

Design ideas
to turn a rental
into a home

Freshen Up

BY WENDY ILENE FRIEDMAN

So, what does it take to transform an ordinary rental apartment into an extraordinary home? Not much. Just creative thinking and a little effort.

We asked downtown design team Jessica Geller and Virginia Toledo of ID 810 Design Group, along with staging expert Jill Vegas, author of "Speed Decorating - A Pro Stager's Tips and Trade Secrets for a Fabulous Home in a Week or Less," to share ideas.

Creative with paint

Given whatever is done to a rental space will likely need to be undone when the lease ends, ID 810's Toledo still believes that painting walls is a good investment and the most effective way to transform a space.

More than just adding color, which sets the tone of a room, she suggests mimicking architectural details that can "really bring a space to life." By applying large rectangle shapes with painter's tape on the walls before painting and then removing when dry, it creates architectural interest.

Toledo also recommends using a dark color, like espresso, for small spaces. Contrary to popular belief, she says darker colors give the illusion of a larger space. "It tricks the eye into making walls recede and plays with depth perception."

Pro stager Vegas often recommends painting an accent wall with a lively shade, like her favorite, "poppy" by Benjamin Moore, or a cozy color like "stone hearth" in the bedroom. When determining which wall to highlight, the staging expert says to look around the room and see where your eye goes first. That's the wall to choose.

"It's a focal point," she says.

You can take it with you

At times, the team at ID 810 encounters a dilemma when clients would like to use wallpaper, but are reluctant since it will need to be removed when they go. To work around this, the designers create art pieces from wallpaper.

Since wallpaper is sold in big rolls, they often purchase several wallpaper samples to frame and create a gallery wall.

"The key is to use a unifying color that appears in each sample, but vary the patterns," says Geller. "Some designs should have softer, fluid lines like florals and others that are sharper geometrics, like a zigzag or chain link."

When they want to go big, they glue the wallpaper to a standard sized 4-by-8-foot piece of plywood to hang on walls. "You can have two or more plywood sheets hung tight next to one another for larger spaces," Geller says.



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Mirror, mirror

A well-placed mirror, according to Geller, is "like a piece of magic on the wall."

The designer says this enhances the space to make it look bigger, while adding a bit of sparkle to a room. "When it's done right, it's a slam dunk."

She advises using mirrors in smaller areas, like a narrow hallway or tight corner. That doubles the size of the space, she says. Also, when placing a mirror, consider what images it will reflect. Put it in a spot that illuminates a nice piece of art or beautiful outside view.

Double duty

Twenty-three percent of renters surveyed by Apartments.com



It's a console closed...



...and a desktop opened, at Ikea

PHOTOS: IKEA

reported that lack of space is their biggest decorating challenge. Many New Yorkers can appreciate that sentiment.

One of Vegas's favorite multipurpose items is an ottoman. "It can be used to rest your feet, you can put a serving tray on top, or it can be extra seating for guests," she says. Some are even hollowed out for storage.

Online retailers like CB2 and Ikea are also good resources for innovative space-saving ideas and products, like the Ikea Vika Veine hidden desk that doubles as a console.

Lighten up

All the experts agree that good lighting is essential. Says ID 810's Toledo, "When you amp up the light, you can visually delineate between spaces."

She says that lighting allows you to create different environments. In addition to an array of floor and table lamps, she recommends replacing lighting outlets with dimmer switches.

"Speed Decorating" author Vegas says that adding wall sconces and switching out fixtures are quick fixes to change the look of a space. Above all, she says, use clear incandescent bulbs. Those "give the cleanest, most crisp light." You can take a chance on something modern or a differently shaped lampshade.

Stay in vogue

Fashion trends on the runway often inspire home styles. For this year's fall season, Vegas finds deep fruits and vegetable tones are in favor. In particular, mushroom-colored shades like portobello. She is also seeing a lot of eggplant and red cabbage colors.

"You see it on the runway for fall and it's translating into the home."

Toledo and Geller notice that shades of gray replaced beige as the go-to neutral with "small pops

of color. "We love cement gray paired with yellow or kelly green," Geller says, "Gray can work with almost any color, whether it's hot pink, burnt orange or turquoise."

Chunks are in

Patterns have gone by the wayside and have been replaced by bold chunks of colors, a look from the '70s known as color blocking.

One way to go full steam ahead with this trend is to paint entire walls in a Rothko-esque fashion with large blocks of solid color. More practical ways to apply this trend would be to incorporate a variety of colored pillows on the couch and chairs, purchase a brightly colored area rug or hang framed color paper in large square blocks on the walls.

"As long as they are the same hue, chances are they will look stunning together," says Toledo. Some "killer combinations" the designer suggests are coral and fuchsia or cobalt and poppy.

What is old is new again

If there is an old side table you no longer like, Vegas calls it an opportunity to play with color. She suggests taking older pieces to an automotive repair place to spray in a bright,



Shades of gray with earth tones make other colors pop

ALEXANDER JOHNSON PHOTOGRAPHY

daring shade. This can just as easily be done with a can of spray paint found at local hardware stores or Home Depot. Just do the work outdoors.

Repurposing a piece of furniture, like a chest of drawers or small file cabinet, by painting a design or some graffiti art is another way to give new life to a space. If you're uncomfortable doing it yourself, find a local art student or ask a friend to do the work.

Make it personal

Vegas believes the most important thing to do with any space is to customize it with unique, personal items. For instance, making pillows from Hermès scarves or displaying a piece of coral found during a trip to the beach.

"That's what makes a rental feel like a home," agrees Geller, who tells clients that if they love something, they will find a place for it.

The Blueprint 810 DIY kit from ID 810 is available at id810designgroup.com



Call in the experts

When stumped on what to do, bring in an expert. ID 810 recently launched Blueprint 810, a web-based do-it-yourself program that allows users to interact with a virtual designer. Once a questionnaire is completed and floor plan uploaded, the user receives a design kit and instructions that include where to buy the items and how to set up. Prices range from \$800-\$1,200, depending on the room.

JACOB SNAVELY

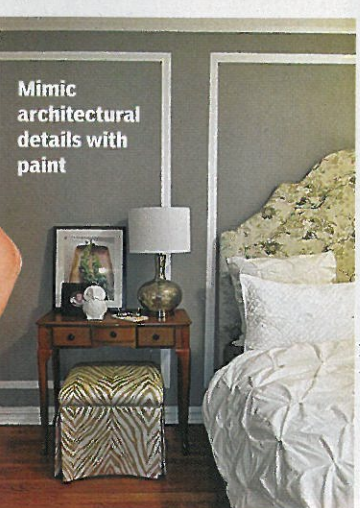


Wallpaper makes great art. Just frame a portion to liven up a room

ID 810 DESIGN GROUP



Jill Vegas



Mimic architectural details with paint

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