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Stylish Solutions

Valentine's Day Décor

By Ann McDonald



By using tools like Sherwin Williams' Chip it, you can see browns and earth tones are hidden within mint green feathers on this wreath. Tools like this, which are available online, are incredibly helpful in creating rich, layered and surprising arrangements, and equip you to make bold choices.

Just like most things, subtlety rules. OK, yes, there are times I go all out kitsch. But there is also a place for subtle stewardship. When going subtle, effort and precision are keys. Tie and drape the ribbon properly and adjust so the items won't hang off kilter.

The best part? Once the holiday is over, switch out \$3 worth of ribbon and voila: You're ready for the next holiday.

2) Pick three elements and stick to them! Hearts, cherubs, paper and candy hearts are all awesome things, but remember, your home is not a retail store or the local craft fair. Those of us with overachieving hearts often come back from our favorite retail haunts, cars loaded with glitter, candy, projects, matching napkin rings and visions of recreating our favorite Pinterest board.

Don't go that route stylish suburbanite! You are better than that. I am calling you stylish for a reason. Engage your power. Let's keep it simple this year. Simple does not mean austere, it just means fewer elements done well and completed.

Pick three elements and use those as your starting and ending points. This year, mine are: red grosgrain ribbon, tall candy, and pheasant tail feathers.

Admittedly, my children are grown and out of the nest, but what if you focused on doing three things really well this year? Your growing family might remember the holiday as one of love and appreciation instead of chaos and sticky fingers from paste trying to hand craft Valentine cards for every relative under the sun. Leave those crafts to the preschool teachers we love so much.

3) Purchase good quality storage and inventory. Storage and inventory keeping are the backbones of a well ordered home. Budget the proper storage into seasonal purchases. If you are taking the time to build a body of seasonal décor to serve you over the next three to five years or longer, preserving it properly and then knowing where it is when you need it may save your sanity.

It's February and that means it's time to punch up your home décor with hearts, cupids and all manner of love. But how does a stylish suburbanite handle a minor holiday like Valentine's Day without descending into tacky or inappropriate kitsch?

Here are my top tips for decorating your stylish space for a fun, not too labor-intensive minor holiday:

1) Modify what you have. When design clients need a bit of bling but shy away from metallic, I like to use feathers. I love large-scale feathers and feather wreaths - I have them in several colors and stock both in quantity. One of my favorite uses is to bump up large-scale live floral arrangements in entry halls, passageways, powder rooms and master suites. Feathers bring a breezy lighthearted aesthetic to most any décor when used properly.

How does this fit into Valentine's Day homes? Simple. I have mint green feather wreaths up now in my Design Studio space and on several exterior doors. Instead of changing these out for heart shaped or overtly scaled cupids with arrows, tie the wreaths onto their hangers using a simple red grosgrain ribbon.

Simple things like proper storage boxes, blocks of cedar, moth balls and/or eco-friendly natural herbs can keep your décor safe for years to come.

Use Google Drive or some other program to develop an inventory of your home and holiday décor. You will be pleasantly surprised how an hour on the computer will save you many hours of searching next year. You also won't re-purchase the thing you have in your shed but can't find. Been there, done that.

I am also passionate about storage and inventory because when it's time to pass your décor along to those less fortunate, those pieces and items will be in their best shape. How much kinder and more respectful it is to bring beautiful, well cared for items in proper storage to your local shelter than all mucked up in a brown paper bag. Let honor be the language of your home.

May your Valentine's Day be blessed and your home be a place of peace.

Behind the Studio Door with Ann McDonald

Upcoming design workshops

"How to Build a Lifetime Design Clientele and Monetize Creativity Without Selling Yourself" - for designers, decorators and working creatives from 1 to 3 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 26 at Taylor Blue Designs in Berkeley. Learn about different client types and how online access has changed what they pay for, how to structure your business model, and how to source ideal lifetime clients - without losing yourself in the process. For information and to register, visit <http://studiodoor.eventbrite.com>.

"Managing and Planning a Luxury Project As Your Own Designer" - for the savvy, stylish suburbanite from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, March 20 at the Orinda Country Club. Learn how to run your own design project like a professional designer and how to utilize professional receivers to complete projects in one day. You'll also receive insider access to downloadable materials on a private online dashboard for one month. For info, go to <http://luxurydesign.eventbrite.com>.

For more information, visit <http://couturechateau.com/workshop/> or ring us at (925) 386-0720.



Sherwin Williams' Chip It app shows the many layers of colors in simple candy.



Photos courtesy Couture Chateau llc, photography by Couture Chateau llc



Ann McDonald, IIDA, NAPO, is the Founder/CEO of Couture Chateau, a luxury interior design firm in Orinda. For a complete blog post including other design ideas, visit www.couturechateau.com/blog

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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