



MICHAEL BRYANT / Inquirer Staff Photographer

Jill Cordes (right), host of HGTV's "My First Place," tends to details in the bedroom of Typhaney Bennett and Howie Shanker's South Philadelphia home. Helping are Nicole Hunn, 8, Shanker's niece, and Cheryl Deyo, Bennett's mother.



Thanks to "My First Place," Typhaney Bennett and Howie Shanker have a new designer bedroom.

Magic or madness?

A makeover TV series visits Philadelphia, and lucky homeowners love the results ... sometimes.

By Eils Lotozo
 INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

When Howie Shanker and Typhaney Bennett learned they'd been chosen for a new HGTV show featuring first-time home buyers, it sounded like the answer to a prayer.

They were about to sink every penny they had into a South Philadelphia fixer-upper. So they were thrilled by the show's premise, which would give them \$3,000 and the services of an interior decorator to help furnish one room.

But in the middle of a four-day shoot for the program, *My First Place*, Shanker and Bennett started to wonder. For reasons they couldn't fathom, they had been dressed up and photographed as characters out of the silent film classic *The Sheik*. Then the show's designer unveiled his color scheme for their bedroom: crimson walls, metallic gold ceiling and woodwork, and a checkerboard sheet-vinyl floor.

"I couldn't figure out how black-and-white vinyl went in a bedroom," said Shanker, 31, a home inspector.

"We really didn't know where it was going," said Bennett, 25, who works for a home-security company.

They would have to wait two more days, for the final "reveal," to find out.

The world of makeover television is not for the faint of heart, the shy, or those who have a thing about control. That's something a number of area homeowners learned recently thanks to *My First Place*, whose production See **MY FIRST PLACE** on E10



Tom Zemon, the New York-based actor-turned decorator who worked on the room, arranges peacock feathers in a metal vase that he had brought as an accent piece.

Banish incredible hulks.

Plan with care: The island can sink a kitchen

By Michael Walsh
 FOR THE INQUIRER

The island has become essential to the American kitchen over the last two decades because it can be a hub around which efficient meal-making and socializing revolve.

But without careful planning, an island can also be an insurmountable impediment to both. Just ask any cook who has had to hike around one to get from the sink on one side of a kitchen to the stove on the opposite side.

If you're planning a kitchen for a new house or remodeling a kitchen in an older home, keep in mind that while an island may stand alone, it does not function independently. To perform well, it has to work in harmony with all the elements around it.

Which means the positioning of other cabinets and countertops, as well as appliances, is critical. What expectations do you have of an island in the first place? Determining early on what you want an island to do for your kitchen is an important first step in designing one that functions properly.

Complicating these decisions is the fact that an island is typically a kitchen's visual focal point as well as its functional focal point — and that often these two impulses conflict.

See **ISLAND** on E11



TOM GRALISH / Inquirer Staff Photographer
The "Clothespin" site is a scene of pure urban spectacle. But to some it's a nuisance.

Changing Skyline By Inga Saffron

A claim on the 'Clothespin'

Centre Square is about to see renovations. But will changes restrict access by the public?

Philadelphia's downtown public spaces seem to be getting less public all the time. Just last month, the Duane Morris law firm installed a fence around its 17th Street plaza, discouraging office workers from enjoying lunch there. Skateboarders and chess players were banished by the 2002 redesign of LOVE Park. Penn Center's crumbling plaza has been jammed with so many giant planters that the open space now resembles a mouse run.

The message is clear: "Don't linger."

So when we heard that Centre Square intends to start renovating the plaza around its famous *Clothespin* next month, our suspicions were raised. The corner at 15th and Market Streets is Philadelphia's favorite meeting spot, thanks to Claes Oldenburg's iconic sculpture and to its location across from City Hall. The 1976 pop artwork serves as a marker for SEPTA's un-

derground rail lines. For pure urban spectacle, the scene at the *Clothespin* can't be beat.

But public spectacle can sometimes evolve into public nuisance. Dave Campoli, the regional manager for Centre Square's owner, HRPT Properties Trust, believes the activity around the *Clothespin* is no longer benignly entertaining. Centre Square workers are forced to run a gauntlet from the SEPTA stairs to the lobby. See **SKYLINE** on E6

ONLINE EXTRA

An appreciation of the work of legendary Philadelphia city planner Edmund Bacon by architecture critic Inga Saffron did not appear in some editions of Sunday's Inquirer and will be reprinted this Sunday. It is available online with photographs from Bacon's life at <http://go.philly.com/edbacon>.

Inside

LifeStyle: Bold black and white punch up a house's hues. **E3.**



New Orleans: At last, a Katrina victim looks over the wreckage that was home. **E4.**