be a big stack of coffee table books.

And you, what you want to do, I think is remove as many shelves as you can and create larger spaces instead of these small, teeny, tiny little things that you feel like you have to fill up. And if you could find larger things to put in those shelves, it will immediately feel less cluttered.

**Jamie:** So you literally could take, say the 10 or 12 shelves, knockout half where you only have like three?

**Laura:** --Or four or five. To make those spaces larger, but remember that once you do that, you're going to have to find larger objects to fit into that space. If money is not a consideration, I do not like all that floor to ceiling bookshelf, because it's the first place to catch clutter, a picture frame or this or that. And you feel like you have to put it somewhere and it goes on the bookshelf and it's rare that people will not clutter on it.

**Jamie:** Well, you feel like you have to fill it. I mean, it's there. Yeah. Okay. Laura, on the back of open book cases or shelves, what do you think about putting like a, like a nice, like a Phillip Jeffries wallpaper, you know, something that--

**Laura:** I do. I love wall covering on the back wall of a bookcase. I think it's a great place to add a little bit of interest in texture. And give your, your room, another level of design because you're adding in something, either color, texture or pattern, that's not everywhere. So it gives you a touch of it, but it's not overwheming.

**Jamie:** Okay. And let me rewind because everyone may not know what that particular, or the one that I have is actually, it looks just almost like an iridescent texture. Just a sheen, it's not a pattern, it's just more of a, I guess, of a, not texture, but element-- it's a different element. So would you ever recommend a pattern or two that would stand out and almost minimize the fact that you've got a wall that is behind the shelves and just make the wall a piece of art?

**Laura:** Absolutely. I would be careful not to get something that's so graphic and repetitive that it also emphasizes the fact that you have shelves in front of it, if that makes sense. Something neutral, but it can have color, but even this might terrify some people, but grasscloth is-

**Jamie:**  Oh I love!

**Laura:**  They make beautiful printed grasscloths. And they can be very quiet and subtle, but very rich and sophisticated. And that's a beautiful texture in the back of a bookcase. So there's all kinds of things you can do to give that another layer of design.

**Jamie:** So when you think, you know, growing up or when we were younger wallpaper meant all these patterns. You know, I'm, I remember in my kitchen when Zane and I were married, I had this wallpaper border that had these big pieces of fruit. I mean, it was this fruit--

**Laura:**  I clearly remember that.

**Jamie:**  Remember that? Oh my goodness. It was so vivid. And, you know, even, I think I had a toile bathroom. Now, I love toile. Isn't that timeless? Really?

**Laura:** I love toile. I do. I love toile, I mean, my, my mother-in-law has a toile bathroom that she's had for 40 years. It goes out and comes back in and goes out again. So if you love toile, I would say stick with it, but yes, wallpaper and wall coverings are very different today than they were in the eighties and nineties.

**Jamie:** They're more like elements. They're more like something like grasscloth, or the-- just a shimmer or just a, it's not paper with a printed pattern on it.

**Laura:** There are some, but I think what you're talking about for the back of a bookcase, we're basically thinking of some kind of texture.

**Jamie:** Texture, yeah.

**Laura:** It's enhanced the space and not really draw your attention to it as much as just another layer, if that makes sense. But yeah, there's some beautiful grasscloths and natural wallpapers and more coverings now.

**Jamie:**  And as far as wallpaper is concerned, don't you pretty much now have to have a designer that you're working with or either know someone who did, but you just don't find wallpaper? I mean, not even the paint stores that I ever go in. You just can't find the wallpaper books. It's not like it used to be. It's a little difficult. It's become very specialized. Am I correct?

**Laura:** You are correct. And that also leads into the fact that there are so many things that are available only through designer, and those are-- there's a lot of fabric lines, there's furniture lines, there's wallpaper. There's a lot of things that you can only get through a designer and there are some outlets. And I don't mean an outlet as in discount, but there are some fabric places, and some things like King Cotton, and some other areas where you can go and select fabrics.

But there are a lot of fabrics that, that the public can not have access to. And they're available only through a designer or only through a design studio. So hiring a designer gives you a lot more options. It doesn't always have to be more expensive and you can save yourself from making a very, very expensive mistake.

