



EVERYDAY INDULGENCES

Longing for luxury, but also trying to cut expenses? Enrich your life with simple pleasures

By Victoria McKenney

Despite economic uncertainty and daily stress, we all know how to soften life's edges with little indulgences. Stop the frantic pace long enough to consider what brings you joy and satisfaction, and enrich the day with simple things: listen to a new CD while lingering over a cup of tea; wrap yourself in a luxury hotel-quality towel after a bubble bath; read a chapter while tucked inside your cosy new duvet; or just decide to eat breakfast sitting down – instead of standing up – in your newly painted kitchen.

A new design philosophy known as “spiritual decor” makes a home a haven. Interior designers are always on the lookout for guilt-free decor items to improve your quality of life, but first we evaluate your home for what's missing. Is there a reading lamp where it's needed? What about a truly comfortable chair for watching TV? Would a drawer near the entrance serve to decrease little annoyances like constantly misplacing keys and eye glasses?

WHERE TO SPLURGE

Inject personality and value into a room with original art. Wait to find the original art that you love for a wall, but in the meantime, beautiful frames can make your humble photographs assume greater significance. Buy them in 8-by-10-inch or 11-by-14-inch frames with mat that enable you to change them periodically and group them in three (using matching frames) or five or seven (using the same colour frame but in different sizes and shapes). A large dramatically framed mirror adds beauty, especially if it reflects the outdoors, and can be moved from one room to another.

Appreciate the beauty of a single object. Make your fireplace a focal point by painting the brick and having a company like Hazelmere Mantel custom make a dramatic and substantial mantel in paint- or stain-grade wood. Savour a well-prepared meal on a prized but well-priced antique table found at an auction. (Feeling too



OPT FOR AN ORIGINAL Visit art school sales to find original pieces. And invest wisely in furniture. This Space chair fits into any decor, making it a smart choice. Photo courtesy Fritz Hansen

guilty to splurge? Remind yourself that a new dining table isn't just a showpiece; it will gather friends and family around you for decades.) In a room without a closet, consider an armoire's graceful proportions and strong vertical lines that can fill the void where something seems to be missing, for example, used as a hall closet and

divider between the entrance and living room.

Create eye-level impact. Items at eye level, like as stair runners, shower curtains and backsplashes, offer immediate gratification when replaced. You may be able to simply and inexpensively adhere new subway tiles to your kitchen

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backsplash if the old surface is in good condition. Paint your kitchen cabinets in a fresh colour, like white or medium grey. Remove them and take them to refinishing companies such as JR West Ltd., which has a paint booth. Other eye-level impact makers: plush towels and cloths hanging ready for use in the kitchen and bathroom.

Revamp tired accent pieces. Re-upholstering a quality piece, like as a classic lounge chair that can be re-purposed for any room in the house, is a wise investment. Check your directory for places such as Comfort Upholstery in Vancouver. Give a new look to old cabinets and dressers by replacing knobs and pulls, available at stores including Lee Valley Hardware and Restoration Hardware.

Add music to every room. The sound of music can turn even a half hour of ironing or reading e-mail into an occasion. A speaker bar (about 36 inches long) can replace the expense of rewiring a room since it can sit under a TV or stereo to create surround sound. They are available at the Future Shop and The Sound Room.

Set the mood with lights. Lamps and overhead lighting can date a room. Draw the eye away from all other lighting with a dramatic chandelier, which makes investment sense. A small wall-mounted chandelier in a foyer is the first thing guests will see as they enter. Robinson Lighting has semi-flush mounted 12- to 16-inch styles. Pot lights are more expensive to install but add resale value.

Create a space that you can call your own. Make time to indulge in a hobby. Perhaps design your own sewing or scrapbooking room by converting a closet. Take off the door, paint a different colour within it, and add shelving, a small desk and chair. Here's a DIY tip: use two small filing cabinets as your table "base" and you'll have built-in storage.

Embrace colour. Paint gives the room an entirely new look and doesn't have to be a four-wall, two-gallon commitment. Don't be afraid to paint one accent wall or even a section of a wall in a bold shade such as raspberry or deep tan (with



GO GLAM Create some grandeur in the dining room (left) by investing in a standout chandelier, or a solid table you'll enjoy for decades. **TRANSFORM YOUR ROOM** Invest in luxe shams or sheets for comfort, and wake up your walls with a punchy paper. **BE BOLD** Kitchen paint has come a long way. **Make a strong statement with hardwearing colour.** Photos courtesy Graham & Brown, CIL Paints



beige walls). The resurgence of wallpaper adds warmth to ordinary surfaces. Buy one leftover roll in a bold pattern and add a few feet of vertical colour with a panel the width of your bed or sofa – matching the rest of the wall colour. Then place moulding (such as chair rail) vertically on both sides to frame the paper.

Purchase luxury linen. Fine bedding is the last thing you feel as you fall asleep and the first thing you notice on awakening, so buy the best you can afford. Since buying an entire bedding set is expensive, add three new accent pieces, instead. To instantly transform the bed, choose couture pillows, a coverlet draped over the end of the bed, or a duvet cover, which is isn't as pricy as new quilt. Cover pillows with new shams, or make them yourself with luxury remnants sourced from fabric retailers.



Sometimes it's not what you have, it's what you don't have that creates an environment of luxury. Edit each room to make it clutter-free; pare down to a few favourite pieces. At the same time, forget design perfection and striving for pristine rooms, and instead create an atmosphere where your family can relax and enjoy time together. Clean and repair. You appreciate details like sunlight through clean windows, the smell of fresh laundry and being able to use that well-loved sheet when it's mended. If a stubborn sliding door or broken window is on your mind, get it fixed to create harmony. ■

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