

'Bland sucks': How home decor is becoming quirky and colourful again

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Jodi Lai, who runs online vintage decor shop Moonlight Vintage, uses her home decor as a way to express and test her personal style.

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If you feel like home interiors have been looking a little same-same of late, you're not alone. But after years of rooms painted millennial grey and decorated in beige, the muted formula that has been dominating social-media feeds and design magazines

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moments are imbuing homes with a unique sense of personality, storytelling and joy.

Taken to extremes, this might look like John Demsey's famous maximalist Upper East Side townhouse that was documented in the coffee-table book *Behind the Blue Door*. Filled to the brim with glamorous memorabilia and artwork from his years as a New York beauty executive, the colourful space is a joyous expression of a life well lived. For a more moderate approach, simply peppering some surprising personal elements, like a vintage find that feels a little out of place or an eyebrow-raising wallpaper, into a traditional space can do wonders.

Even the multinational retail giants are on board with this embrace of the unconventional. In her 2025 editor's letter published in the *Ikea 2025 Style Guide & Color of the Year*, the company's home furnishing direction leader Abbey Stark encourages shoppers to dream big. "This year we encourage you to go big on whimsy. Get bold with your colour stories. Step outside of your comfort zone in an exciting way, like adding florals, watercolours or a pattern you've previously avoided. Stay design curious!" she writes. And with its "Go Your Own Wayfair" campaign in the U.K., where a Roomba robot vacuum cleaner escapes its drab apartment for a colourful suite down the hall, the furniture e-retailer Wayfair could not have been more explicit in its declaration in the campaign that "bland sucks."

Torontonian Jodi Lai shares the sentiment. A long-time thrifter who grew up antiquing with her father, Lai now runs Moonshine Vintage, an online vintage decor shop and booth at the Hamilton Antique Mall. Gravitating toward dopamine-inducing items with a hint of surrealism, she describes her approach to decor as simply making fun, sustainable choices from the thousands of options available to consumers today.

"You can pick something from Ikea or Amazon that everyone else has or you could pick something that's a little more unique that says something about who you are and what your personality is," she says. "I want to be surrounded by things that make me happy."



Lai's home is filled with fun and colourful pieces that may not match but evoke the same vibe.

EDWARD ROW

When it comes to getting started, Lai recommends thinking of shaking up your home decor as a low-stakes way to experiment with personal creative expression.

"I think home decor is a really great way to experiment with personality and expressing yourself in a more private way that isn't exactly like putting on a really loud jacket and going out into the public where you might be afraid of how people would react," she says.

Multidisciplinary designer Tiffany Pratt, known for her colourful Toronto restaurant projects like Piano Piano and Lazy Daisy's Cafe, says a big part of sharing your personal story through decor is considering your unique lifestyle – and forgetting what the neighbours are doing.

"When somebody understands how they live and what they love and what brings them to life, whether it's an individual or a family, then you can actually really design a life for that person by way of designing the objects around that home," Pratt

says over the phone from Florida, where she's busy adding her technicolor touch to new residential projects.

She adds that this newfound interest in personal expression stems from our understanding of the function of the home having evolved beyond just being a place where we eat and sleep. "A lot of people have been doing way more at home since COVID and, because of that, they really want to make their home an experience. They really want to make it a place that feels entirely theirs," Pratt says.

As an example, she points to a friend who decided to replace the formal dining table in her elegant Connecticut home with a high-end ping-pong table. "It comes off as quirky, but I think quirkiness comes from just being authentic."

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