**Jamie:** Okay. And I will say, I can not imagine. Doing much of anything without a designer or decorator and you've helped me. And then I've got someone here who helps me as well. I've always consulted whether it's even my best friend here. I can not imagine making all these decisions without someone who knows who has an eye for such things. So, yeah, I think it saves money in the long run. And I think you end up with a better product, at least I do.

**Laura:** Well, the, the thing about having a designer is they have access to so many more resources. That's something that unless you're in the industry and you have access to those resources, you wouldn't even know where to begin.

So the options are endless and there's innumerable opportunities for different fabrics and wall coverings in furnishings. But if you haven't seen them, then you don't know they're there. You can go in stores and see a limited amount. But there are a lot more options available. And so one of the things I think that's really advantageous about hiring a designer is because they specialize in scale and balance and composition, and they can help you pull those elements together and you don't have to spend so much time doing it because it can be exhausting trying to go and find just the perfect piece.. And sometimes just a phone conversation can, can lead you to discover exactly what you're looking for, that you didn't even know you wanted.

**Jamie:** Oh, absolutely. Laura, I have had several people ask about a large wall, what to do with that large wall?

**Laura:** Well, there are several things you can do. One is you can do a gallery wall and it does not have to be a repetitive subject matter. Like we did for you with the intaglios, it can be a collection of different size paintings, things that you love that could be framed differently.

It does not have to be all the same item. That's one thing. Another thing you can do is to create a vignette. You can put a beautiful console table and flank it with a pair of chairs, or you could tuck a pair of stools under the console table. You can have lamps on the console table. It could be a beautiful desk or chest, or it could be-- you could put in a lovely piece of furniture that is like a bookcase that has storage underneath and shelves above. There are a lot of things you can do. Usually when I have a really long wall like that, I try to find a really pretty piece of furniture. And then I love to flank chairs on either side and you can hang things over the chairs.

And then a pretty mirror over the console or a pretty painting over the console and then a pair of mirrors over the chairs. Just something to really intentionally fill that space where it looks like it was thought out and planned. You know, other than that, you really have to find something to ground that wall.

So you've got to find either artwork or furniture to fill up that space. And I would. Suggest to people not to get intimidated by it, but to, if you don't have the collection of artwork, just start somewhere and find something that you love and just start collecting it and hang it and find somebody that can help you hang it because that composition is going to be important as well.

**Jamie:** That is a bear-- hanging. I mean, I would never. Hey, my intaglios, I have a friend who knows how to do it. She ha-- because we were in the middle of COVID and you took care of getting the intaglios to me. You, you sent me the pictures of all the Greek men, barely clothed.

**Laura:** Scantily clad.

**Jamie:** Scantily clad Greek gods and goddesses, or whatever they are, to choose from. And then you chose the mats and the frames and everything was beautiful, but I did have to get someone to hang those because that is a very precise-- it's almost a mathematical thing to hang all those correctly. So I had several people ask how to-- they worded it differently-- but it's basically how to elevate the look of your home on a budget?

What are some things that if you do those things, it's just a refresh-- a make-over, but without spending a fortune?

**Laura:** Okay. Let's talk about some things we can do to, to change and refresh with not spending any money. First, the first thing you can do is rearrange your furniture. And it's amazing what that can do to just completely transition your room or your space.

So again, sometimes it's good to just get an objective opinion. It could be a friend, it could be a family member, but just say, "Okay, we're going to move everything out and let's put it back in and let's try moving the sopha from this wall to another wall. Let's move the chairs from here, across there." Just re-do the floor plan itself. That's the most economical thing you can do to give you a new look.

**Jamie:** And you feel like you're in a new room, always when you move your furniture. Oh, that's, I've never thought of that. That's a great idea. So rearrange the furniture.

**Laura:** Another great inexpensive way to change your room is paint. Not expensive. It's not real difficult to do yourself. You can use painters tape. If you want to paint off your trim, if you're worried about getting paint on your trim, there's a lot of little tricks and things that you can do so that you can do it yourself.

 If money is a consideration, new pillows is a great thing to do. I like to even do seasonal pillows in the spring and summer. Something linen and light and airy. And then in the winter, maybe a velvet or mohair, that's a little heavier and richer. That's a really easy way to change the look. Again, we're moving up in, in price and budget.

**Jamie:**  Is there a budget place that you can find? I mean, I have someone who makes all of my things like that. Like, and you have your work room, I guess you can snag great ones every now and then. Where? At HomeGoods? I mean, have you, do you have any tips for budget places that you might get lucky?

