

By Meridian Herman Lupu

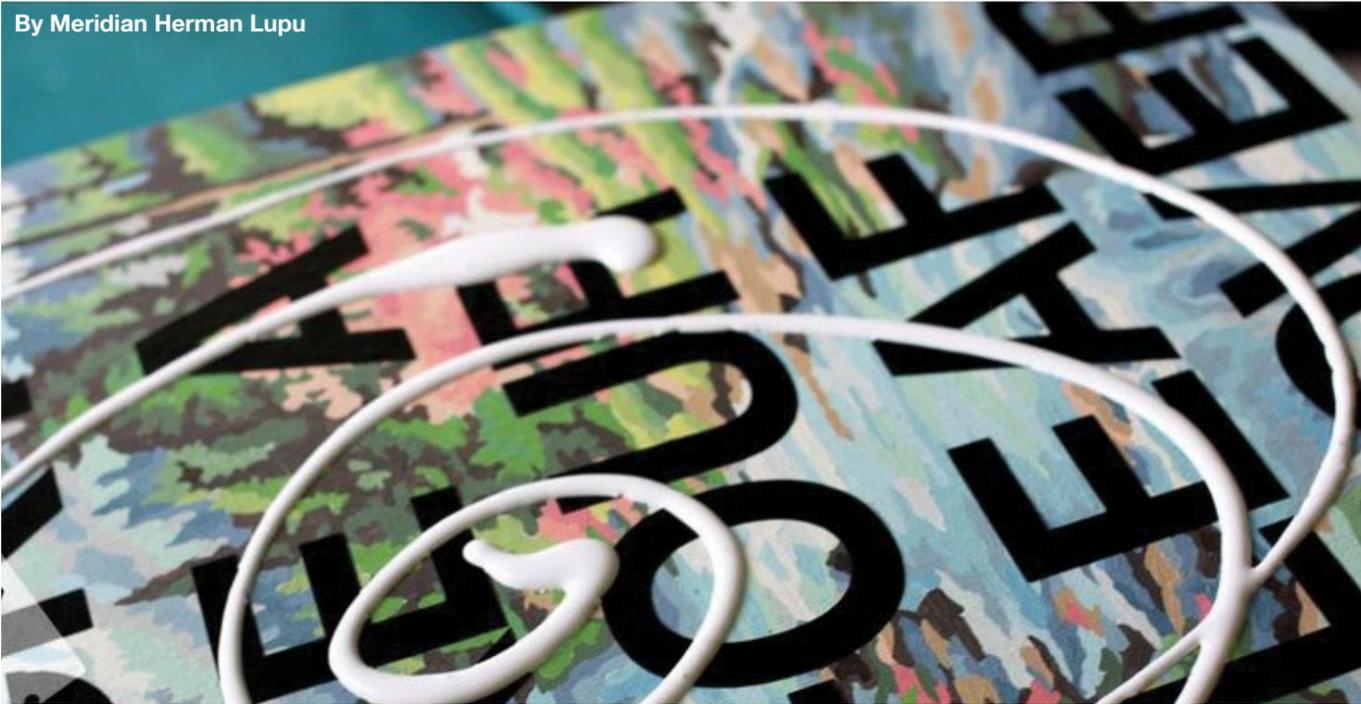


photo provided by Elsie Larson & Emma Chapman

MAKING CENTS OF HOME DÉCOR

The economy's recovery may be in full swing, but we still love decorating on a dime. You may know the basics – shop Craigslist or those national thrift store chains. And we adore those, too. But try shopping local: there are several resale and consignment shops right here in Oak Park, not to mention a plethora of garage sales throughout the warm months.

Starting with your furniture

You don't have to settle for particle board and pegs. You can score great used furniture for cheap at one of the church rummage sales or even au gratis through Freecycle.org. If the dining table is nicked in a corner or the left side of the sofa is a little scratched, consider giving used pieces a new life.

We've got lots of crafty, resourceful nesting ideas at Pinterest.com/LiveInOakPark; like painting furniture and repurposing items like suitcases to become nightstands. There are even links to online tutorials for refinishing so you can sand that little scratch into oblivion, and smooth on a new coat of lacquer.

Jackie Arica, who stages apartments for RK Management, has her own method: "I tore a picture out of a magazine of a room I loved and took it with me

while shopping," she divulges. "It's fun to see what you can create on a budget. You can easily buy things that are really cheap and make them look great; just like a magazine, but for much less."

