FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT/HOME FURNISHINGS - ✓ An Accent Special

Stretching decorating dollars

Does it require a really experienced decorator to get the maximum decorating mileage out of a dollar?

Not at all, say designers Mary Meehan and Robert Metzger, who have come up with a few top-drawer ideas that wouldn't cost all that much.

Although both ignored budgetary constraints this spring in rooms they decorated at New York's Kips Bay Showhouse, they were able to suggest some low-cost, quick-fix ideas for imparting special style to your home.

"Cost is irrelevant," says Miss Meehan, a New York designer whose clients usually can afford not to pay much attention to the expense.

"In my house in Southampton (Long Island, N.Y.), I have a lot of junk furniture from second-hand stores that I've painted," she says. "Put that junk in a room with one thing that's really good - a rug, painting, chair, armoire, for example - and it will still look terrific."

She says you can find the money for the splurge item by saving in other places. "I prefer to buy an old sofa and put a slipcover on it and then spend the difference on something with value and impact," she says.

Another factor that distinguishes rooms created by good designers, she says, is attention to detail. "Details make the difference between a room that look well-planned and one that doesn't. People notice, but they don't know that they do."

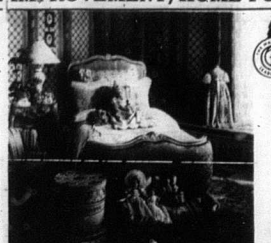
An example is to upgrade the lampshades. "You can turn ordinary lampshades into custom wonders with store-bought dye and commercial trims applied with glue," she says.

For about $35, she created a shade by dyeing a plain white lampshade a very pale pink and then applying a fringe trim in pink and green at the base and a thinner braid trim with the same colors at the top. It took only a few minutes and less than a yard of trim, she says, to create something that would cost about $200 if custom-made.

Designer Metzger advises dealing with bad walls by slipcovering them in inexpensive fabric. He seams fabric top and bottom and then installs it in ready-made hardware that fastens to the ceiling or wall. Or he uses Velcro fasteners on the wall and fabric, or simply staples the fabric to the wall.

If cost is a factor, he says, disguise the bad condition of wood and concrete floors with paint.

When carpeting a stairway, paint stripes to the left and right of the carpeted tread to create the illusion of a costly border treatment.



DESIGNING A WORLD OF FANTASY need not be just the stuff of dreams. The "stage" for the rich, old-European ambiance of the bedroom shown here was set with wallcoverings and companion fabrics from designer/craftsman Louis Nichols's Sweet Dreams collection for Millwork Wallcoverings. Flowers, flowers everywhere—from the patterns on the walls, woven rug, bathrobes, tea set and bed linens to the fresh flowers in the vase—subtly harmonize the decor.

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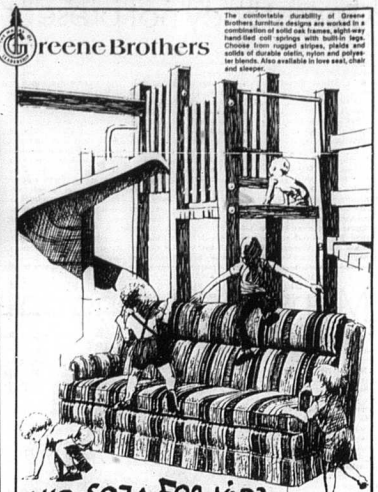

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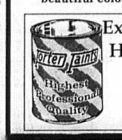

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Redecorating with wallpaper a popular project

Redecorating with wallcoverings has become a popular do-it-yourself project and manufacturers are encouraging the trend by offering more coordinated patterns and borders in wallpaper books.

At the retail level, many shops offer guidance on how to hang the covering and what types of adhesives to use.

Retailers suggest you order all the wallcoverings you need at the same time so they are all from the same color run.

Before starting the job, check the lot numbers before unwrapping the rolls and inspect the full length of each roll before you cut it. If there are damaged rolls, return them.

Consider what is on the walls in adjacent rooms before deciding on color and pattern. You can choose a covering in a similar color, with the same pattern scale or with the same "feeling" in mind, such as a small floral pattern that coordinates with a larger, bolder floral in the same colors.

In general, light colors, textures and small overall prints are unobtrusive, while large, splashy prints, shiny and metallic papers dramatize space. To minimize bad walls, choose a low-gloss, textured covering or a large overall print as long as it isn't shiny.

