



Maria Barcelona Interiors



Modern Market

Décor Fresh for Spring

Create impact this season with accessories, smart edits, layers and light

By Kelcy Wilburn

With its tropical climate, New Orleans marks springtime with a growth of greenery and pops of color not only from its vibrant homes but also from flowerbeds, gardens and budding trees. As the great outdoors transforms with a burst of perennials and newly planted annuals, many homeowners want to mirror Earth's yearly makeover within the home. There are a variety of ways to freshen décor, and whether you're looking to make a big impact or a subtle one, a well-executed change takes planning and

forethought. This season, we've checked in with local design experts and craftsmen on how to make design adjustments that will bring long-term enjoyment.

With over 20 years experience in interior design, Maria Barcelona of Maria Barcelona Interiors recommends a couple different approaches. For a big change, hire a designer immediately, she says, as it will save you from making costly mistakes. For a subtle change, she and other designers often recommend swapping out pillows or replacing a rug or bedding.

“We also like to move accessories around,” says Barcelona.

“Clients get used to certain accessories being in certain places and it’s hard to picture them somewhere else. Clients will often hire us to come in for the day and do a room re-do, where we move current pieces around and then purchase new items to freshen up the space.”

Susan Currie of Susan Currie Design likes to make a big impact by focusing on the public areas of the home, which include the kitchen and living room. If a kitchen refresh is too big a project, adjoining living areas are approachable even for the

do-it-yourselfer.

“When thinking about how to refresh these areas, begin by setting priorities for the project,” says Currie. “Take an inventory of your furniture and determine what pieces you want to keep and which you will replace. Where a sofa may get new throw pillows, a tired coffee table could be ripe for painting and adding a pop of color that ties in with the pillows. With a list of priorities in mind, you can create a budget and timeline and avoid a common mistake: biting off more than you can chew.

“Small projects easily become big projects, so take it one step at a

time and prioritize,” says Currie.

Penny Francis, principal designer and owner of Eclectic Home, also emphasizes budgeting and doing your homework. You can do a lot with a little, according to Francis.

“I recently restyled a book case for a client, and it totally transformed the space,” says Francis. “Editing spaces does not cost money — just your time — and the end result can be amazing.”

Another inexpensive way to freshen up a room is to play with its lighting.

“Layered light creates mood and ambiance,” says Francis. “Lamps, candlelight, wall sconces and ceiling fixtures can

all create different moods, so explore layering your lighting.”

When it comes to fixtures, Francis is used to seeing customers fret over whether to do brass or stainless and chrome finishes. Fret no more, she says, as mixed metals in décor is a rising trend, as is retro lighting and midcentury furnishings.

Experts at Magazine Street’s Modern Market like to look at freshening up the rooms in which you spend the most time, often the living room and bedroom, where we seek solace and comfort. Fresh fabrics can make a big difference in the look of the room, and reupholstering is a great way

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The French Mix by Jennifer DiCerbo Interiors



Greige Home

to work with pieces you already own that could use an update. Picking new textiles can open up endless possibilities for color and give a person a chance to explore their curiosities. If however, you're ready to toss that old chair in favor of something new, the Modern Market crew is enthusiastic about their current offering of limited lounge pieces — modern sofas and chairs — they call “fresh, approachable and attainable.”

There are a lot of places across Greater New Orleans to find new furnishings, and one hot spot on the North Shore is the The French Mix by Jennifer DiCerbo Interiors. With a 4,000-squarefoot store and showroom, The French Mix offers full-service interior design, hand-knotted rugs, custom furnishings, custom draperies, original artwork and more.

DiCerbo warns against buying a new item without having a space in mind for it, a mistake that can lead to uncomfortable spaces with mismatched proportions. She recommends working with a designer to ensure the scale will work for the space.

So what's a good initial piece to purchase when freshening a space?

“I always say to start with the rug — it covers the most square footage and has the most visual impact,” says DiCerbo. “The rug can transform a room and make it amazing.”

