

Urban Spaces



When I think burlesque, I see red and black accented with gold and silver metals, luscious velvet drapes with fringe trim, crystal chandeliers with glass beads and glittery diamonds. Tufted Rococo-era furnishings, like settees and loungers, set upon plush area rugs and of course, I just can't forget the feather accessories. Putting together a room that tastefully comprises any or all of these elements can help you add a new, dynamic energy to your space, especially if you're feeling bored and uninspired by your current décor. Add a little spice, with a style that'll make it easy for you to have a little bump n' grind whenever you want. We all know about burlesque as a form of entertainment, but I'm going to show you how you can take inspiration from this sexy genre to add some flare and excitement in your home, regardless if you rent or own.

The style of burlesque that we have become accustomed to dates back to the 1930's and was made famous by the likes of the legendary Gypsy Rose Lee. If you were fortunate enough to see her story re-told recently on the Broadway stage, featuring the incomparable Miss Patti LuPone, you'll remember how the 2nd act was so much more dynamic after they introduced the characters to burlesque. The costumes, feathers, lace and corsets just took over the entire stage and even from the cheap seats there was no denying the titillating effect it had on the audience.

More recently, the style has been enjoying a comeback and is now being dubbed as Neo-Burlesque and features artists like Dita Von Teese, Katy Perry and of course the stars of last year's hit movie, *Burlesque*, Cher and Christina Aguilera. The neo version of the style is slightly edgier,

SHOW ME WOW ME!

by *Manny Machado*

encompassing elements like stripper poles, modern dance and over the top props, such as Miss Von Teese's famous life-size martini glass tub. The stripper pole industry has seen a growth in sales in the last few years thanks to the many enthusiasts who enjoy having their very own pole to grind upon. However, for the rest of us who don't have the space or the desire for such an apparatus, there are many other ways to bring the spirit of burlesque into your home.

The easiest way to make a change in your space is with a little paint. When working with the boldness of burlesque's red, orange, purple, yellow and black, a little goes a long way. When addressing your walls, pick a couple of options from your local paint store and ask for sample sizes in order to swatch the selections on your walls before you commit. This will save you the frustration and hassle of having to repaint if the colour doesn't come out as you saw it in store. A little trade secret my painter has shared with me over the years, is to first prime your walls before you paint; what this means is fill any small holes or imperfections with a poly-fill material and then use a tinted primer that coordinates with your colour choice. If you are using a Benjamin Moore colour, opt for their AURA

line of paint as it has the primer already built into it. The time and money saved is worth the extra charge.

Another factor that can affect your colour output is the amount of light you have in the room. If you have large windows and the room is flooded with natural daylight, then don't be afraid to go bold and dark; however, if you don't have much daylight, try a lighter version of the colour.

Wallpaper is still a very hot trend with some very affordable and stylish options available at local big box hardware stores. Damask, paisley and floral prints are all the rage right now and what makes them modern is the scale of the oversized pattern, in amazing contrasts like black and white or red. Both paint and wallpaper will immediately be the focus in the room, so make sure you are comfortable with the amount of wall space you are committing to. I like to add the element of colour to smaller walls or behind larger pieces of furniture, like sofas, media cabinets or armoires, so the furniture doesn't look like it was placed in the room as an afterthought.

Part of the mystique of the burlesque style is the unique furniture. The loungers, for example, that entice intimacy



the other person in the “window”—nobody said you couldn’t play alone. Set the mood with crystal chandeliers and glass beads; install dimmers on all your light switches whenever possible.

Lastly, don’t forget the feathers! Feather boas, fans and quills come in a multitude of formats, everything from dollar store finds to expensive designer options from high-end retailers. A whimsical but stylish way to play up the look is to get a stylish canister or vase and fill it with loose colourful feathers, or a good quality boa. How you decide to use the feathers is up to you, just remember to have fun with your space.

and hint at sexual escapades, the fantasy of catching a glimpse of somebody doing something naughty behind the big chair. Accent furniture, like stools, ottomans and loungers are not only great additions to a space from a functional aspect, but they also make it easy to inject some fun and perhaps stimulate a little naughty behavior. The Rococera furniture, like chaise lounges and Louis IX high-back chairs can be found in vintage and antique stores. Keep an eye out for pieces that have interesting features like tufting, button details or nail head trims. Furniture retailers also carry reproductions in a variety of price points, with some very modern finishes like colourful lacquer paints and graphic upholstery, such as zebra or leopard prints. The industry trick to creating a “staple piece”—meaning the item in the room holds the whole look together—is to locate something unique with good bones, that can be re-worked to the way you want it. Older furniture is made of solid materials, like woods and metals and can be refinished and buffed to look new again, while upholstery and cushions are easy enough to change.

Making a change in your home tends to inspire more change in other areas of your life, whether it follows the form of burlesque or some other unique theme. I encourage you to own your space and put your stamp on how it looks. Build confidence in your design decisions by starting small, get a sense of what’s right for you then decide how long you want to keep it up. Remember that a completed room means addressing all the usable parts of the space, such as floors, walls, lighting, seating and counter spaces, which then leads to the accents and accessories that will emphasize your desired theme. If you encounter a blockage in creativity ask a friend or family member to give you some feedback. After all, sharing your space with your loved ones goes hand in hand with creating a home.

Draping fabric in an area to either separate a space, or create a room division can be a fun and creative way to add some glam to an otherwise boring room. Taking a cue from the burlesque settings, I would suggest velvets, specifically in red. Be creative! Perhaps you’ll want to enclose an area, such as around your bed or your new chaise lounge. In order to draw the curtains closed, and create a cabana-like tent inside, simply attach a couple of points to the ceiling by way of screw hooks or anchors and drape the fabric from the top, allowing for enough to reach the floor. Use interesting tiebacks like fringe trim, or even pieces of leather to keep the panels open. Silk fabrics are also a nice option for your cabana and will be lighter and perhaps easier to work with, enabling the use of adhesive hooks as opposed to making holes in walls and ceilings. I would suggest the easy-to-use hooks from 3M. To finish off the look, try items like purposefully hung mirrors that reflect some element or create a *trompe l’oeil*. This term means to fool the eye and could be something as simple as framing a large mirror with drapery, to create a window. Think of the hours of fun you could have teasing

As this is my last design column to grace these pages, I would like to leave you with these thoughts: your home is your own, so make the space you live in the most important space you ever spend time in. Invest in yourself by taking the time to make the right choices that reflect your style. You don’t have to spend a lot to make your personal environment arouse and motivate you. I hope the ideas I’ve shared with you over the years have inspired you to make positive changes in your homes and that you’ll continue to follow me and my designing adventures wherever they may take me.

Yours stylishly,
Manny

Designer and stylist Manny Machado, believes that having the power to dream means having the power to create. Manny’s unique perspective allows him to transform even the most impossible spaces into something clients are proud to call their own. www.mannymachadodesigns.com

