

Stylish Solutions

Embrace the Designs of the Season

By Ann McDonald



Unique Thanksgiving decorations can be made from everyday finds. Don't stress and enjoy the process.

Photo provided

It's that time of year when sanctuary, family, celebration, and yes, a bit of stress starts to settle in. The magazines show us what an idealized November looks like, with perfect pictures, perfect table settings, and not a messy child, unruly relative or stressed-out host in sight.

We look at the photos flooding our social media and grocery store checkout lines, then we go home and see piles of unopened mail, boxes of mismatched china we barely put away from last year's celebrations, our sagging sofas, dog hair filled corners, or worse, our perfectly staged but empty-of-process and empty-of-people homes....and wonder.

What now? How do I navigate this so-called season of joy, when I'm not seeing it in my actual spaces and places? This month, Stylish Suburbanite, I'd like to offer some practical help in the form of a single word:

embrace.

We must stay away from perfectly staged homes void of process and movement. As a luxury designer, one of the most valuable things I do is imbue permission for life to flow, books to be read, and to break the spirit of perfectionism which often lingers in new design commissions where pictures form the idealized look.

Don't get me wrong, I can spot a one-eighth of an inch off in a stack of books a room away; however there is a massive difference between poor design masquerading as process (read: messy and disordered) versus so-called great design masquerading as dead, immovable interiors, where even the presence of humanity ruins a look.

I happen to believe beauty through design process can shift things, from our soul's perspective, and bring

hope into situations and birth new life from celebrations, even when those celebrations don't look like the magazine photos and staged events pushed on us every season. Beauty in process is quite practical!

Here are some tips to "embrace" November:

1) Embrace: your current season of life. If you have young children or pets at home, organic snacks dropped on the floor are an entirely appropriate seasonal décor item. The pets will think they are pennies from heaven, and your real beauty is in not needing the perfectionism mentioned above. Process is lovely. Anyone who renders a design judgment because you have young kids and or pets, with the requisite toys or dog hair, isn't actually a designer. Why? Because they don't understand the beauty of process. Design in its purest form is about process.

2) Embrace: decorating anyway. If you are like we are, with an empty house, where most things actually stay in the place we put them, and that "void-of-life perfectionism thing" can start to creep in...decorate anyway! I can't tell you how often clients let us know "we won't be decorating this season because it's just us."

I happen to think "just us" is a holy and wonderful thing! Did you decorate when you were first married? Then decorate now! Didn't decorate when you were first together because you were broke? Then decorate now! Embrace the beauty together. Find something you both love. Beauty has a place in every space, and the natural shift of season should mirror what goes on inside our sanctuary homes as well. As the earth decorates with color changes, weather change and even the animals move habitations, we need to take our cues and do the same. At the very least change the center hall table arrangement, or the family room shelves.

3) Embrace change with anticipation of good. Change carries a resonance. What you bring in, whether it's live and natural or you prefer the kitsch of seasonal styles (there is a beloved place for both), the resonance of hope you find and the bits of discovery from the "joy of the shop" will fill your home with the same.

... continued on page D6