



AFTER

A BIT OF BRIT

BUDGET REDO BRINGS BRITISH COLONIAL STYLE AND COMFORT TO A HOMEOWNER'S LIVING ROOM

BY JOETTA MOULDEN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JANET LENZEN



BEFORE

AFTER: Simplified accessories, new white sofa, a mail order sea grass rug, new matching leopard print chair from www.ashleyhome.com and custom pillows and ottoman achieve the British Colonial look the owner desired. Latrissa painted her existing Bombay Company mirror, candlesticks and the back of the bookshelves.

BEFORE: Green leather seating, a bright gold mirror and candlesticks, lack of end tables and a rug and too many accessories kept this room from being a standout.

Homeowner Latrissa loves British Colonial style and wanted to replace her 17-year-old leather sofa and chair with new white seating. She felt indecisive about whether to purchase one Ethan Allen Hyde sofa (or two, facing each other) and whether to buy a new dark mirror. She also needed to know what size end tables and rug to purchase. "I wanted a more tropical look, but I wasn't sure what would work. I wanted a warmer room...one that looked more 'put together,'" she explains.

While reading a "DIY Decorating" column in *Houston House & Home*, Latrissa liked the fact that a tablecloth she featured homeowner had purchased on a trip was used as the color palette for the entire room and that his family pieces were reupholstered and painted rather than thrown away. The sources listed in the article were the same stores where she shops. "I figured if his home could look that good on a budget, why couldn't mine?" Latrissa says with a smile.

HISTORY LESSON

Before my intern, Leigh Diamond, and I met Latrissa, we brushed up on British Colonial style. During the Victorian era, the imperial British had expanded their empire to more exotic parts of the world, from Singapore to East Africa, from India to the British West Indies. With them they brought their language, government, customs and, of course, their furniture. While the British enjoyed traveling to the distant outposts of the empire, they were often loath to forego the comforts of home.

As a result, they brought with them the sturdy furniture designs of England and adapted them to the tropics using hardwoods, such as teak and mahogany, which were particularly suited to humid climates without warping. Along the way, they adapted Asian and African motifs into their traditional furniture. Native carvers added little flourishes of Asian, Caribbean or African art to the more staid British designs — a mélange known now as British Colonial style, easily recognized by its mix of animal prints, white cotton fabrics and sturdy, yet sometimes fanciful, furniture.

SMART MOVES

During our meeting, Latrissa pointed out the large round mirror and candlesticks, which she liked, but not in their gold finish. Rather than replace them, I recommended she paint them herself with a small jar of bronze metallic paint (#ME 525 "English Brown") from the Modern Masters Metallic Paint Collection found at Benjamin Moore paint stores.

Moving to the furniture arrangement, I suggested she buy just one sofa. Instead of buying twice as much very expensive fabric (directly from the manufacturer) to cover a new larger chair, Latrissa could buy far less of the manufacturer's fabric and have my upholsterer build and cover a new custom ottoman and a pair of 22-inch down throw pillows using forms from Interior Fabrics. Then to tie the chairs into the sofa, she bought inexpensive animal print fabric from Interior Fabrics to make an additional throw pillow.

I then suggested she purchase a less expensive, matching leopard Showwood Accent chair (from www.ashleyhome.com) to match her existing one and have both chairs flank the fireplace. "I was shocked that you liked the leopard chair and suggested I buy another. Now with everything done, I love the balanced leopard chairs," she admits.

Additionally, Latrissa purchased a \$49 18-inch-diameter accent table on clearance from Bombay Company and an inexpensive 8-by-10-foot sea grass rug from www.sisalrugs.com to complete her shopping homework.

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AFTER

BEFORE: The wall between the benches cried out for another table.

AFTER: A handsome, heavily carved drop leaf table from www.furniturelandsouth.com, low bowl from Z Gallerie, large lidded basket from Pier 1 Imports and new custom ottoman add drama and simplicity to the room.



BEFORE

TRADE SECRETS

- To eliminate costly mistakes, hire an objective professional to help you stay within your budget.
- For smooth color flow, repeat colors from adjoining rooms using paint or fabric.
- Before you toss out perfectly good furnishings, consider painting them first.
- Sometimes the most effective strategy is not to buy more furniture and accessories for your home, but to first rethink the pieces that already are paid for.

GREAT ADDITIONS

While Leigh and I were there, we noticed the paneled wall space between the benches from Pilie Inc. looked a bit empty and suggested Latrissa buy a British Colonial chest or table about 42 to 44 inches wide and 36 to 38 inches tall to place there and balance out that wall.

"I was receptive to everything, but wasn't so sure I wanted a chest there. For the past 13 years, that spot had been empty," Latrissa explains, "and I thought if I put something there it would look too cluttered. Turns out, the John-Richard Furniture Drop Leaf Table [bought from www.furniturelandsouth.com] is one of my favorite pieces now, and it really adds style to the room."

For continuity, we also suggested she paint the back wall of the bookcases the same color as the breakfast room ("Corsican Treasures #1407-300 ICI Dulux Ultra Semi-Gloss enamel) to visually tie the two rooms together. I also provided her with detailed instructions for arranging her own bookcases, which she followed to the letter.

MAKEOVER COMPLETE

This project is a classic example of a one-meeting makeover that was accomplished with just a few additional e-mails back and forth. Each week, Latrissa tackled another project from her detailed instruction sheet.

Does she have any advice for those considering decorating? "My advice is to wait before you buy furniture, paint or accessories," Latrissa offers. "I almost bought too much furniture that was too big for my room because I did not measure first. By not buying a second sofa, a huge chair, new mirror and candlesticks, I saved thousands of dollars and the room functions better."

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