

TRADE TALES | OCT 29, 2021 | [📄](#)

## Does your initial consultation include a site visit?

By [Haley Chouinard](#)

Those first encounters with a potential client are crucial for determining if a project is the right fit for your firm, but is it necessary to see the space you'll be designing? We asked six designers —**Layton Campbell, Iantha Carley, Harry Heissmann, Christine Jahan, Ana Claudia Schultz** and **Alexa Stevenson**—if their initial consultations include a site visit.

### A SENSE OF PLACE

"I always do a site visit as part of my initial consultation so I can get a total feel for the space and create a baseline for the project. What energy is the space giving off? What are we transforming the space into? What do I see as I stand at the center of the site? I also get a chance to see my clients in the space. What energy are they giving off when they are telling me what they want? Where are their eyes traveling? What are they feeling? There is so much about design that is intuitive for me, and being present on-site is something I've found to be invaluable in order to accurately gauge what a project is really about for my clients." —[Christine Jahan](#), *Christine Jahan Designs, Glendora, California*



Christine Jahan Courtesy of Christine Jahan

### ON RETAINER

"Generally, I try not to do site visits until the contract is signed and the retainer is paid. I find it best to start with a phone call so we can make certain the client's expectations, of both the work and the budget, are realistic. Some clients sometimes struggle to understand the cost, time and labor involved in hiring a designer and furnishing a space, so we are sure to get that out of the way before stepping foot on site. You have to remind them that a designer does not just come in and wave a magic wand and—voilà!—in an hour you have the perfect space. If only!" —[Alexa Stevenson](#), *Alexa Stevenson Interior Decoration, Athens, Georgia*



Alexa Stevenson Courtesy of Alexa Stevenson

Decorating, Athens, Georgia

### EXTRA INSIGHT

"An on-site consultation is essential for me. It's important to visualize the space in 3D in order to get a better grasp of the project. It's also a great opportunity to get a better sense of the potential clients—how they live, their relationships, and whether or not I would enjoy working with them." —[Iantha Carley](#), *Iantha Carley Interiors, Silver Spring, Maryland*



Iantha Carley Courtesy of Iantha Carley

### NEEDS TO BE SEEN

"We do site visits as part of our initial consultations if the client has a home already built and is residing there already. We can't send a proper estimate for the scope of work without seeing what we are working with. However, we don't charge a fee and instead have our clients donate to one of our five favorite charities—an idea we got from *BOH's 50 States Project* with [Zoë Feldman](#). We wanted to implement more ways to give back starting in 2021, and I thought it was a great idea!" —[Ana Claudia Schultz](#), *Ana Claudia Design, New York*



Ana Claudia Schultz Courtesy of Ana Claudia Schultz

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### AFTER SIGNING

"I do a lot of new construction, so there are many times when the house is still in the planning stage. For clients looking to renovate or redesign an existing space, I prefer to meet with them on-site. However, all of this happens after an interview and discussion of what is involved, budget and the contract is reviewed." —[Layton Campbell](#), *JLayton Interiors, Charlotte, North Carolina*



Layton Campbell Courtesy of Layton Campbell

### SERVICE-ORIENTATED

"A site visit is definitely included. We see if there is architectural work that needs to be done, discuss goals and dreams, and try to manage expectations. You also get to know the client, listen, observe and get clues for the project to come. You learn about what they like and dislike, the budget and their personalities. Being client-centric is key for me, and that first site visit is part of that." —[Harry Heissmann](#), *Harry Heissmann Inc., New York*



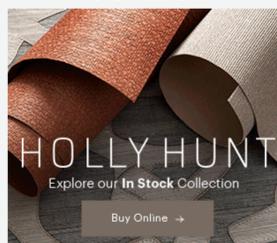
Harry Heissmann Courtesy of Harry Heissmann

Homepage photo: A project by Christine Jahan | Courtesy of Christine Jahan

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