

budget decorating ideas

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Creating Inviting Outdoor Rooms

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ABOVE: The area opposite the bed is furnished as a comfortable English-style sitting room, with thrift shop purchases augmented by an ottoman that designer Sasha Emerson created for the couple and had custom made and upholstered.

LEFT: Heidi and Eric love having their children—Sienna, 6, and Xander, 4—visit them in their bedroom. By the time the room was finished, Dashiell, a new baby, joined the family.

OPPOSITE: Heidi and Eric's bare bed dominated one part of the master bedroom. With no window treatment and no accessories on the bed, the room felt empty and, says Heidi, at times claustrophobic.

Designer Sasha Emerson helps a couple transform a dull bedroom into an inviting sanctuary

ROOM SERVICE

BY MERVYN KAUFMAN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY EDMUND BARR
STYLING BY SASHA EMERSON



H Heidi and Eric Brooks had lived in their Santa Monica, California, cottage for two years before deciding to upgrade the master bedroom. Before moving in, the couple had selected wall paint to use throughout the house and pulled up old shag carpeting to reveal oak floors. Later they hung elegant curtains in their bedroom. "They were a gift from a friend of Heidi's who was moving to a new home," says Sasha Emerson, of Sasha Emerson Design in Santa Monica, who spent two months helping the couple play up their bedroom without beating up their budget.

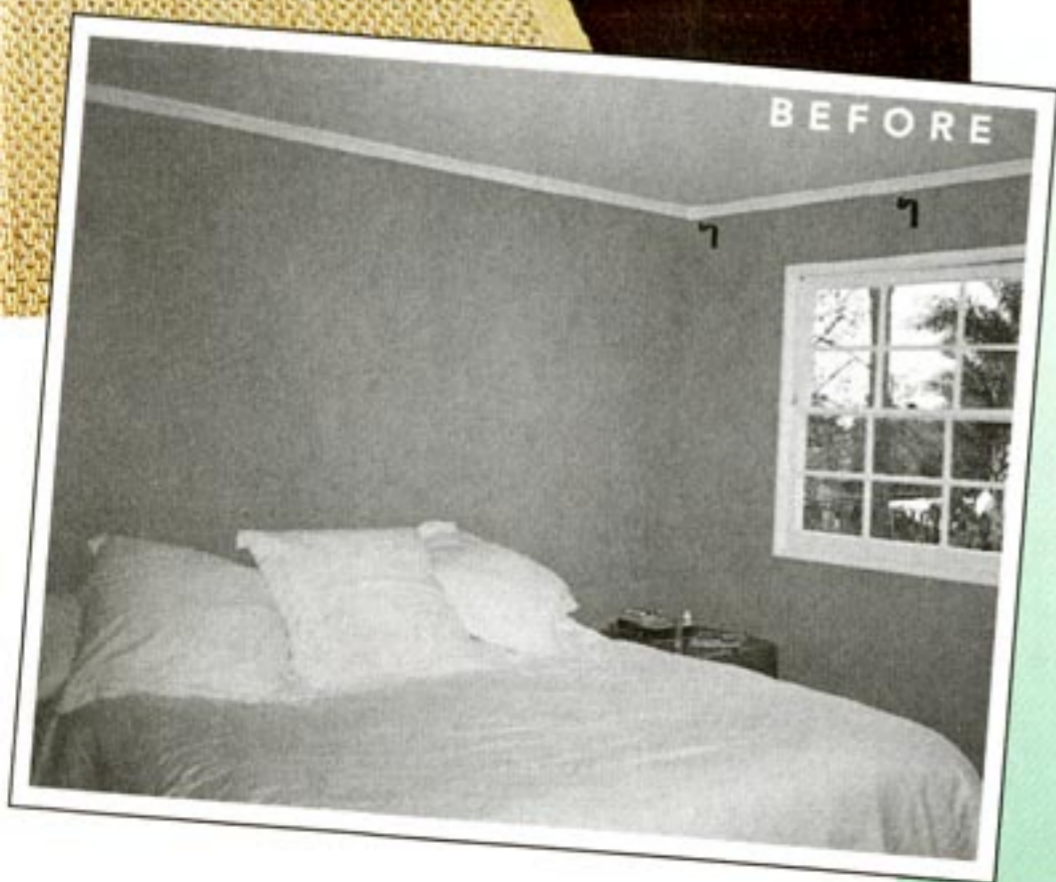
The room, located on the second floor at the front of the house, was long and relatively narrow: about 15x30 feet. The bed was at one end of the room; a TV and computer sat on miscellaneous tables at the other end. "Heidi called one day," Sasha recalls, "and said, 'All I have is a nice bed with a comfortable mattress and nice curtains. I can't look at my

What They Loved

- The scale of the room. "It was big, but we didn't know what to do with it," says Heidi.
- The natural light and ocean breezes pouring in through the windows. "I loved that the windows faced west, toward the Pacific," she says.
- The pristine quality of the hardwood floor. "We applied a chocolate stain to give it a more substantial look," Heidi says.

