

ASK THE DESIGNER: Creating Dramatic Spaces

By Jean Bisnaire
Niche Decor

"I have a nice home that's well put together but it lacks that 'WOW' factor that I see when I flip through magazines. How can I add some drama to my space?"

Often when people decorate they get caught up in making sure that everything matches: wall colours match the rug, which matches the sofa, which matches the cushions. In doing this, they create a room that coordinates but that lacks focus. The eye doesn't know where to look first upon entering a room. This can make a space feel underwhelming. Your first step to building a sense of drama is to create that focal point. Perhaps it's a bold mantle on a fireplace, and accent wall, or an oversized piece of art. Here are my top tips for finding that focus and creating a real sense of WOW!

Colour

Don't shy away from colour. Bold colours are unexpected and exciting. We're seeing more and more furniture in different colours, and rooms being painted in navy blues, jewel tones and even black. We just painted a wall in our showroom emerald green and everyone has something to say about it. Bright colours look amazing paired with white and black and other dark neutrals. If you're not ready to completely abandon your neutral palette, add a bold colour in small pops- through fresh flowers, drapery or art.

Lighting

Lighting is one of the simplest ways to create atmosphere in a room, but it is often overlooked. I could write a whole article on this alone! An obvious solution would be to buy a funky light fixture. There are many fixtures that are like art- they're sculptural, use various materials and are true conversation pieces. Oversized lighting also creates a big impact. Beyond the fixture itself, light can be used in a multitude of ways to create drama. Adding strip lighting or rope lighting to the not-so-usual spots in your home helps to add ambience and inspire awe. Last year we designed a custom banquette for a client's dining room. We added a row of rope lighting behind the booth that lit up the wall behind it. The wall was covered with textured wallpaper and the result was breathtaking. Consider adding channel lighting to a staircase, or recessed lighting in a cove ceiling. All of these ideas are simple but unexpected and will leave all of you guests asking, 'why didn't I think of that?'

Scale

Adding one piece that is oversized or, under scale for that matter can create a strong focal point. I once had a client who loved a small (20"x 24") piece of original art she had acquired and wanted to feature it on a 13 foot wall. We added a large mat and a strong frame and by the time we were done with the space, the only thing people were talking about was how cool that tiny painting looked in the grand scheme of things. Last month we were at a consult in a home with a great room that had 22 foot ceilings. The client had a 16 foot tall Cactus plant. It was incredibly dramatic and made for a beautiful feature. Art, lamps, area rugs, plants - all of these are things that can be sized to fade into the background or stand out as a design feature.

Unusual Gems

In addition to the design principles outlined above, you can create a real showstopper of a space by including quirky or unusual elements. Interesting doors are a great example of this. You can either have a custom door designed, or try scouting out antique shops. Swap out French doors with doors from an old church, or put a coloured Moroccan style door on your front hall closet. Alternative forms of art also create impact. Try something sculptural on the wall as opposed to a framed picture, or consider framing items with dimensions like antique locks, or old record covers. I love to use wallpaper to create wow-factor. If you're nervous about papering a large area, try doing the powder room. Opening the door to the room and being hit with a bold graphic print, a dark tone on tone pattern or something with a fun texture like faux leather will give you big time drama without being too in your face as it is limited to one room.

However you decide to add drama to your space, remember that it's important to create a main focal point. You don't want a room to be too busy; it will feel chaotic. Whether you decide to go wildly bold or just want to add a bit of punch to a small area, there is a

way to achieve that powerful energy you are after!