**Laura:** You might get lucky at a place like HomeGoods. You might get lucky on Etsy. There's actually several places. And if you start typing in "pillows," if you want a particular pattern or a particular color, you can type those in. And, and there's dozens of resources there. There are even some places that use scraps of designer material that I'm sure they purchased from a designer when they have leftovers, because at the end of a job, you may have ordered 30 yards and you only use 28 and a half and you have a yard and a half leftover.

And a lot of people will purchase those yard-- that yardage from them and make pillows and sell them at a much, much discounted price because some of the fabrics designers use can be upwards of $200 a yard. So you can get-- they can buy those scraps for much less than that and manufacture pillows and get them out there for a lot less price. So that's a good point-- a good place to start. Another thing to do is I, I mentioned it before, but I love to put an orchid or pretty plant or fresh cut flowers in the room. That's a great way to kind of elevate your, your style and quality of the room.

**Jamie:**  What about floor covering? A new rug?

**Laura:** A new rug. There's, again, if you're on a budget, HomeGoods often has really good buys on rugs because they get some from when they sell out of a commercial place, like Neiman Marcus or Nordstrom home, and they have all these leftover rugs. Then, someone like HomeGoods or TJ Maxx will go and buy those and offer them at a, you know, for pennies on the dollar.

So that's always-- it's hit or miss, but that's a great, a great way to get a budget. Another thing you can do is to change your lampshades.

**Jamie:** Oh, yes. I love that.

**Laura:** If you have lampshades that flare out, you could find a pretty linen drum shade. That might be something you could find at HomeGoods. And then those also can go up in price depending on where you find them.

There's-- we have a lighting store down the street from us that has beautiful shades, but they can get expensive. So that's something that you could consider doing as well, but those are some really inexpensive ways that you can alter your space without breaking your, your budget and they can be pretty quick turnarounds, everything there is easily doable in a day and even in the painting.

**Jamie:**  Okay. Very, very, very helpful. Okay. Now you've just told us some ways to update on a budget. Someone asked, "Where should I splurge for the biggest impact?" I would think that she meant, where should you splurge-- let's do the biggest impact visually and then where should you splurge, meaning don't skimp on this.

**Laura:** Okay. Perfect.

**Jamie:** Those are two very different questions

**Laura:** Very different questions. If you ask me, I'm a fine arts lover at heart, if you want to splurge go invest in a fabulous painting that you love. That brings you joy. That you will have for the rest of your life, that you will continue to enjoy. And you don't have to keep it in the same room.

So if you get tired of it in one room, you can move it around. But find-- if you're going to splurge and find something that's really super special to you, go invest in artwork.

If you are asking me what you should spend money on, that you shouldn't skimp on for practical purposes. I would tell you a sofa.

There's, there's an old adage that says, however you take the price of your sofa and divide it by 250 -- $250. And that's how many years it will last. So if you buy a $1,000 sofa retail and you divide it by $250, then that sofa will last you about four years. So there's some give and take to that. It depends on how much you use it and who's using it.

If kids are jumping on it, obviously it's going to not last as long as if just adults are sitting on it. But that's a proved test and it-- the thing that's nice about working with a designer is a lot of designers work on a cost plus basis and not a retail basis. And retail furniture is at least marked up 200%.

And a lot of designers do a cost plus 30 or cost plus 35 or so you're getting a much better product for a lesser price. So I am a huge advocate for eight way hand-tied sofas. And if you get one that you spend a little money on, you should be able to use it again and again, and just have to recover it.

Or worst case scenario. I have one that I've used now it's in my third home. I've had it for 25 years. I'm now having to redo the cushions. Because the cushions have gotten squished a little, but I do-- I like to suggest a spring down cushion because it has a foam core and it's wrapped in down and it has a little bit of give.

So those cushions don't do what I call squishing, which means when you sit on a foam cushion year after year, it starts to squish out. So it doesn't hold its boxing. If that makes sense. If you upgrade and do a spring down, it holds its boxing longer. So I would suggest if you're going to spend money, save up and get a very, very good sofa. Because you will, you will definitely reap the benefits of that and it will pay for itself.

