



## «one

### Let Old Meet New

Sure, Grandpa's dark wood dresser looks funeral-home stodgy in a room of Charles Dickens-era furniture. But put something vintage with something au courant, "and it warms up your whole house," says Amy Rutherford, pictured, owner of Red Barn Mercantile (113 S. Columbus St.; 703-838-0355), a new Old Town Alexandria shop that blends weathered pieces, such as an early 20th-century warehouse dolly-cum-table (\$1,250, shown) and presidential portraits (\$25 each), with crisp, contemporary stuff like linen-upholstered sofas (\$5,118). Other ideas: Pair metal Ikea chairs with an old farm table with peeling paint or hang a Pop Arty portrait over a carved Victorian bed. "Just try to keep the lines clean," says Rutherford.

"FIND ONE ANTIQUE PIECE THAT APPEALS TO YOU. IT REALLY WARMS UP A MODERN HOUSE."

—AMY RUTHERFORD  
RED BARN MERCANTILE

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### Get Art Smarts

You got the note about how uncool Picasso posters are if you aren't a junior in college, right? But if putting "real" paintings or prints up sounds expensive or intimidating, take a crash course in affordable art. "It's the icing on the cake, but people are funny about it," says Daren Miller, owner of Adams Morgan decor den And Beige (1781 Florida Ave. NW; 202-234-1557). He recommends decking walls with non-trad pieces like the framed, vintage wallpaper fragments (\$500) or birch bark baskets (\$20-\$25) he hawks at his store. Design blogger Grace Bonney (Designspongeonline.com) champions the ultra-affordable prints (\$20-\$60) of animals and whimsical figures by Etsy.com artists like Matte Stephens and Ashley G. "Buy a series and put them in Ikea frames to make a gallery wall," she says.



### Go For a Collection Correction

"Why do people insist on collecting crap that they don't even have room for?" asks Douglas Burton, co-owner of contempo Penn Quarter home store Apartment Zero (406 7th St. NW; 202-628-4067). He recommends only putting out small groups of well-chosen, well-loved objects, like a flock of glass Oiva Toikka birds (\$245 and up, sold at his shop) perched on a mantel or two or three jade-

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handled Chinese calligraphy brushes (shown, \$28-\$32, Abaca Imports, 1201 N. Royal St.; Alexandria; 703-684-2901) on a table. What should be outlawed? Sports memorabilia that isn't nicely displayed, dolls (unless you're a nine-year-old girl) and grumpy-ish herds of dusty figurines, which smack of desperate Tennessee Williams characters — and will surely scare off gentleman (or lady) callers.



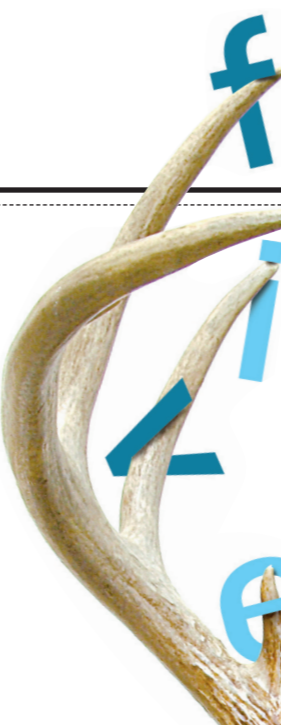
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"A LITTLE SHIMMER IS ALWAYS FUN IN A HOUSE — LIKE A CHANDELIER OR A PAIR OF NICE CANDLES."

—DAREN MILLER  
AND BEIGE

### Add a Little Bit of Luxe

Not to sound like Town and Country mag, but, doesn't your pad deserve something shiny or blingy? A glistening copper bowl (\$65, And Beige, 1781 Florida Ave. NW; 202-234-1557) could elevate a plain-Jane dining table; Victoria Hagen's Palm Beachy vases and mirrors from Target cost very little, but lend a room boutique hotel swank. "A little shimmer is always fun in a house, like a chandelier or a pair of nice candles," says And Beige owner Daren Miller. Think of sparkly bits as jewelry for the home, and only add a few mercury glass balls or one silver dresser to a pad. A hall of mirrors is only appropriate at Versailles — just look at what happened to that early decor diva Marie Antoinette!