What They Hated

- The room's bowling-alley feel: a long, narrow space that lacked creative attention.
- The dichotomy of a comfortable bed at one end, and junky pieces at the other.
- There was no place to sit and relax, and no area for the children to congregate.





OPPOSITE: Sasha found the antique trunk at a flea market and had it refinished before placing it at the end of the bed. She used the same linen to create a bed skirt as was used to cover the upholstered headboard.

RIGHT: The thrift-shop desk and chair fit neatly on one side of the sitting area. The desk lamp was a cloisonné vase, which Sasha converted into a lamp with a newly re-covered shade.

BELOW RIGHT: An ugly assortment of tables and storage gear was clustered at one end of the bedroom. Heidi wanted a desk for her computer, but she also wanted a comfortable space to sit—in effect, an upstairs family room.



desk and all that junk from my bed anymore. We want our room to have a sitting area that's comfortable and pretty to look at—one where our kids can play and read and hang out—but still leaves room for a desk.”

Heidi envisioned an English-style sitting room, which gave Sasha her cue: “The answer was flea markets and thrift shops.” She scoured them weekly, giving her clients, who were also close friends, updates and reports. “One of the niceties of English country is that you can mix high and low. For instance, the sofa and armchair came from a local low-budget antiques store. I had both pieces reupholstered in six-dollars-a-yard fabric. I designed the ottoman and had it made, down to the chocolate brown-stained legs. The fabric came from flea-market curtain panels, and some of it was used to cover a pillow on the armchair.”

Sasha found the Empire-style end tables and delicate desk chair, along with a Mission-style desk, at a second-hand furniture store and had lamps made out of flea-market vases. “I bought shades to fit the lamps and had them re-covered in inexpensive hand-blocked cotton,” she

Time Line

Sasha Emerson worked with three artisans to complete this job: a refinisher, a lamp maker and an upholsterer. When she shopped, she would phone to alert Heidi and Eric whenever she found something—furniture or accessories—she wanted to buy. Sometimes they would ask to see what she had discovered, but in many cases they would just say, “Let’s get it.”

Visit to Heidi and Eric’s home to look at bedroom and take measurements **1 hour**

