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## The Home Designer What's Love Got To Do With It?

By Brandon Neff



A curvy custom sofa and plush pillows add comfort and glamour. Photo courtesy Brandon Neff Design

Believe me, holiday themed articles peppered with witty, cutesy turns-of-phrase and double entendre are not my style. You'll never read my "Deck The Halls With Boughs Of Velvet," or my "Jack-O-Lantern Decorating Extravaganza" in this column. In fact, I would say that I go to great lengths to avoid any type of contrived prose or display altogether. However, how can I ignore that Valentine's Day is upon us, and begging to be recognized? I'm no cynic (well, maybe a little). So, in honor of the occasion I will do my best to thread the needle of incorporating something resembling romance into this week's feature without dissolving into saccharine rhetoric. Don't expect any "love nest" or "super-sexy boudoir" recommendations from me here, but rather, I offer you a more esoteric take on the occasion - glamour.

Glamour is sexy. Glamour stirs emotion. Glamour heightens every moment. Glamour, dare I say, is romantic.

In my work, clients are mostly interested in function. They want spaces that serve a specific need - this usually includes a TV and a place to sit while watching said TV. People, there's more to living well than a comfortable place to sit while tuning out your partner - am I right? Don't answer that!

While I'm all for creating a functional room, I'm a firm believer that your space can, and should inspire you to live at a higher level. A sanctuary, if you will, where you're operating at your best - free from all the chaos of the world outside your doorstep. Your home can be aspirational, and is definitely an extension of your personality. Whether you want to believe it, or not, your home represents to all who visit just who you are at your heart evidenced by what things you surround yourself with, and what you're presenting to every guest. If, as we're being sold every day, our personal "brand" is being shaped by our work, our time "online" and by our actions, shouldn't your brand begin at home? So, to this end, I propose adding a touch of glamour

to your brand.

What is glamour? For me, it's seeing things through a curated lens - making the most out of everything you add to your life. Glamour sparks an emotion, or creates a dramatic pause. Historically, glamour was seen as something for the rich - an affect ripe with pretense and largely unattainable. Trust me, glamour isn't about money. Far from it. Things, in themselves, do not create glamour, but how you put them together does.

A couple of "before and after" photos illustrate my point. I was asked by my clients to create something "glamorous and inviting" in their living room. They entertain quite often, but this room felt sad and uninspiring - hardly a room for festive and lively gatherings. Even more upsetting, the existing furnishings and trimmings had cost them a fortune - again, without guidance they had spent a ransom on pieces that neither worked, nor accomplished their goal. There was no gracious layout, no flattering lighting, nothing personal or interesting that indicated who they were at their best.

When I first saw the room, I envisioned it becoming a light-filled space with generous seating, dramatic windows, sumptuous details and a show-stopping moment or two - my clients are fun and interesting people, but the room betrayed their personality. They wanted a place for cocktails and conversation - a place to enhance their lifestyle and heighten moments with friends and family. And they wanted a little romance.

What I created for them was a room that feels twice as large and 10 times more glamorous. And don't let the chic furniture and fabrics fool you - everything is durable, functional and washable, fashionable and practical in perfect harmony. Soft lighting keeps you looking your best, jewel tone upholstery surprises you, and sensuous shapes and textures stimulate all of your senses. Let's face it, if we didn't care about our surroundings we'd all still be living in caves. We evolved and discovered a life less ordinary.

Simple tips. I removed the dated shutters on the windows and hung full length drapes mounted just below the crown molding for exceptional drama. It takes the eye up and makes the room feel grand. In lieu of a clunky coffee table, I placed two smaller "tea height" tables in the room to catch cocktails and canap• - they're easy to move around as needed and add great sculpture. A pair of matching chairs replaced the love seat, creating more personal

space for guests - no one wants to share a love seat unless they're lovers, and even then just for a short period of time! Creating sexy lighting was key - always mix overhead lighting with more flattering task and accent lighting at eye level. So important. Lastly, for added glamour, mix in a few unexpected elements like that chandelier fashioned after a sea urchin - with so many choices out there why would one want something ordinary? It's whimsical and unique - just like my clients.

Remember, interior design is personal, intimate and revealing at the same time. You have the choice to live your life in a space that speaks to you, makes you smile and lifts your spirit when you open the door - something akin to love, right?

For this Valentine's Day surround yourself with what you treasure; choose wisely. If all else fails, choose dark chocolates!



Drab walls, outdated shutters and poor layout hide this room's enormous potential. Photos courtesy Brandon Neff Design





Dramatic linen draperies, pale walls and beautiful textures make the room a chic gathering space.

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