### Flee the Woods

The antler chandelier was ironic and hip. But when you added the owl towels and squirrel tray, your Logan loft started to feel like Grizzly Adams' lair. Really, the whole woodland creatures craze needs to be put on the endangered species list. "There's all this stuff coming out of my own borough — Brooklyn — like this, and it's we've ODed," says design blogger Grace Bonney. "Anything related to a deer — heads, antlers, tiny figurines! A little dash here and there is fine." To avoid a hunting-lodge vibe, limit yourself to one or two forest-y elements — one of Roost's wooden stag heads (\$575, Velocityartanddesign.com), a cowhide rug from Prua (Pstreetventures.com). And watch for the next motif trend, then dip in just a wee bit. "I think it's going to be the octopus and the squid," says Bonney.

### Don't Space Out

You know those huge, overstuffed sofas? The only place they really belong is airport waiting areas, and that's as likely to happen as planes taking off on schedule or Dennis Kucinich redecorating the Oval Office. To make your place look great, sometimes it's better to think small. "I hate the chair-and-a-half! They're out of proportion in condos and townhouses. It's just aiding the obesity crisis," says David Dennis, owner of thoroughly modern RCKNDY (1515 U St. NW; 202-332-5639), which stocks streamlined, mid-century-mod sofas by Blu Dot and Gus Modern as well as sleek cocktail tables and other cramped-quarters stars. Really want a big old chair? Snag a loveseat instead, which is more romantic, anyhow.

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—DAVID DENNIS, OWNER OF THOROUGHLY MODERN RCKNDY



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### Toss Pillow Piles

In the indie flick "Lovely and Amazing," one of the characters has to slowly remove a zillion pillows from her bed every time she goes to sleep. And while we love a good sofa or boudoir puff, enough is enough. "Our customers kept asking us for long bolsters, so we had Bev Hisey design us one," says Douglas Burton of Apartment Zero (406 7th St. NW; 202-628-4067). A single throw model like Zero's wool felt number by Hisey (\$220) packs more punch than a dozen fussy numbers from Pier 1, and often provides all the lounge-aid you need. On sofas, it's nice to mix solid and print pillows, but limit yourself to two or three so you can see the couch, please! We like the designs of Michelle Varian (Michelevarian.com) or Thomas Paul (Pillowsandthrows).



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### Rules, Schmools

Rugs are for floors. All the furniture in your dining room should match. The decorating tips our parents lived by no longer hold true, and thinking in such a circa-1981 Better Homes and Gardens way will make your house look frumpy. That means you can put things where they seem not to belong — a CB2 rug on the wall (shown, \$300-\$400; Cb2.com), a tiny table stacked on a huge chest for more storage. And that whole matchy-matchy furniture thing? It's as out of fashion as handbags and shoes cut from one shade of leather. "If you walk into a room and all the wood is the same color, it feels like you're in a furniture showroom," says Bethesda interior designer Diane Gordy. "Mix things up, say with an antique chest or an upholstered headboard. It's more pleasing." Then keep the room unified by repeating colors or shapes.

"IF ALL THE WOOD IS THE SAME COLOR, IT FEELS LIKE A FURNITURE SHOWROOM."

—DIANE GORDY, INTERIOR DESIGNER

# Nest Intentions

**Do more push ups!** Eat less chocolate! Why do New Year's resolutions always focus on bods, not abodes? In this bleak season, promising to make your surroundings brighter, lighter or more organized might be easier and more enjoyable than joining Gold's Gym (again). It's a good time to do away with last year's castoffs and get your pad in shape. "I vow to never to buy another bird piece," says decor blogger Design Sponge, aka Grace Bonney. David Dennis, owner of U Street shop RCKNDY swears he's going to embrace wallpaper. "It's great on just one wall," he says. And us? We'll be nibbling bonbons on a new loveseat, not a chair-and-a-half — that's so 2007. JENNIFER BARGER (EXPRESS)