

Slow, methodical approach best for decorating

Whether you're moving into a new house or apartment, or you're simply tired of the same old decor, it may seem desirable to go out and immediately create the interior decor you've admired in countless magazines. However, the best approach is to be slow, methodical and use a formula.

"A deliberate approach doesn't necessarily mean an empty apartment with cold, bare walls," says Catherine Crane, interior design expert and consultant to Deck The Walls, the nation's largest network of custom framing and art stores.

"While decorating one's home can be a fun, creative endeavor, a systematic formula based on creative combinations of smaller pieces and accessories will offer affordable warmth as you save for the larger purchases."

When decorating a first home, invariably you must work around pieces "inherited" from former roommates, family members or well-meaning friends. With the basic pieces in place - a bed, chair, couch and end table - effective decorating should be based on a focal point in each room.

When selecting accessories, consider working with a neutral color scheme accentuated with bright dashes of color. Chintz pillows work nicely against a neutral couch. Inexpensive throw rugs can be purchased and placed under your coffee table to create a unified look.

Whether you have one significant piece or several small arrangements, your art can easily become the focal point of any

room. Take the time to select a print, watercolor, charcoal sketch or pastel which suits your long-term taste, rather than your immediate interior design scheme.

Once you've selected an image, frame it before you display it. When working with a custom framer, describe the ultimate effect you wish to create in the room.

According to Jim Nye, framing specialist for Deck The Walls, the frame and mat treatments should complement the art which, when carefully placed, will enhance the room.

"Too often, people attempt to make the art work for the room, rather than remaining true to the unique qualities of the piece itself. Remember, it was the art you were first drawn to," Nye says.

"Therefore, the art should be enhanced with a darker mat closest to the piece, enveloped by a neutral mat which will expand the art into the frame. The frame should also complement the piece; rich wood frames usually won't work with a dramatic abstract, for example."

Wall decor can also pinch hit for furniture pieces not yet purchased. For example, a group of three framed botanical prints, when hung approximately one foot above a bed, can substitute for an elegant headboard. Spot lighting, strategically placed, creates an overall warmth that will more than compensate for the furniture you may lack.

Updating an outgrown design scheme can be more difficult than starting from scratch. You must

decide what to change and what to keep.

Once again, remember the basic formula for redecorating your home. Carefully examine each piece. Can it be reupholstered? Disguised? Used in a different way, in a different room?

Before investing time and money in new furniture, consider using accessories to explore a new design scheme.

For instance, your home decor has always been traditional and you now feel a yen for Oriental elegance. Realizing that deep lacquered reds, rich golds and glossy blacks typify an Oriental look; set out brocade fabric or used Oriental rugs and re-cover your old throw pillows. Purchase matchstick blinds at an import store, place colored reeds in a ginger jar, perhaps lacquer your outdated coffee table. The key to effectively using accessories is changing the texture and the color, from floor to ceiling.

To continue the Oriental theme, watercolors can be framed in bamboo and hung over the ginger jar arrangements. Even an antique kimono can be framed and displayed over a couch. Dramatic wall pieces such as these will minimize a postmodern couch and loveseat combination, while providing the exotic effect you desire.

Beyond drawing attention from the furniture, your wall decor can also fool the eye as to the structure of the room. Inexpensive mirrors, when framed in a floral, marbleized or rich wood frame, can be clustered in an arrangement to add light to any room. An array of

smaller framed mirrors, arranged over your candle-covered tabletop, added a romantic glow to the room. Or, consider framing one oversized mirror, and placing it adjacent to a window or above the fireplace.

Whether setting up a new apartment or redecorating a twenty room estate, let creative combinations of smaller pieces - floral arrangements, rugs, pillows and wall decor - work together to create one dramatic, well co-ordinated home.

