

THE  
*Inspired*  
ROOM



MELISSA  
MICHAELS



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS  
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## The Inspired Room

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CREATE A HOME  
*inspired*  
BY YOUR *life*  
& WHAT YOU *love*  
AND THEN YOUR HOME WILL  
*inspire you*



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# Creating a Retreat

## {Introduction}

Think of your ultimate getaway. You know, that special place you envision as an escape from the cares and stress of the world. Maybe it's a quaint cottage on the coast or a gorgeous mountain lodge where you can slow down, inhale fresh air, and be rejuvenated with an inspired perspective. While it's wonderful to head off on a vacation to recharge, what if you could create that same sense of a retreat every day right where you are?

I believe our home can be a daily destination for relaxation and reenergizing when it's filled with meaningful and intentional beauty. Our home should inspire us to go out into the world to do the great things we dream of and then welcome us back for refreshment, just like we'd want to experience at our favorite getaway.

What we see around us right now may make us question whether it's even possible to turn our home into the oasis we long for, but it is possible. If we start with a sense of purpose and intention for the home we want, we won't end up at a destination that doesn't make sense for our needs. We will end up with a retreat that reflects who we are and what matters most to us.

This book is for you if you ever find yourself dazed or confused, wondering how to move forward with the design of your home when there are so many possibilities, so little time and money...and so much potential for ending up with a random mix of impulsive, regrettable choices.

## START HERE

Make a list of the many things you like, and celebrate the joy of choices and decisions. Along this journey together, you'll discover more starting places to help you move toward a home that inspires you.

## Getting There Is the Fun Part

How do you get there, to that home you picture in your dreams? Is it even possible with the home you have? I've pondered those questions with my readers for more than eight years at The Inspired Room online.

While I dreamed of a beautiful home, I wasn't quite sure how to get there. As you probably do, I have hand-me-downs and objects and pieces I've collected over time. And because I like so many styles and design ideas, when I tried to evolve *my* style I felt as if my home was going in every direction. I was that crazy-eyed, indecisive woman who would flip through magazines, peruse Pinterest, head out to shop, and become overwhelmed by possibilities!

*I like white. I like dark. I like color.*

*I like texture. I like peaceful. I like lively.*

*I like serious. I like fun.*

*I like clean and fresh surfaces. I like contrast.*

*I like a mix of styles and colors all in one room.*

*I like informal. I like cozy. I like modern. I like pretty.*

*I like quality and well-designed pieces.*

*(But, darn, I don't have the budget for high-end furniture.)*

*I like dignified. I like classy. But then again, I like quirky.*

*But I don't like tacky. And sometimes there is a fine line between quirky-fun and tacky.*

*FOR THE LOVE. Why can't I make a decision?*

*Do you have design ADD too?*

While patience has been and will be required, I get great joy from each small change and step along the way. The good news is that I no longer feel quite so *haphazard* about what I need or want to do with this house. I still love many styles, but the decisions are easier to make now, and I savor the process of refining and evolving my home in new ways.

Enjoy the journey. Just as you grow and change, your home should too.



CAPTAIN



## Creating an Authentic Home

Shaping one home over time is an entirely different experience than having a professional design a house from top to bottom with a large budget and a completion date.

As a result of my own experience, this isn't a typical design book filled with professional images of beautiful projects from an interior designer's portfolio. You won't find design ideas that require admittance to a designer showroom. This isn't an interior design manual at all, but rather encouraging inspiration to create a real home you love and love to live in.

Creating an authentic home is the slow process of learning to pay attention to what speaks to you and how your home *feels* to you. It invites you to embrace (and appreciate) the joy found even in the smallest details and improvements along the way.

This isn't about following the rules or style trends that someone who has never been in your home tells you to adhere to. It is about rediscovering the simple ways you can tend to, brighten up, and personalize your home.