**Jamie:** Right. Right. Well, and that's something you don't want to have to keep buying.

**Laura:**  And you have one in your home that you've recovered, that you've loved for a long time.

**Jamie:** I have had these sofas, we're going on 25 years. And they're actually, because our spaces have always been rather small, we have just never had expansive living room area. So they're basically, like, a little larger than a loveseat. I mean, they're, they're like a smaller sofa and they are a, they're not tufted, but they're a, they don't have any detachable pillows. What do you call that? A flat back?

**Laura:** A tight back.

**Jamie:** I have recovered those. I'll recover-- I mean, I'm about to probably recover them again. Love them. I'll let I-- they've only got two cushions and a tight back. They're comfy and I'll just keep covering them because I mean, when I find something that I like, I'm sort of a one trick pony, I'll stick with it. And then Laura, any trends in master bedroom?

**Laura:** Well, I think for most people, the trend is going to things that are easy to care for. People are becoming more and more time impoverished. And so if you could find a bedding line that is washable, great. And there are a lot, a lot of even the higher end bedding lines like Peacock Alley and Matouk, that used to have you have to dry, dry clean everything. There-- they have a lot of washable products in their lines, but what I'm seeing is that people, because we seem to be more time impoverished, we want things that are easier to take care of, but that are still lovely. And there are those things that are out there that are available. I know one of the questions that one of your viewers asked was how do you dress a bed without using 50 pillows?

That, that is one of the things that I really like to do is I like to do a pair of, if it's a King bed, I'll do a pair of King shams and then just do one really large oversized, custom lumbar, not roll, but just a flat lumbar, maybe do some pretty trim on it. You have three pillows and then I'll do it pretty throw over the foot.

And there's not-- the foot of the bed. And there's not all this stuff that you have to take off every day, put back on, fluff, all of that. Simplify.

**Jamie:**  Yeah. We're about to get rid of some pillows, we've got way too many pillows. When my new bed comes in, we're, we're going to have a clean out of pillows. Are bed skirts sort of phasing out for platform beds?

**Laura:** There's always going to be someone who likes the look of a bed skirt. It's softer. It's not as contemporary. I am doing more tailored bed skirts and less ruffled. I do a lot of tailored bed skirts, and then I do a lot of beds that are the upholstered side rails and foot rails so that you don't have to have a bed skirt.

So I do a lot of those as well, but again, I think it's a simplification thing. Just as much as anything it's less to take care of, to wash, to deal with. And I think people are liking things that are a little bit simpler.

**Jamie:** Okay. As we round out on that note of a bedroom. Now, thankfully I won on this debate, but a lot of wives don't. The men always want a ceiling fan.

The husbands, most of them husbands, they want a ceiling fan in the master. I managed to say, you know, "Let's just put a fan over on your side where you can't see it." Is there a elegant, nice looking ceiling fan out there or way to have your husband, or whoever the hot person is that wants the fan, to be happy without putting a fan up? I mean, they're just not--

**Laura:** They're not pretty.

**Jamie:**  Do you run into that a lot?

**Laura:** All the time. I run into men wanting a ceiling fan or men want a leather sofa or men want a recliner. Those are their three requests that I get that tickled by. Now, thankfully, there are some great looking recliners that don't even look like recliners.

They don't have the big arm on the side. That's easier to deal with, but generally speaking, I discourage people from putting in ceiling fans. And I do suggest a fan in place on a countertop or a bedside table or something that can circulate the air.

**Jamie:** Something that can be tucked away during the day.

**Laura:** Fans are difficult to work around. I do understand why people like them. They don't bother me as much at a beach house or a lake house, but that's just not what I want to stay in a master bedroom. But again, you know, some people are very particular about it. So you have to work around them. If people are insistent, I usually try to find one that just goes away and disappears. Don't get the one that has wood paddles and brass and a light, let's just keep it as simple as possible.

**Jamie:** Okay. You just said brass and one of the questions right here, are we going to regret brass fixtures?

**Laura:** You know, this may be a little risky, but I'm going to say no. And this is the reason I think. When we use brass before we used it everywhere, it was on the door knobs.

It was on our hinges. It was on our hardware. It was on our light fixtures. It was, I mean, accessories were covered in it. So it was brass ad nauseum. If you have one beautiful brass fixture or one room in your house that has brass hardware, you're not really going to be as tired because it's not everywhere. So, I love gold and I love a touch of it. I know some people don't like it at all, and I think that's fine too. But if you like it and you enjoy it, I think you should use it. Just use it sparingly. You don't have to change everything to brass.

