

Stylish Solutions

Spruce Up for Spring

By Ann McDonald



Don't be afraid to mix fabrics, shapes, colors and sizes. Refer to your inspiration photo, make a list and do it. Photos courtesy Couture Chateau llc

This month stylish suburbanites all over Lamorinda are looking at their tired family rooms, bedrooms and other spaces, and wondering what they can do to bring some beauty and love into their homes without breaking the bank.

I have a time-honored strategy involving gathering and arranging pillows and accessories when clients want a refresh without a complete remodel. This is how I teach my design assistants to create beautifully layered spaces. There are many who think decorating and design are out of their natural bent, but let me assure you, there are ways even the most non-aesthetic of the family bunch can bring style into a dated room.

The truth is I have a very simple three-pronged strategy to make spaces look layered and more expensive. You can do this! When spaces are highly matched, they provide less movement for real life. While I love a gorgeous hotel suite, the bland match and lack of layers, even



This is a great example of an inspiration photo. It has color variation: blues, greens, whites, yellows; texture variation: flat tablecloth, petals, rougher greenery, thistles; and scale variation: flowers.

in textures can prove boring. Who wants a boring spring home? Not me! I also need spaces that work for real people sitting and sleeping in real bedrooms. That means if one pillow gets moved, it can't mean disaster for the design. This strategy helps tremendously with movement.

First, we find a layered and expensive looking inspiration photo. These inspiration photos are typically not designed spaces, but rather live floral arrangements or natural landscapes, where layers are expressed differently than in decorating shots. This keeps us from shopping a look and equips design assistants and clients with the ability to generate their unique look while developing their design eye.

Second, we set a budget. Trust me, even billionaires have budgets. Typical pillow costs at local discount home stores range from \$25 to \$60, plus tax. For three pillows, you can reasonably set a \$100 budget, for five pillows consider \$200 so you can purchase a show stopper and for larger more luxurious spaces, think about \$300 and up. The same is true of accessories.

Third, we shop with and from lists. Don't be fooled. Most designers and decorators who head out for free-fall inspiration do just that and waste a ton of time and money doing it. You don't walk into a sports store, throw out your hands and declare, "Inspire me!" without knowing what sports equipment you need. Why on earth would you do that for your home? Lists, inspiration, and budgets protect you.

Now that you have that three-pronged strategy at

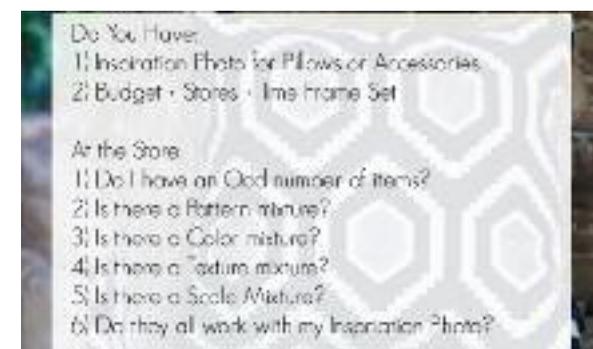
When Pillow Shopping:

- 1) Bring an inspiration photo
- 2) DON'T match fabrics + pattern
- 3) DO match the inspiration photo
- 4) THIS helps you gather unique pillows that look mismatched in store but GREAT in the room

hand, here's how to create expensive and fresh updates using pillows and accessories. Use this in your family rooms, bedrooms, even rental properties (our example) and kid's apartments.

1) Get comfortable with odd numbers. I have dear clients who are very symmetrical in nature, but even a pair of something can use an anchor in the middle. If you have two candlesticks on the fireplace, add something simple in the middle and create an odd number on the mantle.

2) Work the pattern mix. In our Tahoe rental example, we have floral, applique, geometric, striped and solid pillows. If you went out without a list or inspiration photo, it is highly unlikely you would put all those pillows into your cart. When you shop from a nature-inspired photo, however, and pull each item with reference to the photo alone (not your design thoughts), you get home with a glorious mix that works. ... continued on page D12



Make a list, and stick to it.