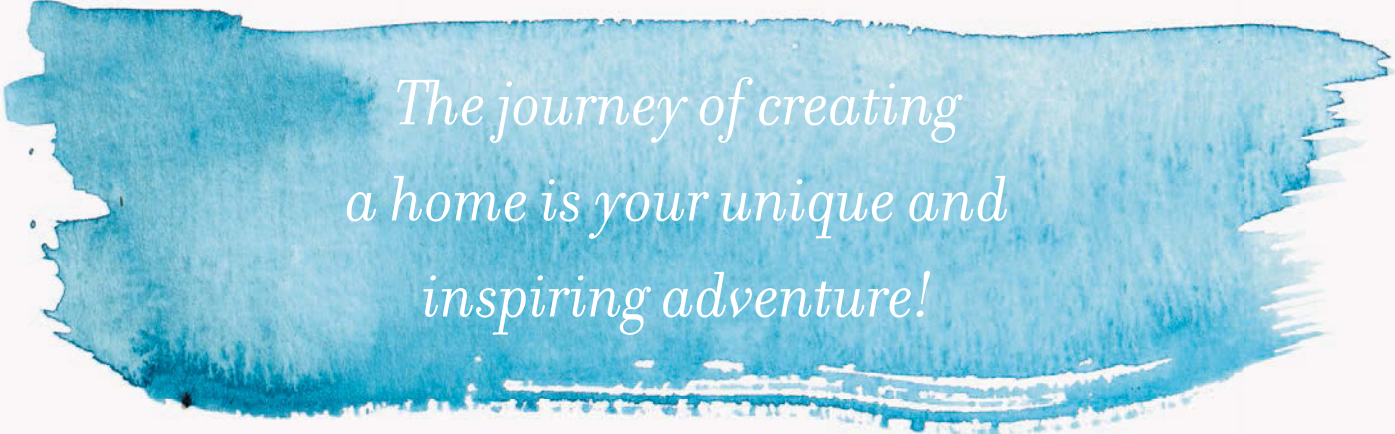


## *Your Home, Your Look*

So how do you pull your own look together, especially if you are working with a home's imperfections and things you have gathered over time? I have a lot of experience with that, so I'll show you how! I'll share the simple tips and style discoveries I've used to create a home I love, one that is authentic to my family and reflects the way we live. To help orient you to our space, I included the upstairs and downstairs floor plans after the table of contents.

While this book will introduce you to my family's home, my goal is to encourage and spark ideas for your home. You may share my style or we may have completely different design preferences, but no matter what kind of home you dream of, I'm happy to share my lessons learned and offer practical ideas to create the home of *your* dreams.

There isn't any pressure here to keep up with the trends or decorate for show. By surrounding yourself with beautiful things you actually use and love, you will experience more joy in everyday activities. You'll spend less money decorating. And as a happy result, you shape an attractive home effortlessly, without trying hard to "decorate."



*The journey of creating  
a home is your unique and  
inspiring adventure!*

## Everyday on Display

Years ago I started using a phrase to describe my simple approach to everyday decorating: *everyday on display* (not to be confused with *everyday in disarray*, heh). To me, this means less-fussy styling, simpler beauty, and a deeper appreciation of the things I use and see every day. We may as well love to use what we have in our home because it makes everyday tasks more enjoyable!

With this philosophy, even simple things we collect, such as books, movie tickets, postcards, and art from travels, and special quotes that mean something to us, can become a part of our style when we intentionally incorporate them into our decor. Our home has evolved over time with a mix of things we've been given, pieces we found at flea markets and secondhand stores, and memories we collected one story at a time. A home that evolves will have a unique character.

## A Worthwhile Journey

I take pleasure in the journey of creating a home I love. You'll see through these pages how I mix and match what we have, how I bring color into my home, how I use lighting to set the mood, and how I gave each room a unique purpose and look.

You'll find images I took of my home so I could invite you into each and every room. Well, to be clear, I took photos of every room but one—my master bathroom. It remains on my to-do list, where it has been for quite some time! Our house has come a long way, but there is still more to do. It's a real home. That is one of the many confessions you'll read throughout this book in my "keeping it real" confessions.

