

# Case study: Family home in need of makeover

Today's column is part one of a three-part series on residential "case studies."

The three houses I will be featuring over the next six weeks are very different from one another because people's taste and lifestyles vary so dramatically. It's important that homes



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reflect the people who live there and not the designer, although our influ-

ence is clearly seen in the finished product. I believe it's a nice collaboration, combining the homeowners' preferences with the designer's experience and savvy.

Recently I had the pleasure of doing a dramatic home makeover for a beautiful Granite Bay residence. The

house is a traditional style two-level home with a double staircase in the entry, a stunning new custom kitchen, pool, wood floors, a slate fireplace, a formal dining room and many amenities.

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## HOME

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The family had a lot of furnishings, and I was called in to freshen things up a bit, particularly in the living room, dining room and entry, using the furniture and accessories the family already had. They have an adorable young daughter with strong opinions about her home and all three are active in sports, travel, and school activities.

For my home makeovers I like to start with the living room and kind of weave back into the entry and dining room, going back and forth making sure that the "best things" are distributed throughout the spaces. The living room had a beautiful dark olive-green velvet sofa and matching chair; some fun leopard print pillows; and a few pale yellow floral pillows. The furniture wasn't placed to its full potential, and the coffee table was drab and worn.

The simple act of moving the sofa to face the fireplace created an instant anchor, and removing the cocktail table and replacing it with a dark brown trunk I found stuck in storage updated the look and brought the overall quality of the room up several notches.

I went through the house numerous times, looking at things in different ways, thinking about how to reuse or repurpose them. I found a lovely, contemporary armless chair in a taupe cotton blend in a guest room.

Since the chair wasn't used often in the guest room it seemed a safe bet that my client wouldn't mind me moving it to the living room where it *would* be used. It worked beautifully. The chair filled a corner of the living room that really needed attention, also providing more seating for family and visitors alike.

When not placed in a corner, the fireplace creates a major focal point. This one has beautiful stonework and a large-scale, white wood mantel. The artwork that hung above the fireplace didn't really suit the room or create a strong statement like it could have. Moving a colorful painted landscape above the mantel and accenting it with subtle accessories like potted orchids, a small handmade wooden box, and several white candles gave it a classic, tasteful look.

I also hung a large mirror on the adjacent wall, above the green velvet chair beautifully, reflecting the landscaped backyard and built-in pool.

A few more passes through the guest rooms and dining room produced a mahogany end table which coordinated with the new "trunk" cocktail table and mirror; a mahogany étagère; two lamps; and some artwork. As well, we were able to use a handmade "tree of life" wall sculpture which worked perfectly over the piano. Since the tree of life was an heirloom made by a great aunt, the wife was pleased.

Framed black-and-white images of landscapes flank the mirror over the green velvet armchair. Some nice etchings hang above the flat screen television next to the fireplace, adding a subtle accent. Anything too loud there would have thrown off the artwork over the fireplace.



Courtesy photos / Union Democrat

An old chest replaced a worn coffee table, and a "tree of life" sculpture made by the homeowners great aunt was moved to a place of prominence.

On the trunk in front of the sofa I placed a stack of hardbound design books, a round tray, and on that a clear glass hurricane and candle.

The overall effect of the makeover was sophisticated, classic, and tasteful as well as perfectly functional for an 8-year-old child, even though she didn't approve of my trunk-cum-cocktail table idea.

The dining room was a challenge because I was running out of spare accessories. I made recommendations for future purchases: a new sideboard to replace the not so ideal existing one, a new mirror and artwork for the walls, and most importantly new upholstered his-and-hers slipper end chairs and coordinating window coverings. Those are now in the works. In the meantime, I hung family portraits on the walls in an interesting pattern. This created a nice focal point to carry the family through until new items can be sourced and purchased.

On the existing sideboard I placed some candlestick lamps from the master bedroom, a basket, hard-bound coffee table books and a few knick-knacks.

The entry turned out to have a strong design statement. Previously empty, I moved in a small black dresser, a stylish table lamp, a very large artwork, and several framed family images. At the top of the double staircase, as you walk in, there is our *pièce de résistance*: a large-scale mirror reflecting the beau-



Artwork, fresh flowers and family images help create a strong design statement in an entry.

tiful entry chandelier. The entry has never felt so welcoming.

The project took six hours. Since I was beginning to fade, my sweet client gave me a wonderful snack of almond butter, cashews, slices of apples, and a few cheeses. She was ecstatic to see her home with a completely new look.

The next day I received an enthusiastic email stating that the makeover was a big hit with hubby and daughter, too.