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LIFE AT HOME

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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2010



Designer Aly Velji refinishes used furniture from Habitat for Humanity's ReStores in his garage.



Above are two pieces that Aly Velji has repainted and restored.

AROUND THE HOUSE

Reclaim your home

TIPS • Your kids are out the door to school, but your home is in shambles from a summer of Popsicle drips and muddy footprints.

Now is a good time to tidy up and get organized before the snow flies. Here are some tips from Sure Fit Slipcovers and Home Solutions (surefit.com).

■ Revamp your furniture: Buying a new couch is not a cost-effective solution. Instead, consider a bright or patterned slipcover for an instant update.

■ Clean your carpets: After a summer of spills, fall is a good time to call in the pros to shampoo your carpets.

■ Designate your space: Kick the toys out of the living room and into the playroom.

■ Add something new: No, not to your wardrobe... to your furniture. A throw blanket or pillows in fall colours will help you get the new season in style.

Fair trade rugs

EVENT • Starting today and running through Sept. 25, Ten Thousand Villages is hosting its Oriental Rug Event. The two-week event features various styles of fair trade rugs on two floors inside the store. Buyers will find everything from small runners to large area rugs measuring 10 feet by 12 feet. Rug experts will be on hand to educate buyers about rug quality and the artisans behind each rug.

Ten Thousand Villages sources its rugs from Buryaad, a fair trade organization that ensures its artisans are paid a fair wage for their work. Ten Thousand Villages is located at 220 Crowchild Tr. N.W.

Try these handy indoor projects

DIY • Autumn often inspires the handy among us to get busy with small redo tasks. Most projects are easy to tackle with the right tools, of course, and the folks at Dremel (dremel.com) have come up with several ideas that use the Dremel Trio and cordless Dremel Multi-Max tools.

1. Create a festive decoration: avoid annual holiday decoration costs by making your own personalized door hanger out of wood. Use the Dremel Trio to cut, sand and rout a design, such as a holiday greeting or winter snowman. Then, use the cordless Dremel Multi-Max for quick and easy surface sanding.

2. Make a wine rack: These make great gifts, especially when they're handmade. Find a wine rack pattern you like at dremel.com.

3. Replace window glazing: this is a simple way to reduce drafts. Use the cordless Dremel Multi-Max oscillating tool to remove the old glazing.

— Compiled by Lisa Kadane, Calgary Herald

RePAINT, RePURPOSE
ReSTORE

Aly Velji's Restore Home exhibit makes 'upcycling' a reality

LISA KADANE
CALGARY HERALD

Even when he's painting used furniture, local interior decorator Aly Velji embodies fashion sense. Dressed in Converse low-tops, distressed jeans splattered with paint and a stylish patterned shirt, Velji makes DIY home projects look easy and chic.

On this recent morning visit, Velji is busy refinishing a buffet and end tables for the Restore Home exhibit, which will be on display starting Sept. 16 at the Calgary Home • Interior Design Show

SPOTLIGHT: The Calgary Home • Interior Design Show runs Sept. 16-19 at the BMO Centre in Stampede Park. For show hours and details, and to buy discounted tickets online, go to calgaryhome show.com.

exclusively from ReStore, Habitat for Humanity's retail outlets. Taking someone else's trash and turning it into a treasure through a bit of sweat equity is a DIY craze called "upcycling."

"It's something that's becoming a really hot trend right now," says Velji at his home in Chinook Park, where a detached garage serves as his refinishing workshop.

"This is such a great tool. It's all about repurposing, whether you find things at a garage sale or at ReStore."

To complete his Restore Home project for the home

show, Velji says he has made 10 to 15 trips to ReStore to look for just the right pieces — ReStore's retail locations (habitatcalgary.ca) receive new donation items daily. He estimates he will have spent between \$3,500 and \$4,000, and about 15 hours of his time, transforming cast-off furniture, art and lamps into stylish like-new statement pieces.

"We're probably the best-kept shopping secret in Calgary," says ReStore operations director Michael O'Reilly.

The stores carry everything from lamps and sofas to tables and chairs. They also regularly receive new items — think complete kitchens — from retailers such as Home Depot.

ReStore is selective about the donation items it accepts, always asking the question: "Is it something that you would put into your home?"

O'Reilly says ReStore prices are "amazing," with new items offered for at least 50 per cent off. One challenge the company faces is overcoming the stigma associated with used items, but O'Reilly notes that stereotypes are fading as more people actively look for ways to reduce their footprint and keep perfectly good home furnishings and accessories out of the landfill. Naming the trend "upcycling" has helped too — it implies taking something old and making it better.

But it all sounds so... crafty.

"It's really easy," Velji insists.

"It's just about wanting to do the work. Anyone can sand and prime and paint a piece."

"Though, the creative genius does concede that reinventing an ugly brass lamp requires imagination and the ability to see things in a different light.

For example, Velji decided a high boy dresser could be painted a vibrant mossy green and outfitted with new hardware, and then be better put to use as a dining room buffet. He also sanded two bedside tables and painted them white — they will be resurrected as end tables on either side of a sofa. Finally, he cut a coffee table in half to turn the narrower wood piece into an entryway bench, and used a bed headboard as the bench's back.

Some people are aghast that Velji paints over wood, but he says wood pieces are often the most salvageable. What's more, painting them makes them look new and provides an opportunity to incorporate a hit of trendy colour, such as the aforementioned mossy green, into a space.

"People have to get out of that mentality of, 'It's solid wood so I can't paint it,'" he says.

Velji doesn't do everything himself, however. He hired a professional to re-upholster two blue wingback chairs in a lovely coral and green floral pattern, thus incorporating yet another trend — pattern — into the Restore Home space.

Home show attendees who stop by the exhibit next week will also see artwork Velji has repurposed by channelling his inner Jackson Pollock.

He purchased some used canvases at ReStore, primed them, and plans to unleash coral and green paint splatters onto them to complete his exhibit space.

Knowing Velji, the art will probably match his stylin', paint-splattered jeans.

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Courtesy, Aly Velji

Above: Aly Velji found these wingback chairs at the ReStores.

Below: He had them re-upholstered in a lovely coral and green floral pattern.



Christina Ryan, Calgary Herald