**Jamie:** Okay. Now you said gold. Are you lumping those two together? Because--

**Laura:** Yes, because brass has a warm gold finish.

**Jamie:** Yeah. I mean, I, I have a lots of touches of gold, but I've never considered them brass. When I think of brass, I think of, I had this, this duck, this brass duck forever, that was on one of my bookcases and it was like brass and it would tarnish and I would have to shine it, but-- and, and you know, those brass candlesticks and all of that. But to me, the gold is more elegant now that you see with the acrylic and all of that. I mean, don't you think there is a difference?

**Laura:**  There is a difference, but the point is still the same. I still think even if you are using gold or you are using brass, it can be over done. If you redid your powder room and you had brass knobs or gold knobs and a gold fixture and a gold mirror and go-- it could get over done very quickly. And I think the nice thing today is that we can mix metals and it's lovely. It doesn't have to be all nickel or all brass or all oil rubbed bronze. You can mix those and it can be very tastefully done, but you don't have to get so tired of the gold or the brass or that warm, because you can mix them.

**Jamie:** Okay. So you can have brass fixtures in your kitchen sink and then nickel or brushed nickel knobs or pulls?

**Laura:** You can.

**Jamie:** Okay. Wow. Okay. Laura, what about, just going outdoors, walking up to your home, what's a way to just refresh other than landscaping? How can you refresh the entrance to your home?

**Laura:** Paint. I love to paint a front door. Change the color of your front door. It's a great and easy solution. And there are a lot of really lovely colors. And then my favorite outdoor color that I use a lot on doors, I actually use it on interior doors as well, is a Sherwin-Williams paint color called Urbane Bronze, and it is very pretty. It's like a dark, almost a black coffee. Has a touch of green in it. So it's, it's a little bit mysterious. It's kind of hard to pinpoint the color, but it's beautiful. And it works well with almost everything.

**Jamie:** Well, you mentioned that to me in a previous conversation that we had, and I had my painter come and paint the front door Urbane Bronze. I love it. It was such a refresh. I'll send you a picture. It was such a refresh and it was the most inexpensive update. I mean, it made the planters look, the topiaries look better. It just looked. It was like, wow, this was an update.

**Laura:** Yeah, that's awesome. And the second thing I would say is to change plants, either add plants to your, around your front door or to change the plants. That's an easy way to update as well.

**Jamie:** Oh, and what about your welcome mat? What is a-- Now, I need a new welcome mat. Like where's a place to get a, an elegant, nice, welcome mat?

**Laura:** I would start with Frontgate.

**Jamie:** Frontgate. Yes. Okay, any other places?

**Laura:** And I like a plain one with just the initial of your last name.

**Jamie:** William Sonoma Home might have some.

**Laura:** William Sonoma Home and their-- Smith and Hawken used to have, I think they still have an online store and they had great looking welcome mats. So that might be a place to look into too. They used to have a retail outlet as well, but I think they closed the retail outlets, but I do think they still have their online presence. So I would suggest William Sonoma Home, Frontgates, or Smith & Hawken for that.

**Jamie:** Okay. And I do want to circle back because I do want you to share this very quickly. You shared this with me. I've not done it yet, but I told you I really needed a refresh in my living room. And we have gas fireplace and tell everyone how you like to refresh a gas log fireplace to look more transitional. And I am going to finish doing this. It's just now getting hot. So it's hard to get motivated, but--

**Laura:** You can just wait till next fall and have it ready for next time. I love Fireballs. I think they're interesting. If you have more than one fireplace in your home, I think it's a great way to add sort of a more high-end custom look and they're available online.

You can Google, I think it's Rasmussen, which is R A S M U S S E N. And that comes in different colors, different sizes. You can have a variety of sizes. You can do all one size, but it's a beautiful and lovely way just to sort of bring your, your living room areas with, with your fireplace forward a little bit and make it a little bit more transitional and not have the traditional woodblocks. So I think it's a great look and it's, it's different and it's unique. So I think it's a good thing for people to consider, to do something really different.

**Jamie:** And didn't you say to paint, like you're going to-- of course have to remove, no, have someone remove, I would-- it would have to be a plumber, right? Because they're gas certified to remove the logs.