I believe a home isn't a showplace—it's a sanctuary. And the journey of creating that space is worthy and wonderful. I hope that opening my home to you encourages you to look at your own in a fresh way and maybe even nudge you to try something new—or something you've been dreaming about—to create a home you'll love.











# First Impressions

## { The Entryway }

An entryway is the space that extends a warm “welcome home” to your family at the end of a long day away and a sincere “we’re glad you’re here” to the people invited into your sanctuary. The entry provides a glimpse into the life we live within our own four walls. And if, at times, it reveals a bit too much about us, that’s okay too. When we’re authentic, we invite our guests to be themselves. That’s hospitality at its best.

With two wildly exuberant but adorable doodle pups at our house, the chances of me opening the front door to greet a visitor without a commotion are slim. As I invite you in, let me set the scene. For several chaotic minutes, Jack and Lily will invariably fling themselves in the air and tug on your coat (I know, they failed obedience school). Then they will run up and down the stairs to show off their agility.

Once the pups are past the initial excitement of your arrival (by now I’m sweating and my hair is standing on end) and you’re welcomed in, your first

DISCOVER THE  
IMPACT OF SIMPLE  
CHANGES

MAKE THE MOST OF  
YOUR ENTRY, NO  
MATTER THE SIZE

DIY—REPURPOSE A  
JUG INTO A LAMP

impression is likely that we live with a bit of imperfect chaos. Yes. Yes, we do. But we also live life with gusto (and with fur flying), so I hope you'll also notice the happy, casual, and lively home we have here—a home designed to welcome people and pups alike.

Whether you have a defined entryway or your front door opens directly into a living room, this is the welcoming space that starts to tell the story of you and your family. It begins with an authentic impression and an invitation to relax so the whole story can unfold in greater detail, room by room.



## Choose Your Focal Point

### START HERE

Enter your home through your front door right now. Look at the entry with fresh eyes. What does it say to your family and guests as they come in?

- + Does it set the tone and atmosphere you want for your home?
- + What about your space doesn't work well?
- + What is there too much of, what is there too little of?

When you first walk into your home, does a focal point capture your attention? Artwork, mirror, tall plant, or fun piece of furniture? There are great benefits to creating a focal point. Believe me, it's better to have a guest zoom in on one intentional, attractive feature than to become distracted by clutter (ahem) or elements that don't yet reflect your style.

- ◆ Focal points can be moveable pieces. Try a striking table, cabinet, or bench. If you don't have room for furniture, use a bold mirror to grab attention and reflect light around the room or collections of photos in frames for a personal touch. If your entry opens right into another room, make the focal point in the adjoining space as welcoming as possible.
- ◆ Go for bigger objects or wall hangings rather than several little items.
- ◆ Use at least one interesting piece that gets people talking! Look around your house and see what conversation piece you could put in your entry.

When we first moved in to this home, we were eager to put our own stamp of style on the generic builder-style house. There was a no-paint policy during the nine months while we rented, but this gave me time to decide that I wanted to paint our focal point. As soon as we bought the house, we happily painted wide horizontal stripes on our entry wall. This creative focal point made the entryway feel intentional and defined.

What currently catches your eye when you enter your home? If it isn't something you intended to steal the visual show, like a pile of shoes, then decide which piece, paint, plant, etc. could be added.



*Find DIY instructions for painting horizontal stripes in chapter six, "A Functional Space."*



## *Just the Right Piece*

The right piece is worth waiting for. We may think it's best to have everything all at once, but that pressure can make us crazy and cause us to miss out on the beautiful unfolding of our home's look and story.

For quite a while, I didn't bring new additions into my house because I wanted to weed out what didn't suit us so I could wait and watch for pieces that did. When my daughter and I spotted an adorable dresser at a secondhand store, we knew it was *the* piece to set the tone for our entryway and home. It had the cottage vibe and a touch of class with metal hardware and a rounded front. Best of all, I didn't have to paint it because it was already cute. Score.