Scouring thrift shops and flea markets over a two-month period **10 hours**

Consulting with Heidi and Eric on projected major purchases **3 hours**

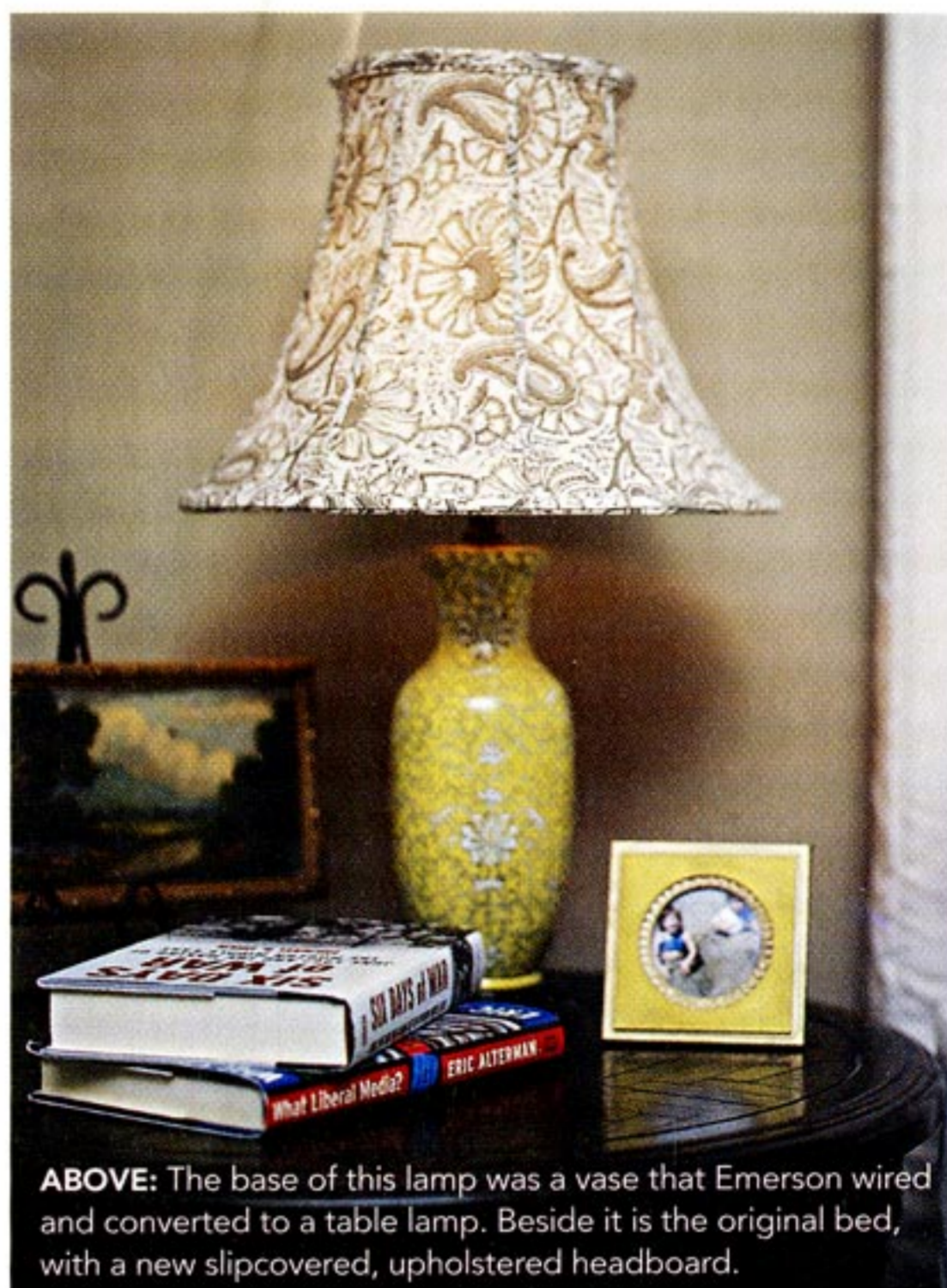
Arranging for furnishings pickup and shipment to artisans **4 hours**

Refinishing and reupholstering furniture, making lamps, and framing art. **3 weeks**

Arranging furnishings, hanging artwork after delivery to site **3 hours**

The Tab

Sofa, armchair, fabric, reupholstering	\$2,000
Lampshades, vases converted to lamps	1,000
Artwork, framing	700
Custom-cut sea grass rug	600
Upholstered slipcovered headboard	550
Pillows, duvet, bed skirt	500
English screen (cut into wall hangings)	400
Ottoman construction, fabric	400
Desk, including refinishing	345
Desk chair, new seat cushion	339
Antique trunk, including refinishing	300
Balinese miniature chair	300
End tables	300
Miscellaneous fabrics	250
Thrift-shop area rug	150
Flea-market urn	75
TOTAL	\$8,209



ABOVE: The base of this lamp was a vase that Emerson wired and converted to a table lamp. Beside it is the original bed, with a new slipcovered, upholstered headboard.

explains. “For about \$6 worth of fabric, we got a really great custom look for each lamp.” On the floor is a rug Sasha had made. “It’s a basket-weave sea grass cut to size and bound,” she says. For an accent she added a flea-market throw rug, probably of Indian origin.

The bed was virtually new, but Sasha designed a upholstered headboard covered in an oyster-colored linen and she covered the throw pillows in mostly vintage fabrics, including a large antique curtain. “Those panels hanging above the sofa came from a huge English folding screen I found at a flea market,” Sasha says. “We broke it into three pieces and hung it as art.” Elsewhere on the walls are images Sasha unearthed in her flea market forays and reframed.

Some of the accessories were Heidi and Eric’s, moved from other parts of the house: the floor lamp, the painting over the bed, the sculpture of a Chinese head on the desk, the tole tray, a few of the pillows, and one of the throws. But most of the decorating came from Sasha’s shopping trips. “The idea was to buy what’s basically junk,” she says, “then class it up to create the look of an English country salon. I consider this kind of decorating a layering process, which is very much what English country style is. You have the basics—the furniture, in this case—and you layer and layer and layer, down to the pillows and the pictures.”

Although there were splurges—the ottoman, an Indonesian miniature chair—the bulk of the furnishings came from second-hand sources. “You actually can do English country on a budget,” says Sasha. ■



ABOVE: Pale blue welting on the reupholstered thrift-shop armchair picks up tones in the sofa and ottoman. Sasha says the elegant linen curtains, which the homeowners got as a gift, would have cost as much as all the rest of the furnishings.

RIGHT: To create the sausage-shaped pillow, Sasha covered it in a low-cost vintage fabric scrap, trimmed its ends with buttons and placed it prominently on the bed.

