



FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

Virtual Renovation Lives or Dies on the Photograph

What a usable before photo must contain, what can honestly be changed and what cannot, and how to stop a client approving an image the builder cannot deliver.

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You are not commissioning a render. You are commissioning an edit.

Renovation visualisation starts from a photograph of a room that already exists. Everything that follows — how convincing it is, how much it costs, how much of it can be changed later — is decided by that photograph before anyone opens any software. A good photograph of an ordinary room beats a bad photograph of a beautiful one every time.

This is the opposite of a new-build render, where the studio controls the camera, the light and the world. Here the camera has already happened. If it was taken on a phone in the dark, at head height, with the far corner cropped off, there is no version of the job that comes out well.

What the photo fixes forever

- The viewpoint. There is one, and no other view exists.
- The lens distortion, which every new object must match
- The light direction and quality — new surfaces must obey it
- What is visible at all. Anything cropped out cannot be changed

What people assume it does not fix

- “Can we see it from the other side?” — no, not from this photo
- “Can we take that wall out?” — only with measurements
- “Can we make the room brighter?” — within limits, and it will start to look unreal
- “Can we do the whole flat?” — one photo is one view, not a room

Which is why the checklist on the next page is the most valuable page in this guide. Ten minutes with a phone, done properly, is worth more than anything you can buy afterwards.

STEP 01

The photo checklist

Give this to whoever is going to the property. A phone is fine. Technique matters far more than the camera.

01 Shoot the whole room, corners included

Stand in a corner and shoot diagonally across. Two opposite corners between them cover nearly everything. A photograph that stops short of a corner cannot have a new kitchen run put in that corner.

02 Camera at about chest height, held level

Not at eye height tilted down. A tilted camera makes verticals converge, and every new vertical object — a tall unit, a shower screen, a wardrobe — then has to be bent to match. Level is the single biggest improvement most people can make.

03 Avoid the ultra-wide lens

Most phones offer one, and it bends the edges of the frame and exaggerates depth. Use the standard lens and step back, or take two overlapping frames. Wide-angle distortion is the most common reason a finished renovation image looks subtly fake.

04 Even light, nothing blown out

Daylight, curtains open, room lights on, no direct sun patch across the floor. A window burned to pure white removes all the information behind it, so nothing can be shown through it afterwards.

05 Put a known object in the frame

A tape measure extended along the floor, a door of known width, a standard tile. One reliable reference lets everything else be scaled. Without it, new fittings are placed by eye and arrive the wrong size.

06 Several angles, from the same visit

Three or four per room, overlapping. Going back later means different light and different clutter, and the set stops matching.

07 Clear what you can, keep what you must

Remove clutter, bins, laundry, cables. Leave anything that will still be there after the work, because that is the thing that proves the image is the same room.

08 Photograph the details separately

Close-ups of the existing floor, skirting, window frames, and anything being kept. These are what the new materials are matched against.

09 Write down what you cannot photograph

Ceiling height, room dimensions, which way the door swings, where the soil pipe and the boiler are. In a bathroom or a kitchen these constraints decide the layout more than taste does.

Send the photographs unedited and at full size. Not screenshots, not a messaging app that compresses them, not the version already cropped for the listing.



STEP 02

What can honestly be changed — and what needs more than a photo

	WHAT IT COVERS	WHAT IT NEEDS FROM YOU
Straightforward Finishes and fittings	Paint, wallpaper, tiles, flooring, worktops, cabinet fronts, taps, lighting fittings, furniture, soft furnishings.	The photograph, and the specification of what is going in. This is where the technique is strongest and the result is genuinely convincing.
Possible, with measurements Layout inside the shell	Moving a non-structural partition, changing a door position, a new window opening, moving a kitchen run or the sanitaryware.	Dimensions, ceiling height, and a plan if one exists. The room is partly rebuilt in 3D and blended back into the photograph, and the price reflects that.
Not from a photograph Structure and extensions	Removing a load-bearing wall, opening up two rooms, a loft conversion, an extension, changing the roof.	Drawings and a designer. This is a new-build visualisation job that happens to sit in an existing house, and pretending otherwise produces an image nobody can build from.

Retouched photo, or modelled render?

Both get sold as “virtual renovation”. They are different products with different prices and different limits, and you should know which one you are buying.

Retouched photograph

Surfaces replaced and objects added directly into the original image.

