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One-day makeovers for the home can save you money

By Cindy Shigekuni

A Marin homeowner recently opened the front door to her home. She paused. Not knowing what to expect, she quietly took one look around and quickly breathed a sigh of relief. The house looked amazing. She was thrilled with her "new" home.

While she was out, a team of professional interior arrangers had been at work.

Gone was the clutter. She saw instead open spaces with seating areas grouped comfortably around a reading lamp. Instead of a cluttered obstacle course, open and flowing paths existed to walk easily from one room to the next. The hodgepodge of collectibles had been pared down to highlight the very best and gave each piece visual importance. Colors, textures and pattern all complemented one another in total harmony.

How much time and energy was spent on the one day makeover and what was the cost?

The team sent the homeowner away that morning and spent one full day repositioning the furnishings and accessories.

Except for the fee paid to the interior arrangers, in this instance the grand total to purchase additional pieces was... zero.

The secret is out. Homeowners, both buyers and sellers, are embracing this fast, easy and extremely satisfying method of transforming the home. And it's affordability is making it possible for those who normally would hesitate to make the commitment in hiring an interior designer for a long term project, to take the plunge.

The one day makeover appeals to a wide range of people, the busy professional, families, singles, men and women, renters, first time homeowners and especially to those who have lived in their homes long term and need an objective eye.

If you want a fresh perspective in making such diverse decisions as to what accessories to use, what couch to buy, what colors to paint the walls - to even deciding what house to potentially purchase, who can you call?

Enter the Marin based mother and daughter interior design team at Distinctive Nest. CEO and founder Sarah

Hunt Malone, along with her mother Susan Lahr, are the dynamic duo responsible for making miracles happen.

Malone and Lahr are known for creating feel-good environments that are pure comfort and are easy on the wallet. "Our specialty is creating affordable interiors in just one day," says Malone. "By using what you already have, the homeowner saves both time and money."

Malone is a master at the art of the hunt. Spotting that diamond in the rough among the owner's furnishings and repositioning it, can often make a huge difference. "People think that you have to purchase all new furnishings to create a more welcoming environment - when in fact you can often just play with the existing pieces," she noted.

Let's say you've decided to purchase a home. You have taste but limited resources. Your real estate agent shows you several different homes - some in move-in condition and some that have "potential."

You can hire a pro to walk you through a particular home before you make an offer, highlighting the possibilities that exist and gently pointing out those that may need too much work.

Having a neutral yet trained eye is often exactly what is needed during a real estate transaction.

With her high-energy enthusiasm, Malone is part personal coach, part cheerleader assisting in every step of the moving process.

Including dealing with other peoples clutter.

The results are worth it. Get the energy moving - clearing clutter is good Feng Shui. Ask yourself. Do certain items

currently have a deeply personal connection or meaning? These are the items you may want to keep.

What happens to those items that don't make the grade? The team at Distinctive Nest will edit your possessions, sometimes placing them in a box to be taken out of the room - for safekeeping in storage or for donating to a worthy cause.

Moving is also the best time to consider painting. "A lot of times any color is better than Navaho white," Malone explains. "Although the services in a one day makeover don't include paint - it's just too time consuming - painting is a powerful way to make a difference even if you are staying where you are."

"If you want white - there are at least 30 shades of white and over 4,000 colors out there," Malone says. As a quick tip she suggests painting a four foot by four foot square on different walls then living with it. "Don't expect the paint colors to look exactly the same on every wall. The light will hit each wall differently."

Malone advises her clients on everything including lighting, painting, windows, flooring and furnishings and accessories - "the options are huge," she says.

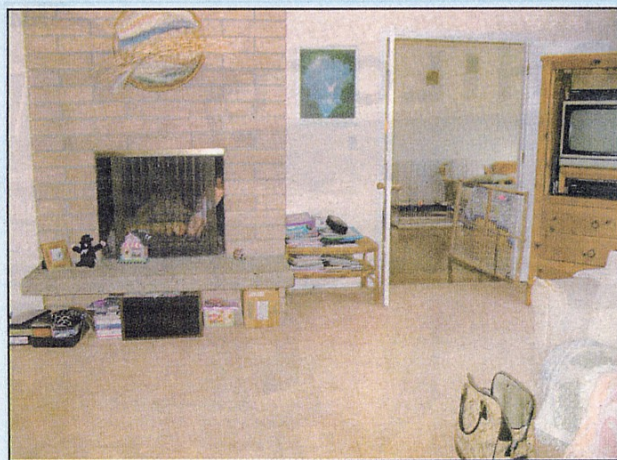
How does the Distinctive Nest team recreate an entire room using only existing elements? "We may pull things from other parts of the house. We say to clients, 'don't go out and buy a bunch of new stuff. If you're moving don't get rid of everything yet - it's going to be different in a different space.'"

Mentoring her numerous repeat clients, Malone remarks, "We often get called to redo a home we've already done when the owner's priorities change. A

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One-day makeover of the house by Sara Hunt Malone, owner & designer of Distinctive Nest. Above left: before the makeover and above right: after the makeover.

client may think that they need a new couch, but what they really need is new drapes or to simply add a few pieces of art or some throw pillows."

Luckily the clients don't have to do any of the work themselves or have to go out and buy any new furnishings.

So surprise yourself with a "new" home in just one day. Believe that it's possible, call in your design professionals ... and relax.

The results can be amazing.

Cindy Shigekuni, a sales associate with McGuire Real estate in Marin specializes in representing buyers and sellers of fine properties. A certified Feng Shui Consultant and owner of Instinctual Feng Shui, she recently

experienced a Distinctive Nest makeover - transforming her office into a sanctuary for the soul. E-mail Cindy at cindyshig@aol.com.