## *Connect Rooms with Color*

In our entry, we established our style and started a flow of color. The white entry dresser ties in with other pieces in our home—our powder room vanity, our dining room table, a secretary and hutch in my office, and painted rattan chairs in the kitchen. The paint colors of our horizontal stripes, also found elsewhere in our home, set the stage for our home's color palette.

Unifying colors can be presented in easy-to-change extras, such as a bouquet of flowers, seasonal table runners, or a colorful stack of books. Repeating colors throughout your home creates a familiar flow and expands the confines of the entry to welcome people into your home.

*Creating a home we love takes time and intention.  
Those items we patiently look for often  
end up having more significance and purpose.*





# ENTRYWAY DETAILS

1

3

2



## KEEPING IT REAL

Our entry stripes were done incorrectly! The stripes at the top and bottom are not of equal size. Good news: We have perfectly sized stripes in our TV room now and those can be your best “after” example!



1 Add a lamp or candles to give your entry a warm glow at night. Dark entries are depressing and not functional. Find lighting with a great shape and personality to suit your style.

2 Layer objects such as books, baskets, old trunks, crates, or footstools under open tables and benches to give a cozier feel. Corral smaller items in a tray to bring more order.

3 Stack books or use footed plates or pedestals on tabletops to bring more warmth and height to accessories. Lean art or mirrors for a stylish look.



4 Make a creative coat hanger for your wall with just about anything (shutters, an old door, a wooden step ladder, or even a weathered plank of wood) and a few functional, attractive hooks.

5 Place the top of your wainscoting at least one-third of the way up the wall or about 36 inches from the floor. If you will add hooks, shoulder height is a reasonable measure.

6 Warm up the space with textured wallpaper or wood walls, or go super simple and add a cozy patterned or textured rug.





**TIP:** Indoor/outdoor rugs are easy to keep clean, even with dogs. When they get dirty, I wipe them off with a rag or take them outside and hose them down (the rugs, not the dogs).

## *Everyday on Display— Style and Storage to Go*

Storage doesn't have to be in the form of an ugly plastic tote! It can be a fun yellow leather bag or polka-dotted canvas one! Bags hung on hooks can be ever-changing, colorful sources of storage for grab-and-go items. I scour Target sales for bags that suit my style and needs.

Think about your specific, regular needs. I have one bag designated for church every Sunday. During the week, I add to it what I'll need so I won't leave things behind. Routines make life so much easier and cute bags make life so much more enjoyable.



