

DIY ARTWORK!

When a shipping snafu left Deidre with a handful of the wrong hardware, she decided to repurpose them into wall art. She mounted the lion-head doorknockers onto doors she removed from a vintage credenza. She spruced up each panel with molding and a coat of high-lacquered white paint. "I can use them again one day if I want to make my own credenza," she says.

In her home-office, Deidre combined a variety of unexpected elements, such as a cowhide rug, a Victorian settee reupholstered in a modern fabric and a mix of vintage furniture she made cohesive with white paint. The result is a fun, modern Bohemian feel.



WHEN SETTling INTO HER CHARLESTON, South Carolina, townhome, interior designer Deidre Alexander, founder of Leaf Design Studio, didn't let the bare walls and dated finishes of her rental digs prevent her from turning it into the stylish home/office living space she envisioned. Instead, she saw it as an opportunity to express her personal style. With a quirky barrel door to greet guests upon entering the separate home-office, it was the perfect place to call home, although it had its design challenges.

"I've had to work with what's existing," Deidre says. "On the bottom floor, it's all white tile, which is not very aesthetically pleasing, so creating a flow but delineating the spaces has been a challenge. I was able to do that through placing rugs

► "I don't get a lot of light in here, so adding bright things really helps the mood. **Waking up to cheerful colors is key.**"

and furniture in the living room, dining room and kitchen."

Luckily, the homeowner allowed her to repaint the walls. Some are white, while others were painted a soft-gray hue, creating a blank canvas for the fresh colors and patterns in her accessories to pop against.

"My whole philosophy is: A happy home is a happy life," Deidre says. She achieved it through her peppy combination of colors, accessories, rugs and artwork, but keeping the background neutral.

Here, Deidre shares her tips for bringing lively colors and prints into your personal space—no permanent changes necessary.





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A large white sofa dominates the living room. Chic details such as tufting, keep things interesting, while a bold graphic rug and pops of color and pattern in the pillows keep the look exciting but not overwhelming.



DECORATING A SMALL SPACE?

Scale down your furniture to fit in simple arrangements, like this shorter version of a hallway table paired with a stool instead of a bench. Scaled down, this arrangement still functions as an entryway landing area.



DELINEATE SPACES

Knocking down walls and reorganizing the layout wasn't a possibility. What was doable? Arranging the furniture so that each living space is separate and makes sense.

"Create a good flow from room to room," Deidre advises. "Think of your visible traffic patterns and how you would walk around the room if you didn't have the furniture in the way." Keeping the larger furniture pieces against the wall is one way to do it. For example, Deidre set her credenza against a wall leading into her breakfast room, which marks the transition from the living room to the breakfast room. It's also a great spot to set her purse or mail. "The layout needs to accommodate the traffic flow but utilize the space in the best way possible."

FRESH COLORS

Bright accent colors continue a fun and fresh vibe throughout the home. Deidre says you should have one jolt of color in each room to create rhythm. "White walls are great because you can accentuate them with artwork," she says. "Keep the color minimal and on smaller things." Juxtaposing a striking color to a neutral one helps create balance. Case in point: Deidre's yellow wing-back chair—one of her favorite things—balances well against a neutral sofa. "As long as your eye is not jumping around, you're keeping a good flow," she says.

A flash of red, a burst of yellow, a splash of orange—accent colors pop up everywhere, drawing the eye toward Deidre's art, accessories and even the vibrant fabric patterns on the wooden DIY bulletin board in her office.

"I don't get a lot of light in here, so adding bright things really helps the mood," Deidre says, "Waking up to cheerful colors is key."



Opposite: In her breakfast room, Deidre repainted the hand-me-down ladderback chairs bright yellow. She repurposed antique cabinetry as a dining hutch by ripping off the ugly old molding from what was once kitchen cabinets, using paint thinner on the yellow-painted window panes and adding new legs. She then painted it all over with brown on the exterior and red-orange on the interior.

Left: The existing red cabinets in Deidre's kitchen were serendipitous and work well with her bright color palette.

Above: This deer head was repainted and given new hardware to fit in with the overall décor for a unique touch.



PERSONAL PIZZAZZ

Deidre put a unique spin on her interior by mixing and matching colors, patterns and time periods for an eclectic look. "My home is definitely more shabby-cottage, with antiques repainted and mixed in with some more modern pieces," she says.

She also rolled up her sleeves and tackled various DIY projects to add a personal, unique touch to each space. An antique sofa is upholstered with a coral Kelly Wearstler fabric to make it modern and blend in with other Ikea furnishings. In her breakfast room, a white mod-style dining table contrasts yellow-painted ladderback chairs and an antique cabinet she repainted in brown with a red-orange interior. "I would say it's a good mix of new and old," Deidre says.

A self-proclaimed impulse shopper, Deidre fills her home with many antiques and thrift-store finds from shops in Charleston and is always scoring great pieces that enhance her eclectic style. One of her favorite finds is a painting of a Mexican mariachi band in its original frame by artist Estacien "Etta" J. Benjamin, aka E. Cien.

"All of my pieces have been major surprises, later finding out that they're worth something," Deidre says. "If it speaks to you and there's a place for it in your home, grab it." 📌

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Deidre kept her workstation in monochromatic whites to help it blend into the rest of the space and keep the vibe calm, cool and collected. A simple white Ikea desk chair is kicked up a notch by adding a sheepskin rug, which also softens up the space.