**Laura:** Correct.

**Jamie:** And all those little ashes and then put the fireballs in. But you said to paint the inside of the fire area a matte black, is that right? Do you ever do a gloss or do you just?

**Laura:** I do matte black and you basically use grill paint. And what you're doing is, if anyone has ever had a new house and they've started a fire, you get a mark in the back of your fireplace where the flames have gone.

You cannot clean it. So I start every single job that's new construction, painting the inside of the fireplace a matte black, and it's a grill paint. Done. You don't have to worry about fire marks. You don't have to worry about anything it's clean, it's crisp. And then you put your fireballs in on top of that, but that is an easy way to reduce maintenance and, and the age of the fire marks showing up in your fireplace. There's nothing you can do about it once it's in there. So I just painted as the, as a precursor.

**Jamie:** So every fireplace, whether you're going to have the fireballs or not, you always paint?

**Laura:** I always do, because the fact the logs do it too. And so do natural wood-burning logs, it's just going to be a problem from the heat. So I paint all the interiors matte black.

**Jamie:** Okay, last question on the fireplace. You have the fireballs, those little, little, little screen that goes back and forth. Do you take it down, put up a standing screen? Like how do you deal with that? If it's, you know, you have that opening.

**Laura:** You don't have to have a screen because there's no threat of anything popping out of your fireplace.

The fireballs retain the heat. They're ceramic. And so you don't have to have a screen. If you want a screen, I would say, do something very simple. I would add another element of design on top of it because the firewalls are very strong in their presence and diminish that.

**Jamie:** Babies and animals can not get burned by fireballs?

**Laura:** Yes, they can. You can either watch them or you make sure when they're there that you are teaching them. It is not something they would ha-- it would just be like any fireplace. You have to be very careful about small children and pets. Pets will stay away.

**Jamie:**  Okay. So there is a flame. There's just no ash?

**Laura:** Correct.

**Jamie:** Got it. Okay. Okay.

**Laura:** There is a flame, just no ash.

**Jamie:**  Well, that, that's an update that I would like to do as well, but Laura, thank you and tell everyone how to get in touch with you and how you-- that maybe the different ways you can work with them if they don't ever plan to come to Montgomery or this part of town, but they need some help-- small job, big job. How do you work with people?

**Laura:** Well, we have several options. I have a one and a half hour consult where we can do a FaceTime appointment that we walk through your house and we talk about what, what you want done and what you want to accomplish. And it depends on the scale of the job as to how, how many rooms we can address in that one and a half hour time, because it is an hour consultation. And then there's the time after that is used for me to send back email correspondence about the things that I think you should do and what should be addressed and priorities. So you can do something as simple as that. Or you can send me, we can do plans via email. You can send them to me. I can have them printed at a place here to scale, and then we can work remotely.

You do not have to have me in on site. There's also that we also travel. So travel is not a problem. So really it's just a matter of how big the job is and what the scale of what you want done, needs to be done, we can address it. They can get in touch with me via email. My email address is laura@lauredockerydesign.com. The last name Dockery, D O C K E R Y. And I think you've said you were going to include that in the notes, but that's the easiest way to get in touch with me via email. And then also you can address my design assistant, Alex, and her email address is alexw@lauradockerydesign.com. So you can email either one of those addresses and we can get back in touch with you.

**Jamie:** I'll put both of those in there. And Laura,you also do commercial, correct? You're currently doing a museum and you've done a restaurant.

**Laura:**  I'm currently doing a restaurant. So we have done, this is our third restaurant we've done. We've done several office buildings and, and we love to do commercial work. It's totally different, but we love to do it, so.

**Jamie:** Okay, Laura, thank you. It's been a pleasure. I always love talking with you, but this has been so practical, so helpful. And I think everyone who listens or watches is going to go away with something that they can use in their homes. So thank you for sharing with everyone.

**Laura:** You are so welcome! Thank you for having me and let's do it again.

**Jamie:** We will. Okay, my friend, you take care.

**Laura:** You too.

**Jamie:** This is Jamie Tarence and thank you for listening to The SavvyCast. If you haven't already, please go to Apple Podcasts, and subscribe, rate, and review The SavvyCast, and be sure to check each week for a new episode. Thank you so much for listening.