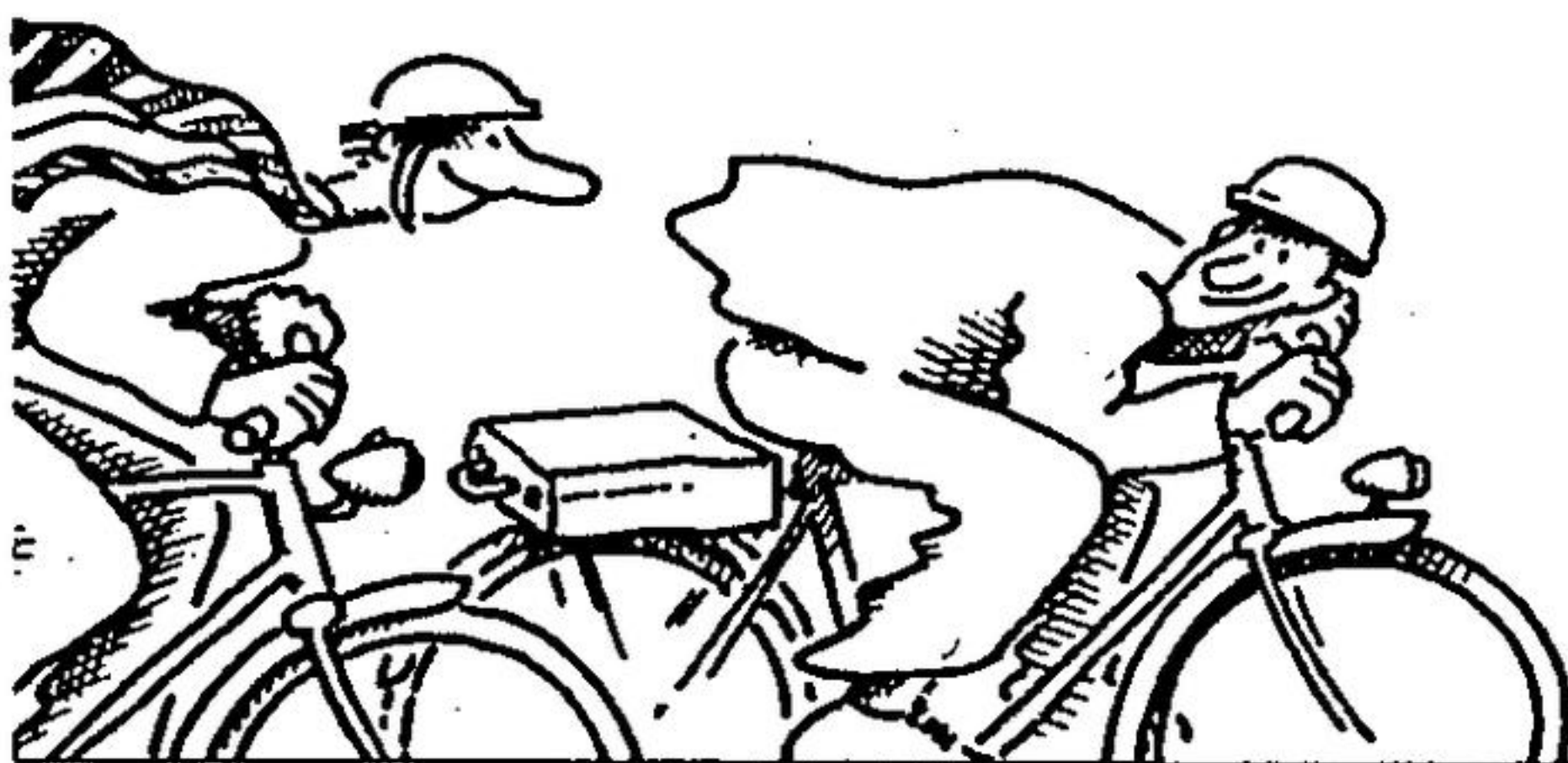
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