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Easy ideas for DIY décor

DIY decor instantly adds spunk and personality to your interior. Follow Deidre's tips below on what kinds of pieces to look for and how to revamp them with ease.

LOOK FOR GOOD BONES

Antiques and vintage furniture have lines and shapes you just can't find in modern pieces. Even if the paint is chipped or hideous, if it's got good bones, it's got potential. Just sand it down, paint it, reupholster it, add new legs or change the hardware to make it new.

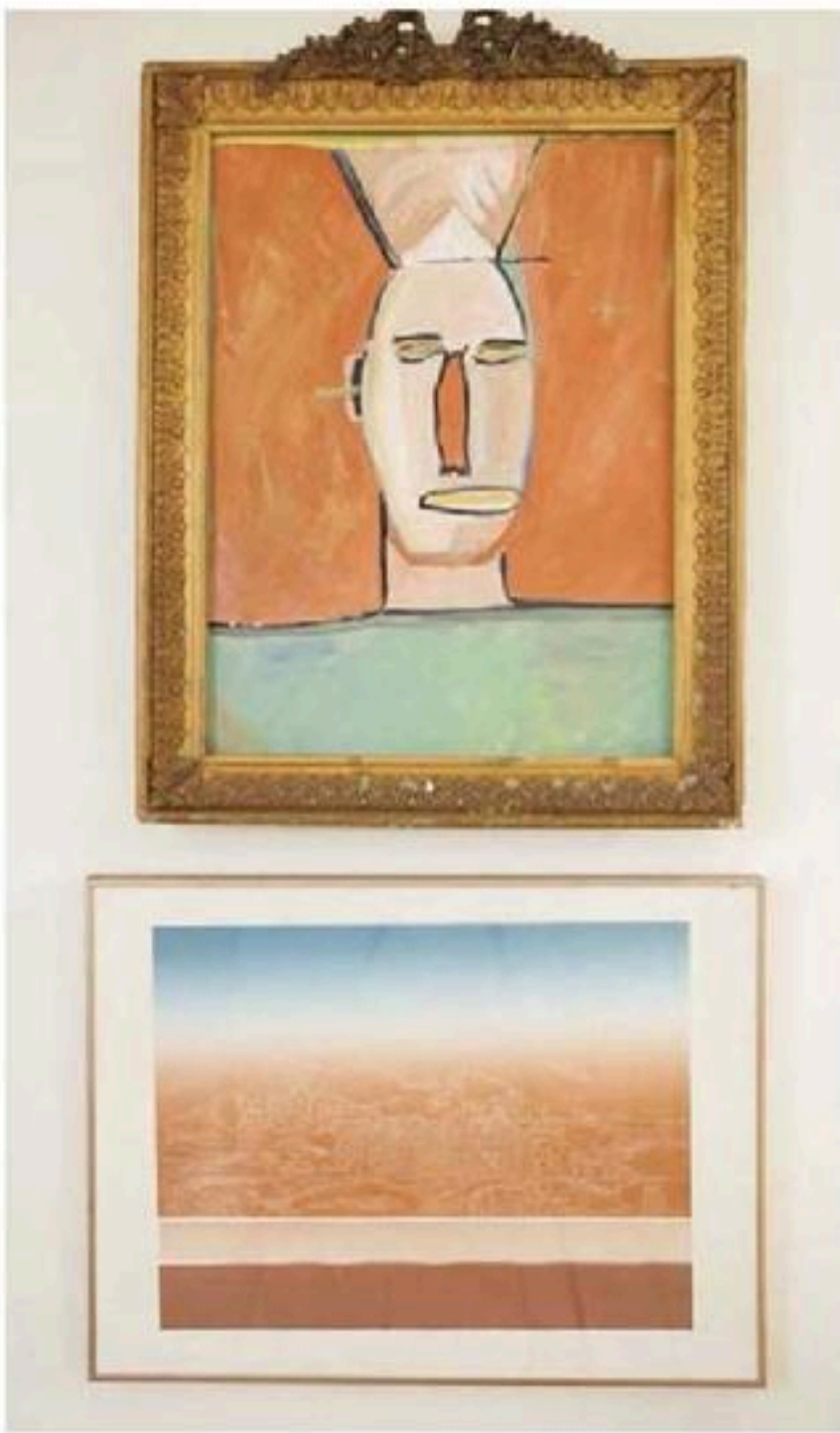
LOOK FOR THRIFT-SHOP ARTWORK

Great-looking works of art can be found in the most obscure places, including your neighborhood thrift store. Keep an eye out for eye-catching pieces, and switch out the frames and matting for a new look.

LOOK FOR UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

Leftover bits and pieces from remodeling or other pieces of furniture can be refashioned into whatever you want them to be. Something as simple as a doorknocker and doors with molding can become an art installation if you use your imagination and some elbow grease.





COLOR coach:

For a cohesive feel throughout your whole home, pick a color family and try to use it in every space. Deidre's citrus palette appears all through her home starting with the vibrant lemon yellow front door to the soothing peach and subtle coral in the bedroom and office. Vary the tones to suit the energy and function of each space.





With a bright-yellow front door,
guests get a hint of the fun color
palette they're going to see inside.



Deidre's simple bedroom is decorated with the same vibrant colors as the rest of the house. The addition of gray for the walls helps add a soothing layer, proving you can have a quiet sanctuary that fits any style.