Home Décor

"Well, I start with really great 'bones' in the buildings I work with," Arica says. But as long as you have a space, she assures, you can make anything work. "I choose one certain element and pick an accent color, then carry it through the entire space," Arica advises. "If it's green and black sconces, I find a green pillow, choose green towels or shower curtain for the bathroom, and set the dining table with green napkins. The rule of thumb is to see the color three times, and it feels cohesive."

You can also try adding some visual interest to your photographs or artwork by surrounding them with a large open frame. Or go for something really different, like putting a plate or shelves in the middle. "You can even attach a piece of art or décor—like a vintage clock—on a mirror," suggests local shop owner, Margaret Mudjer of Old & New, Consignments for You in Oak Park. She's full of decorative inspiration: "I love coming up with ideas like this for my customers," she says.

Here's another one: frames don't have to hang on walls anymore. "If you have high ceilings, get two identical frames and attach them back-to-back," says Mudjer. "Hang them from your ceiling for a 3-D look. You can leave the open space, or even hang something in the middle of them instead."

Small Spaces

If you're decorating on a budget, chances are you have a smaller space to work with. Arica suggests you maximize your space by finding furniture and other items that serve a dual purpose and is to scale with the size of your space (i.e., avoid the overstuffed sectional in a small living room). "Think about a table in the front entry that also has space for storage underneath, or a storage ottoman that can double as your coffee table or end table."

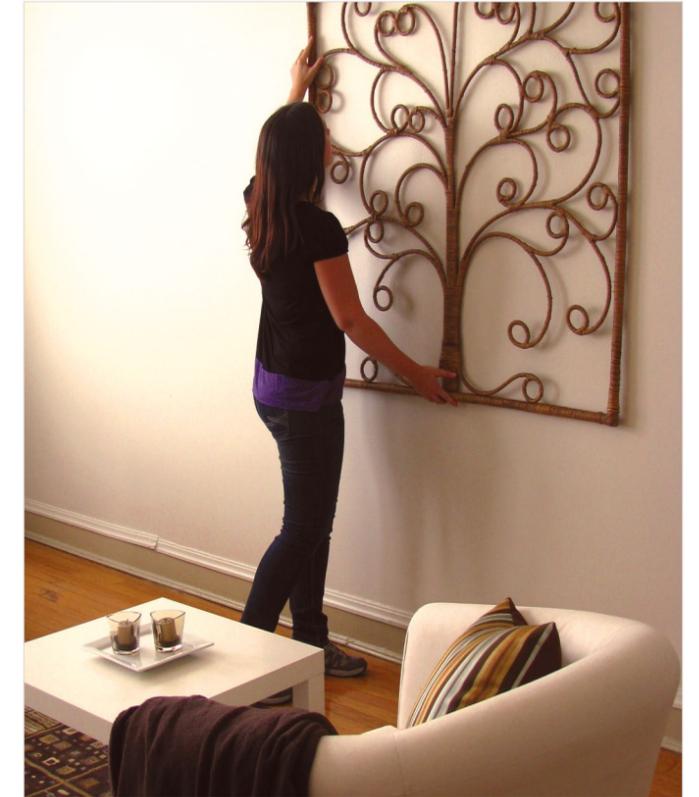
Utilize whatever space you do have. Don't forget about those high shelves in your closets or kitchen cabinets. Putting stuff away is the best way to keep a small space from feeling cramped.

"We feel crowded with many small things around us," says Mudjer. "Those things that you seldom use should be put out of view. Put a shelf about eye-level for your trinkets you want to display to avoid a cluttered feel. Or, you can sell the things you don't need on consignment." Hint, hint.

Making Your Rental Feel Like Home

If home is where the heart is, then your pad should reflect what's most important to you: family, friends, Fluffy. Whether you plant pictures everywhere or dedicate a wall for your photo gallery, showcasing your memories is a great way to establish your space. Not much of a photo person? How about incorporating your heart through other sentimental objects? They don't have to be your blankie! Mudjer offers another spin – you need dishes and towels? Why not include a tumbler from those good old days at college, or a couple of hand-me-down towels from your mom's house? Sentimental + utilitarian = less cluttered, efficient, happy home.

However you decorate your place, it doesn't have to break the bank. You don't have to settle for a miscellaneous mash-up of furniture and décor—there are simple, inexpensive ways to spiff up your space for a couple bucks. What's most important is that whether you rent or own, you love walking through your door.



Choose one accent color to use throughout your home for a cohesive look.

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