# Embellish!

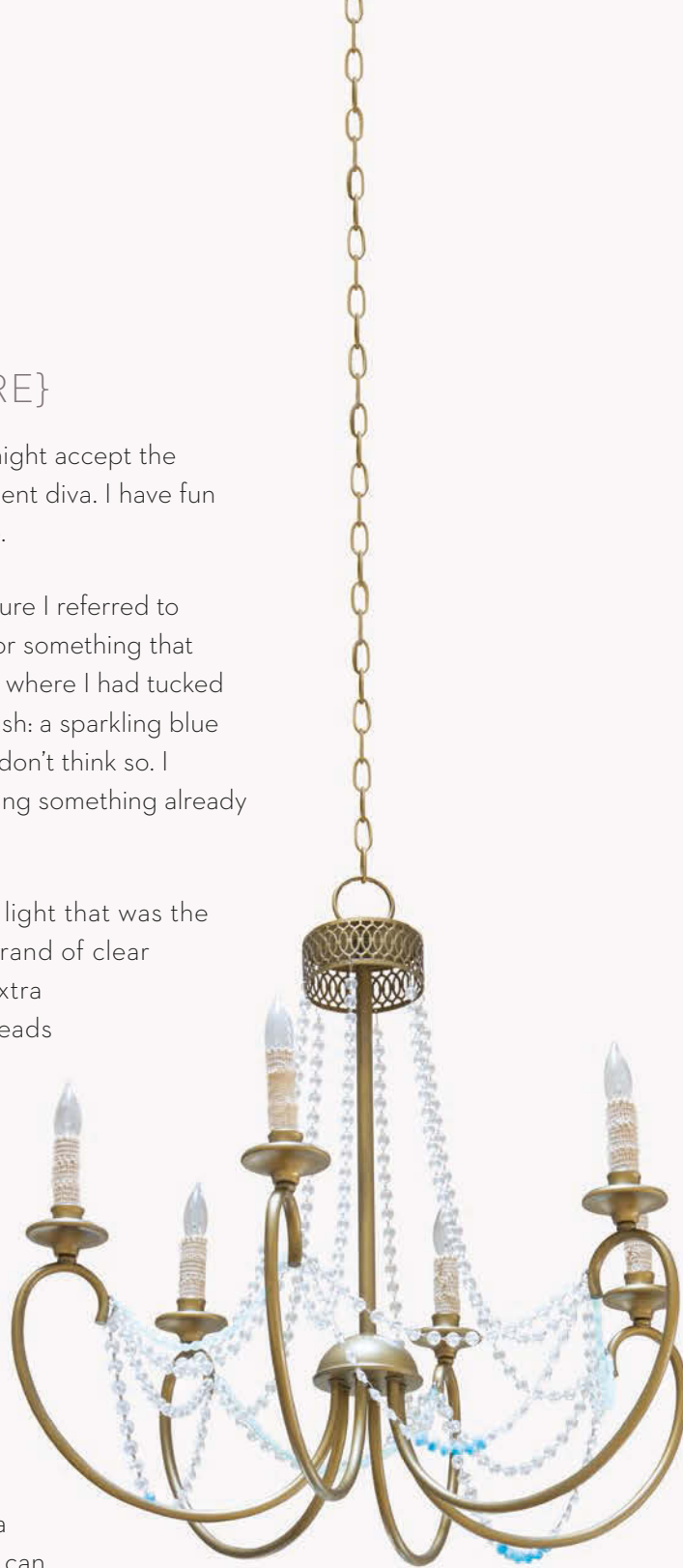
## {OVERHEAD LIGHT FIXTURE}

No one would consider me a DIY diva. But I might accept the imaginary honor of being titled an embellishment diva. I have fun taking an item off the shelf and making it mine.

For a long time we lived with an entry light fixture I referred to as the Flying Goblet light. When I was ready for something that suited us better, I turned to my idea notebook, where I had tucked a magazine photo featuring my light fixture crush: a sparkling blue glass chandelier with a \$2800 price tag. Um, I don't think so. I decided to make my own chandy by embellishing something already created. Here's how:

- 1 At a home improvement store I found a light that was the right size and shape and had a single strand of clear crystal beads. We embellished it with extra strands of inexpensive clear and blue beads strung on fishing line and a strand of sparkly crystals we had from an old chandelier.
- 2 We then covered the white plastic candlesticks with strips of burlap for a rugged, imperfect look. The contrast in the fanciness of a crystal chandelier, the quirkiness of the ocean blue beads, and the homey charm of burlap suits my indecisive style!

We love our one-of-a-kind fixture inspired by a crush and created with embellishments. What can you do to make something reflect your style?





## What Can You Change?

A small area like an entry still has a big impact on the ambience of your home. In the same way, small changes can lead to big results in mood and style. Anytime you think you need a grand renovation, pull back and consider what manageable step may move you forward now.

One simple way to update your entry is to refresh your front door. Our door, which I loved at one point, felt out of place as our color scheme unfolded into softer grays. We had plenty of our kitchen cabinet paint leftover (Benjamin Moore Kendall Charcoal), so we gave it a try! That small change transformed the space.



BEFORE



AFTER



## Organize Your First Impression

An entry can become the dumping ground for every family member's possessions, from stinky gym shoes to piles of stuff you intend to take upstairs someday. Keeping things organized in the 180-degree visual field from the front door makes a big difference in how your space feels.

