

COLUMN: The real life decorator

By Paola McDonald

Many people assume great interior design is only for the rich. They assume they must spend a lot of money to make their home look like it came from the pages of a magazine, or that it takes a lot of natural talent, a lot of work and an interior design degree for a great home space.

But interior design for your real life is more attainable than you might think. It just takes a little creativity and a close look within your own community.

Believe me, with two young children, a husband and three dogs, I understand that real life can make it more challenging to have the home of your dreams. On any given day it could look like a bomb exploded in my house.

But if you accept your reality and add a little creativity, careful planning and measuring, measuring, measuring, you can create a beautiful home -- even with toys strewn about haphazardly. And it doesn't have to cost an arm, a leg or a child to attain it.

In the coming months, this column will help you achieve these goals, but it's best to start with a few simple rules. These have helped me conquer many real-life challenges and have allowed me to create a functional home space that meets my family's needs.

Rule #1: Your home can't always look like it belongs in a magazine. The reality is that you live in your home and should be comfortable enough to enjoy it. When decorating, always think functionality first; the aesthetics will come.

If your home doesn't work for you, it will always feel uncomfortable and unfinished. For example, a big challenge is toy storage. Understanding the type of storage needs you have can help you identify the best type of storage solution. If you have a lot of smaller toys like trucks and stuffed animals, perhaps bins are a better way to go. If you have larger items to store, like bikes and yard toys, perhaps a great garage storage system could help with the clutter.

Stay tuned for more creative ways to conquer the plastic and create spaces where your children will love to make messes and hopefully help you clean them up as well.

Rule #2: Your home must reflect who you are. Many find it easier to go to a large furniture store and choose a complete furniture suite than to pull unmatched pieces together for a cohesive look. But we'll discuss some creative ideas that will allow you to go beyond the complete furniture suite and create your own personal home décor.

In addition, you'll read about great local resources where you can find unique furnishings, accessories, artwork and other pieces that will give your home the boost of "you" it needs.

Rule #3: Think outside the box. Creativity is your most useful tool when it comes to assembling a great interior look that doesn't drain your wallet. The real-life solutions, tips, techniques, ideas and local

resources here will allow your creative juices to flow and help you move toward a home that truly reflects who you are.

These monthly topics of interest from the decorating and design world will make it real for you, and I hope I can motivate you to address some of those home projects you may have been afraid to tackle and provide you with new ideas for projects you may not have thought of.

Along with local businesses, vendors, service providers and other local homeowners, I want to inspire you and become your decorating partner.

Welcome to reality -- where children, husbands and pets rule!

Paola McDonald is a certified interior decorator and owner of Creative Elegance Interiors, LLC based in Haymarket. Contact Paola with suggestions at decorator@creativeeleganceinteriors.com.

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