Small and dark rooms will seem more spacious if you choose pale colors and small patterns.

Lower a ceiling by covering it in a bright color or strong pattern. Limit the use of a bold pattern, especially in a foyer or hall or small bath, since large, busy expanses of any pattern can become tiresome.

When it's time to apply the wallcovering, cover the pasting table with plain brown wrapping paper or inexpensive tablecloths or dropcloths. Don't use newspapers because the ink may come through to the new covering.

If you're working on top of old wallpaper, it's best to strip it from the wall. Strippable or vinyl wallpaper peel off easily when you grasp a corner and pull. Wash the walls with warm water and scrape off the remaining glue with a putty knife after you've done the stripping. If the wallpaper to be covered is in good, tight condition, you can paper over it.

At worst, rent a wallpaper steamer or apply wallpaper remover. They soften the paper so you can scrape it off with a wide putty knife. After scraping, wash the walls and allow them to dry before hanging the new wallcovering.

For a better-looking job, work slowly and don't try to finish the project in one day. Wallcovering paste dries slowly enough so that you can adjust a strip and eliminate seam mismatches and bubbles, if necessary.

Save extra wallpaper, which can be used to fix small tears and loose edges without repairing. For loose seams, apply the paste to both the wall and the wallpaper, press the paper in place, smooth it with a seam roller and then wipe away the extra paste.

To patch a small damaged area, paste a new piece of wallcovering larger than the tear over the damaged areas, matching the patterns exactly. Allow the patch to set, but not to dry entirely. Then, cut through both areas, clean the empty area and repaste the top piece. Wait 15 minutes and roll the edges smooth.

Other ways to use wallpaper:

– If there is a pattern, cut out some of the motifs and apply them to lampshades and accessories.

– Wallpaper a closet.

– Create custom waste receptacles, perhaps from large round ice cream cartons or plastic or metal wastepaper cans.

– Use wallpaper inserts on kitchen cabinets, bathroom counter tops.

– Use for picture frames.

– Wallpaper borders can update and enliven old furniture. Just glue them on.

Trends are explained

HIGH POINT, N.C. (AP) – After last year's record growth, furniture industry analysts projected business would flatten out in 1988.

So far, their projections are on the mark. But that doesn't mean the furniture manufacturers, many of them in North Carolina, are sitting on their hands.

Faced with the industry's first prolonged no-growth period since 1982, the manufacturers are developing innovative ways to attract retailers and consumers.

Some are pushing new furniture lines to catch the eyes of potential customers. Others are working to improve services. Prices have been sharpened and new marketing strategies devised.

"The people who will be successful will do their homework, come out with some new lines and sharpen their pricing," said High Point designer Randy Culler.

Culler, who designs furniture for 10 different companies, feels it will take good business acumen rather than exotic designs if manufacturers are to entice consumers to buy as they did in 1987.

"I've always said 80 percent of what we do is merchandising and 20 percent (is) design," he said in an interview.

William DiPaolo, vice president of the Southern Furniture Market Center in High Point, said the business slowdown during the first few months of this year caused some difficulties for some factories.

"Their cash flow has become squeezed," he said in an interview. "We might start seeing some shorter work weeks."

Marty Reddan, an economist for the American Furniture Manufacturers Association, said shipments and orders from factories to retailers have been flat this year, when compared with the record levels of a year ago.

First quarter shipments, measured by units, were up less than 1 percent over the same period in 1987, he said.

Jerry Epperson, a furniture industry analyst with Wheat, First Securities, a Richmond, Va., brokerage house, said the reductions could lead to shorter work weeks and smaller backlogs in orders.

"It's not that business is not clipping along at a good rate," he said. "Retailers are not ordering as far in advance because the backlogs aren't as large. Business in the popular price points has been tough most of the year. But it's more complicated than to just say consumers aren't buying furniture."

Epperson said many furniture retailers have been struggling to comply with the federal tax reforms of 1986. No longer can they pay their taxes on an installment basis and defer some payments, he said.

"Now they have to pre-pay the government before taking out of their inventories," he said. "They are less generous in credit terms and stricter in inventories.

"We've seen a year of significant inventory liquidation," Epperson said.

Reddan stressed that 1987 was a record year for shipments and orders.

"You must remember that employment is at an all-time high in the furniture industry," he said. "Flat is very good – a lot better than some people had feared."

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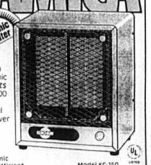

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