Even though we have a very small coat closet in our entry, it's the only closet on this floor, and it's filled with my husband's guitars. To help reduce visual clutter, we turned to three essentials for an organized and welcoming entry:

### 1. Hooks

Decorative wall hooks can bring more order to your entry if you have a small coat closet or no closet at all (as in our situation). If you hang hooks in drywall, increase stability by first mounting the hooks on a piece of wood and then use wall anchors to mount the wood to the wall.

### 2. Landing Zones

Create a specific landing zone for the items that most frequently pile up. Once everything has a designated place, it's easier to maintain order. Decide which items cause clutter in your home and make it your mission to give them a home—or give them away!

Paper and mail are common offenders. Establish zones and actions for each category. In my home I put unnecessary flyers, mail, envelopes, or newspapers directly in a recycling bin. Bills go directly to a bill-paying basket. At the end of each week, I empty the baskets and bins so I can start fresh the next week.

### 3. Contained Storage

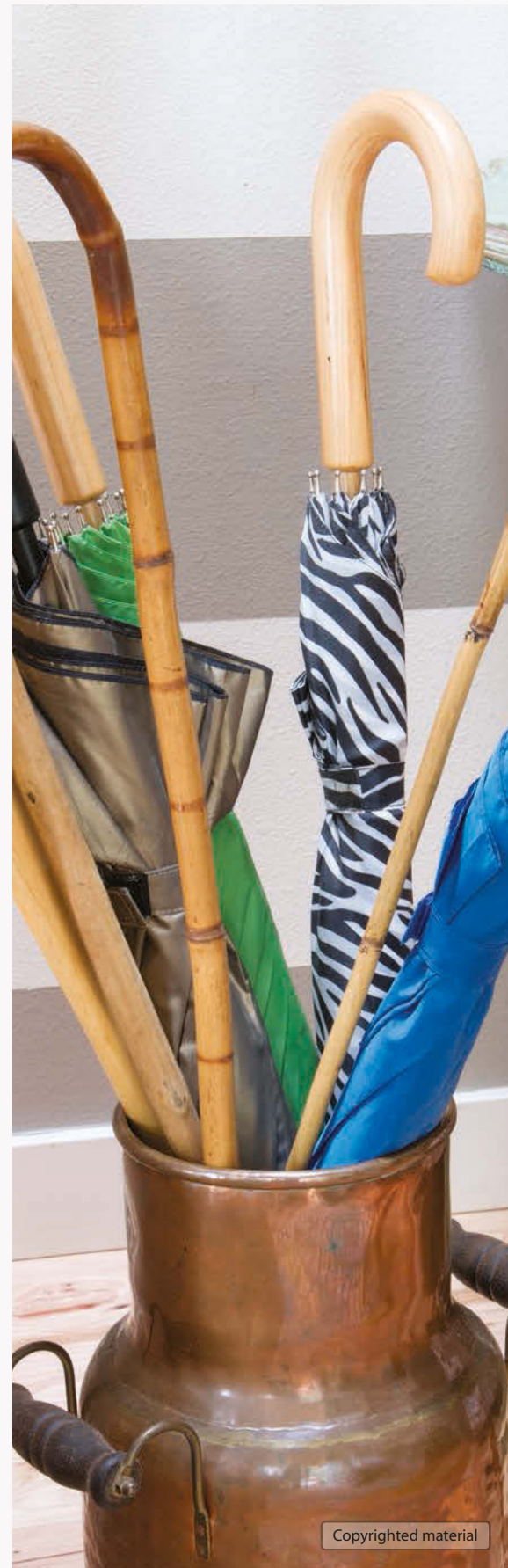
Closed storage restores visual order. My two favorite pieces in my entry are my flea market dresser and my baskets. Both give me a place to stash items we use regularly in the entry and yet keep the room from looking cluttered.