Rugs are also a go-to statement piece for Beth Assaf, Owner of Rug Chic. Also located on the North Shore, Rug Chic offers a vast selection of hand-knotted rugs either personally designed or selected by Assaf in addition to accessories and furniture. Assaf notes that Rug Chic rugs and furniture are all customizable, and she's excited to see more people incorporating bright splashes of color and getting away from such subdued tones. A common mistake for rug shoppers, though, can be misjudging the color or the size of the rugs they need.

“To prevent that, we offer free in-home consultations,” says Assaf. “We bring as many rugs as a client needs to their home so that they can actually see what it looks like in their space for a few days.”

On custom jobs, they create color samples so clients can see exactly how the colors will look.

If you're not sure where exactly you want to start, or what kind of look you want to achieve, you can

always find tons of ideas online and in magazines. Terri McCormack and Jennifer Uddo, Co-owners of Haven Custom Furnishings suggest starting with design websites and apps such as Houzz and Pinterest. You can easily save the room images of designs that appeal to your aesthetic and then go back and review your compilation for specific colors and textures. Of course, translating the look to your own home is easier said than done, and, like our other experts, they recommend hiring a professional to guide you.

While searching online is one thing, buying online is another. There are a

number of benefits to shopping locally, and two of the biggest are knowing firsthand a product's quality and size.

"Of course you should buy what you can afford, but not buying quality upholstery or significant pieces can cost more in the long run," says McCormack. "Buy once and buy right. Your chairs and sofa will probably be around longer than your car."

The staff at Greige Home also like to use magazines and apps to identify desired color schemes and ways to freshen them up.

"When working with neutral walls and furniture, this is easy to

do," says Kirsten Agnelly, designer. "Do you prefer warm or cool colors? Are you wanting an analogous color scheme or a complementary one? Remove the old décor and add the new pops of color with the help of colorful throws, pillows and other accessories for bookshelves and tables."

Agnelly and Manager Ryan Jordan also stress flexibility throughout the project. Achieving your desired look may require further editing or additions. They recommend keeping an open mind and talking with your friends and family whose design style you admire to further expand your ideas.

The rising reintroduction of color into design schemes pleases Alex Geriner, founder and CEO of Doorman Designs. As a designer and builder of home furnishings, Geriner loves cultivating a look that is colorful, eccentric and artsy in his own home. At Doorman Designs, he fashions furniture that can adapt to a number of settings and that tells a story through its materials, which are largely locally sourced and consist of reclaimed wood, architectural salvage, metals and glass.

A trick that Geriner loves when freshening up décor is simply to rearrange. Aside from rearranging rugs and

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bookcases, another trick is to change out your art — move a painting from your bedroom to the living room or make a previously under-emphasized work the new centerpiece of a room. Even if your furniture stays in place, the introduction of different art can significantly alter the feel.

When adding or replacing furnishings, it's important to note your inclinations. Do you prefer something rustic or something polished? A new piece handmade in New Orleans or an antique crafted centuries ago in Europe?

“Most people think

antiques fit into just one niche or style but that is categorically untrue,” says Laura Roland, co-owner of Fireside Antiques. “We have such vastly differing styles within the antique realm, from primitive to empire. If you're looking to make a big change, Roland suggests donating or selling anything you don't love and starting with your treasured pieces.

Some of Roland's favorites include the armoire, essential for housing unsightly technologies or serving as extra cabinetry, as well as the enfilade or commode, which “can serve as a gorgeous anchor for your artwork or lighting.”

“I think a beautiful desk or secretary is required for the modern home and you don't have to banish them to the study either,” she says.

One thing we haven't discussed freshening up is window treatments and the incorporation of natural light into a room. At Wren's Tontine Shade & Design, owner Blythe Wren offers a wealth of knowledge and materials for updating drapery or shades. For a different look, Wren recommends adding solid-color, linen-blend drapery panels, which can dress up a room without the limitations of a pattern. For a smaller room,

she recommends shades in place of drapery, and shade varieties are abundant — from roller to Roman to woven wood or grass. If your décor re-fresh calls for a touch of luxury and modernization, Wren offers a number of high-tech solutions for adjusting or controlling shades from anywhere via your mobile device or at home via an Amazon Echo.

With advice from our design experts, it should be easy to justify a little spring sprucing — and for the penny pinchers pinning for a few more household goods, we'll just call it spring cleaning with a wink. ■

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