

Design on a Dime

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At this time of year, frustrated customers come in the shop wanting to change the look of their houses for the new season, incorporating the inspiration they have gleaned from their summer holidays but not having the budget to redecorate. We always suggest making a few inexpensive changes, which can make a huge impact on a room.

Paint

Yes, it does take time, patience and preparation to paint but the change can be massive and the cost of paint is relatively low. If you are lucky enough to own your own home, then you have the freedom to experiment with colour. Most landlords are quite lenient and walls can always be returned to their original colour. However, it is easier to ask permission than forgiveness so always good to check.

If you are nervous of the results then start small with a bathroom or closet and expand from there. Outdated tiles can be given a new lease of life with specialist tile paint. Blackboard paint is great for accent walls in kids rooms and areas in kitchens and pantries for those never ending shopping lists.

A less committed option is wallpaper. There are some fabulous wallpapers on the market today, made of wipe-able vinyl and is self adhesive, movable and removable without leaving residue on the walls. Perfect for small rooms or accent walls.

Fabrics and window treatments

It is amazing what a huge impact textiles make to a room. Throw cushions can be recovered quite inexpensively. A yard or so of fabric can be used to make a decorative throw for a bed, adding a new splash of colour. Installing curtains or exchanging curtains or blinds from one room to another can make a huge difference to your colour scheme and costs nothing but time.

If you feel that you would like to buy new curtains, there are some less expensive ready-made curtains available but the best advice here is to stay as neutral and as simple as possible. If curtains still seem too expensive, check out local fabric stores. There are some beautiful fabrics available by the yard and often these are finished at either edge or selvaged, so you just need to hem either end and hang them up.

Changing a space

It may sound obvious but moving the furniture around in a room, if possible, can be a breath of fresh air. Sometimes, it is even possible to change the use of a room's altogether. It's very easy to get used to looking at the same layout of a room, so shaking things up a bit can be very refreshing.

Second-hand Furniture

We live in a transient community, so the second-hand furniture market is extensive. Check out BVI Bring and Buy on Facebook or the classifieds in the local papers. Pieces of furniture which look a little worse for wear can be painted or re-stained to renew them to their former glory or give them a new look altogether. Alternatively, decoupage with your favourite images from maps to comic books, to create a customized eye-catching piece.

Bringing the Outside in

Freshen up rooms with flowers, either real if you have a garden at your disposal or if not the silk alternative can look very realistic. Treat yourself to a new vase or re-utilise something you already have and do not use. Old jugs and pots can be given a new lease of life by switching uses. Large potted trees also will give the room a new perspective and bring a tall room together. Palm fronds are in plentiful supply and just two or three artfully placed in a simple glass hurricane can look stunning. Visit the grocery store and make a statement with jars of lemons, limes or oranges. Similarly, try beach combing and pick up shells and sea glass to leave on a tray or plate.

Book Shelves

Magazines and design books are now dedicated to how to organize book shelves and cupboards. Book shelves are not just for books. Mix it up with small pots, vases or collections. Many decorators now cover books with plain white or brown paper to create a monochromatic scheme.

Designing or redecorating on a budget can be fun and a worthwhile project to embark on this time of year. Look around and take inspiration from magazines, friends' houses and brainstorm ideas with others. A change is as good as a rest and can save you lots of money.