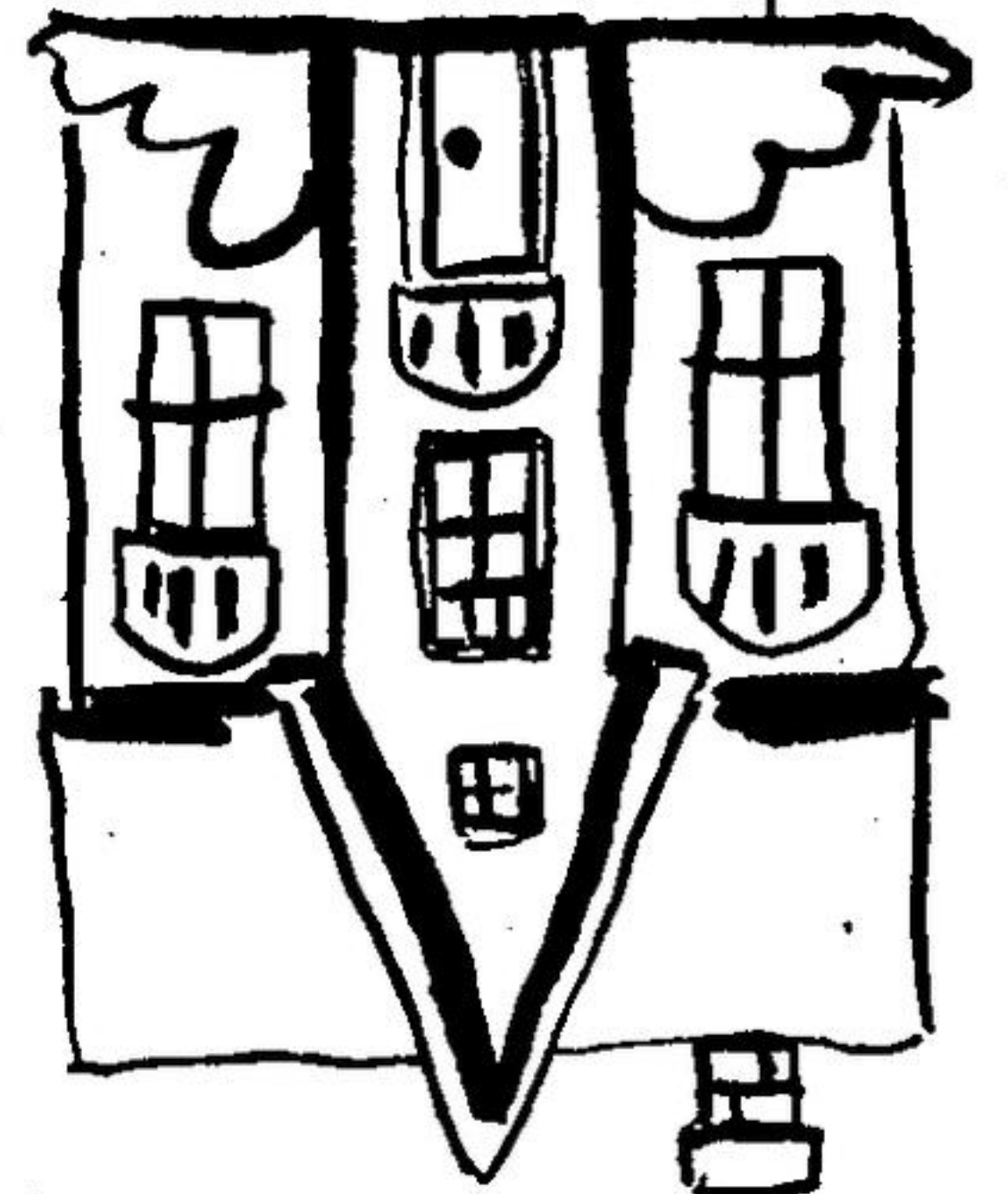
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