## Maximize a Small Entryway

If your entry is small or nonexistent, there are decorative and functional ways to visually set apart the doorway area:

1. Add a small rug to define the floor space right by the door as your official entry.
2. Establish borders with style to outline the space. Add trim, wainscoting, wallpaper, or a pretty color to the walls surrounding the door.
3. Place small key hooks or coat hooks on the wall nearest the door. Even if they're just a few feet away, you will expand the area of the entry.
4. If you don't have room for an entry table lamp, improvise your light options! Hang a cute lantern or small candle holder with a battery operated candle on the wall nearest the door.
5. A chair or sofa facing the living space and with its back to the entry door can be a visual separator between the areas. Other options include a console table, half wall, or even something small like an umbrella stand between the door and the living space.

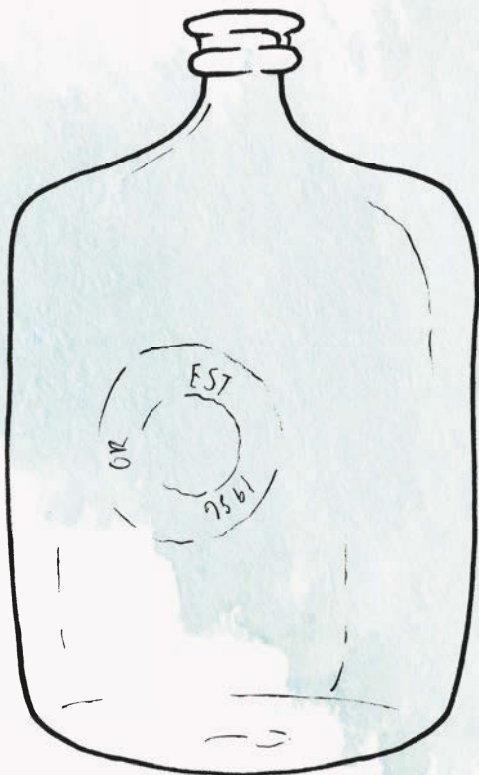




## Take a Creative Risk

Making a bold decor move on a whim can be great fun. I knew I wanted a big glass lamp for the entryway that wouldn't be dwarfed by the stairwell or the high ceilings. Nothing I saw matched the vision in my head or my budget. So when I noticed a big blue glass water jug at a flea market, I knew that with a little bravery on my part, it could become the beautiful lamp I was dreaming of. I brought it home and proudly declared to my husband, "I'm going to make a lamp!" I never thought those words would come from my lips (nor did he). But this lamp was so easy to make that I wondered why I had never tried making one before.

You really can make a lamp from just about anything! That's great news for those of us who love unique fixtures and don't want to spend a fortune.



# DIY: A Water Jug Lamp

- 1 Find a glass water jug (or vessel of choice).
- 2 Buy the lamp socket and cord at a hardware store or reuse one you already have. Lamp kits are available, but I chose individual pieces so I could have a clear cord.
- 3 If your cord is not pre-attached to the socket, attach the wires (consult an electrician if you do not know how to do this).
- 4 Set the socket in the spout of the jug and pull the electrical cord out of the spout. If you want the cord to go inside the glass, you need a special drill bit to cut glass to allow the cord to come out the side near the bottom of the bottle.
- 5 Use a hot glue gun or other adhesive to stabilize the socket in the jug.
- 6 Set a wire ring-style lampshade on the socket.
- 7 Plug your lamp in and pat yourself on the back because you made yourself a cool LAMP!

*I'm not an electrician, so I won't tell you how to attach the wires in case my misinformation causes you permanent injury or death. Who has time for that?*



## *Authenticity Welcomes People In*

While the entry is the perfect space to create a happy first peek into the life you live and the sanctuary you love, the goal isn't to present a perfect image. You will have days when the mess overrides your desire for order. You will have weeks when your plans remain intentions and don't unfold into actions. Or, if you are like me, you will have seasons when keeping up with the pets and with the family becomes your *only* focal point!

It may take a little time and creativity to assess what TLC your entry needs, but it's a space worthy of attention, so enjoy the process! And give yourself grace along the way.

*Your entryway  
becomes an intentional  
space that invites  
your family and guests  
deeper into the  
heart of your home.*





