

Ugly duckling no more

Bright new look on a budget: Home stager Sveta Melchuk transformed a small condo with repeated visits to IKEA and some other inexpensive but delightful finds

BY DONNA NEBENZAHL, FREELANCE JANUARY 16, 2010

Clutter, outdated furniture and lack of good lighting should ring alarm bells for anyone who wants a home that is both stylish and functional.

But while the first step might be paring down until you've got a few good pieces in every room, what makes one place sizzle while another looks just ordinary?

That's where resourcefulness and sense of style come into play, embodied in the expertise of Sveta Melchuk, a home stager whose work has transformed ordinary rooms into alluring havens, simple homes into saleable commodities.

Melchuk set to work recently on a one-bedroom condo in N.D.G., home to a busy university student who did little more than plunk down a couch and a few tables, all backdrops for laundry and books. The walls were painted contractor white and, given the small space, nothing had been done to delineate the rooms and their functions.

In the living/dining/kitchen area, the problem was clutter, she says. "It had old furniture and no effort was made with the decoration. It's a multi-usage space, so you have to be creative in order to give a sense of spaciousness and warmth."

She started with the colour, repainting all the rooms a neutral beige, Benjamin Moore's Feather Down (OC-6), with white trim around doors and windows. "It's a small space, so the colours flow from one room to the other," she said. "This way I can play with the accessories."

Because the light was strong in the condo, even though it is a semi-basement, she was able to make use of available overheads and add just a few fixtures. Against the neutral backdrop, she chose to use chocolate tones, brightened with lime green for visual punch. "I wanted to give it an organic, ecological look," she said.

She purchased a nearly new IKEA couch for \$200 in chocolate brown and added full-length curtains with tones of green and brown in a modern leafy pattern. "Even though it's a semi-basement, it makes the windows look bigger if you put curtains all the way to the floor," she said.

A beige area rug and dark brown coffee table complete the seating area, while the wall over the TV carries on the green theme with a series of leaf close-ups that she bought for \$10 each at Reno-Depot. "Everything is nature and neutral," she said.

She placed a mirror over the small dining table (\$150 with four chairs from IKEA) to reflect the light from the windows and open up the space. "When using mirrors, you must be careful of what they reflect," said Melchuk, who likes to make use of mirrors wherever possible.

The bathroom, a humdrum space in its original plastic-curtained state, is now livened with the texture of fabric curtains and studded curtain rings (\$10 at Walmart). The framed shells and stone-strewn tray of candles around the toilet are the only touches needed to bring the nature theme into the room.

In the small bedroom, black and white are added to the mix, and the single bed has been transformed with a stylized duvet cover (\$20 at IKEA) throw pillows and a cozy white blanket. "I matched everything with the quilt," Melchuk said. "It's always a good idea to pick a colour scheme that you like - you can start with fabric, cushion, carpet or bedding - and match everything else."

The final touch in the room, on the wall over the bed, are a series of small black and wood mirrors (IKEA, \$4 each), gauzy full-length curtains in black and a couple of standing lamps. "The room looks clean and modern," Melchuk said.

She has discovered when owners come to her company, Home Staging Montreal, that they usually don't have enough lighting, art or bedding.

As for colour, staging a home for resale demands neutral tones in order to please as many potential buyers as possible, while pale colours make rooms seem bigger. "I use light yellow, cream, off-white or grey," she said.

When redecorating, however, personal tastes play a big part, so if someone has a dark red dining room, for instance, Melchuk will keep the colour as long as the room is big. "But not in a bedroom," she said. "Red is too aggressive a colour."

And sometimes, it's the little things that matter most. "Don't forget the throws, artwork and candles," she said. "They make all the difference."

She placed a mirror over the small dining table (\$150 with four chairs from IKEA) to reflect the light from the windows and open up the space. "When using mirrors, you must be careful of what they reflect," said Melchuk, who likes to make use of mirrors wherever possible.

The bathroom, a humdrum space in its original plastic-curtained state, is now livened with the texture of fabric curtains and studded curtain rings (\$10 at Walmart). The framed shells and stone-strewn tray of candles around the toilet are the only touches needed to bring the nature theme into the room.

In the small bedroom, black and white are added to the mix, and the single bed has been transformed with a stylized duvet cover (\$20 at IKEA) throw pillows and a cozy white blanket. "I matched everything with the quilt," Melchuk said. "It's always a good idea to pick a colour scheme that you like - you can start with fabric, cushion, carpet or bedding - and match everything else."

The final touch in the room, on the wall over the bed, are a series of small black and wood mirrors (IKEA, \$4 each), gauzy, full-length curtains in black and a couple of standing lamps. "The room looks clean and modern," Melchuk said.

She's discovered when owners come to her company, Home Staging Montreal, they usually don't have enough lighting, art or bedding.

As for colour, staging a home for resale demands neutral tones in order to please as many potential buyers as possible, while pale colours make rooms seem bigger. "I use light yellow, cream, off-white or grey," she said.

When redecorating, however, personal tastes play a big part, so if someone has a dark red dining room, for instance, Melchuk will keep the colour as long as the room is big.

"But not in a bedroom," she said. "Red is too aggressive a colour."

And sometimes little things matter most. "Don't forget throws, artwork and candles," she said. "They make all the difference."

© Copyright (c) The Montreal Gazette

[Previous](#)
[Next](#)



A new duvet cover cost only \$20. Throw pillows, lamps, mirrors and a cozy white blanket completed the transformation.

Photograph by: MARIE-FRANCE COALLIER, THE GAZETTE, Freelance