- Keeps the real light and the real room — very believable
- Cheaper, and quick to produce variants of a finish
- Locked to that one viewpoint forever
- Struggles with anything reflective, glazed or moved

Modelled render

The room rebuilt in 3D, matched to the photograph or replacing it.

- Anything can move: walls, openings, layout, camera
- New angles and a walkthrough become possible later
- More expensive, and needs measurements to be right
- Must be lit carefully or it stops looking like the real room



Maverick Frame production render.

STEP 03

The image the builder cannot deliver

The characteristic failure of renovation visualisation is not a bad image. It is a good one, approved by a delighted client, showing something that costs twice the budget or cannot be built in that room at all. The image then becomes the specification, and the argument arrives months later with the invoice.

WHAT QUIETLY APPEARS

WHAT IT COMMITS SOMEBODY TO

A named premium finish

If the image shows a specific stone or a specific tile, that is what the client now expects. Either specify what is actually budgeted, or label the image as indicative.

Services that moved

Sinks, radiators, sockets, extractors and the soil pipe are drawn where they look good. Moving them is real plumbing and real electrics.

Skirtings, thresholds, reveals

The junctions that consume the trade time and never appear in a visualisation. Where two floor finishes meet, something has to happen.

Perfect light

A north-facing bathroom rendered in warm afternoon sun is a different room. Agree the time of day and keep it truthful to the aspect.

Furniture nobody is buying

State plainly whether furnishings are included in the works or shown for scale and mood only. One line on the image solves this.

Two habits that prevent almost all of it

Caption the image. A short line stating what is included in the price and what is indicative, carried on every version that leaves your office.

Show the before and the after together. Same size, same page. It is more persuasive than the after on its own, and it keeps everyone looking at the same room rather than at an aspiration.

About the app-based tools

Honestly, because people ask and the marketing around them is not honest.

What they are good at

Trying twenty ideas in an evening. Testing a colour direction before you commit. Showing a client the general feeling of a scheme quickly and at almost no cost. For deciding what you want, they are a genuinely useful sketchpad.

What they are not good at

Dimensional truth. They will place a kitchen that does not fit, invent a window, quietly resize a room, and produce a different result each time you press the button. Anything a client signs, a builder prices, or a portal publishes needs a person who has checked it against the measurements.

Used in that order — app to explore, commissioned work to commit — they save money. Used the other way round they cost it, because the client has already seen the room they cannot have.

WORKING WITH A STUDIO

Cost, and how to brief it

Two things people ask us before anything else. Both answers are short.

COMMISSIONED WORK	FREELANCER	STUDIO
Single exterior still	\$100 – 300	\$250 – 600
Single interior still	\$120 – 350	\$300 – 700
Package, 5–8 views	\$600 – 1,500	\$1,500 – 4,000
Animation, per minute	\$1,000 – 3,000	\$3,000 – 8,000

Market ranges we are willing to publish. Turnaround and revision-round figures are deliberately not in this table: ours vary too much by project type to state as a benchmark, and an invented number here would be worse than none.

How to brief it — shorter is better

This is the opposite of what most people assume. Four things:

- What you need — **how many images, and of what**
- The plans and elevations, as they are
- A few reference images for mood and light
- One clear line on what the images are *for*

Inflating a small job into a fifty-page specification backfires: taken literally it comes out ugly, and it misleads the people doing the work. Tell them the intent and let the team that does this daily handle the detail.

The mistake that costs the most

The biggest failure we see is not choosing the wrong vendor. It is **timing**. People start looking only after the first supplier has already failed and the deadline is on fire, then choose in a panic.

Line up and vet rendering partners **before** you need one. One, ideally a few, briefed and ready to take work. It costs an afternoon now and saves a project later.

10+

YEARS RENDERING
VISUAL STORYTELLING

350+

BRANDS & AGENCIES
EMPOWERED GLOBALLY

95%

CLIENT
SATISFACTION RATE

40%+

OF OUR COMMISSIONS NOW
INCLUDE MOTION OR 360

When the image has to hold up, **talk to us**

We are a CGI studio: architectural and product rendering, 3D modelling, animation, 360 tours and VR. Ten years, 350+ brands and agencies, and the kind of work that still looks right when somebody counts the windows.

Send us the plans and a line on what the images are for. You get a scope and a price, and no obligation to use either.

START HERE

maverickframe.com/contacts

SEE THE WORK

maverickframe.com/gallery

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Maverick Frame production render. · Cost ranges are market ranges as of 2026 and are not a quotation.