

How To Make Your Home Reflect Your Personality

By Curt Hagedorn

A few years ago everyone was talking about the “democratization” of taste. Basically, the theory was that with rise of national chains like The Gap, Banana Republic, Club Monaco and the like (stores which promoted a certain kind of classic style) Americans from all walks of life could all afford a certain level of dressing. In other words, one man’s (or woman’s) white button-down and khakis is just as good (in theory) as another’s. This concept has now moved over into home décor as well. Call it “Ikea” call it “Pottery Barn,” call it “Target,” our homes are increasingly filled with examples of a kind of clean eclecticism ranging from angular modern to enduring traditional from furniture to fixtures.

While this state of affairs is perhaps far preferable to the furniture fads of the past from hot pink shag carpeting to patent vinyl neon bean bags to inflatable polypropylene, it’s also become a little bit...uniform. If you look around your room and can’t tell the difference between it and the cover of the latest furniture catalog, maybe it’s time to set out on a journey to discover your personal style.

Perhaps the best way to do this is to follow a few tips from the realtor’s handbook. To make your home to look like a showplace, start by editing. Remove everything that’s not absolutely necessary and follow the rule of three: a maximum of three objects on any flat surface. This means that if your coffee table is hosting a stack of magazine, a bevy of knick-knacks and a pile of mail, you need to reduce it to one magazine, one envelope and one knick (or knack.) While this isn’t the end of the line, this will clear your field of vision to decide what’s absolutely necessary (pull the envelope, add a candy dish, and so on.) Pull things that are bland and generic and replace them with things you love. And remember while the things you love may not make your home look more like Pottery Barn, they will make your home look more like you.

The next best (and least expensive) place to add some of your own personality to your home is with color. Paint and fabric can go along way to turn safe neutrals into radiant reds, glamorous golds and passionate purples. If color scares you, start with a deep color to emphasize one wall, then pick up that color in some throw pillows or even a print you love. Or pull your colors from a favorite piece of art. And, contrary to popular opinion, play with scale. One oversized framed poster or one imposing splash of slip covered sofa or scarlet wall can help add just the right touch

of over the top drama to an otherwise safe decorating scheme. Just don't spend too much money on any one thing (unless you will love it for the rest of your life) and remember paint can be painted over, fabric can be dyed or reupholstered.

Finally, one of the best ways to make your home reflect your personality is to ask someone else. What you may not be able to do, you may be able to describe. Professional decorators and color consultants abound in the pages of the paper and at your community's home show and decorators showcases and model homes and finally, even at your local home and furniture stores. You'll be surprised how a good decorator can not only make the most out of a limited budget, but can take a look at your mixed up home and figure out just the touches to make what you already have shine and what's most important about you from your favorite color to your fear of hot pink stand out. Remember decorators often have access to furniture, fixtures and labor that the rest of us don't. If you're brave and on an even more limited budget, you might even try interviewing some graduates of your local college or other interior design program. You might convince a professor to give extra credit or make your dowdy bedroom or family room a class project.

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