

IN FOCUS

Light up your home

Here's how you can transform the dark and drab spaces in your home with paints, lights, mirrors and more to add some drama and balance



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There's nothing like fresh air and natural sunlight to brighten up your house and make it cheerful and serene. However, there are some rooms or spaces in our homes, which feel like the inside of a cave. And quite often, it isn't possible to carry out structural changes like breaking a wall or building a window. To enhance these spaces, five industry specialists offer decorating tips to brighten the dark and dingy spaces of your home in little to no time.

Paint it bright

"Using a soft paint, preferably white, on the ceiling makes the home appear bright and fresh, as white doesn't absorb any hues and in turn reflects light," says Monica Chawla, founder and interior designer, Es-sentia Environments. "However, this doesn't work with cream or off-white. If you



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really want to brighten a dark room, make sure the ceiling is painted in the clearest, brightest white you can find," she concludes. "Lighting up a dark and dreary room will instantly make it more appealing," says Shabnam Gupta, owner, The Orange Lane and Peacock Life. "A sure-shot way is to paint the room in a happy colour like white or lemon yellow."

Light it right

A lot of homes have lighting at ceiling level. While this may work well for homes with high ceilings and sufficient natural light, in majority of the cases, this actually darkens the space. According to interior stylist Rubina Dhankar Qadir Din, "An easy way to lighten dark spaces is by strategically placing



lights in innovative ways. Hang chandeliers or seat light fixtures on corner tables and then put a massive mirror opposite it to make them reflect doubly." According to Chawla, while a room looks warm and inviting with yellow light, it can also make an already dingy room look smaller. "To make a room seem fresh and bright, opt for white light bulbs," she adds.

Mirror mirror

"Mirrors are the perfect tools to brighten up dim rooms," says Preeti Knowles, owner, The Hidden Gallery. "If the room has windows, then place some mirrors opposite them to reflect as much natural light as possible. However, if the room does not have windows, or it's not possible to place mirrors, don't fret; the strategic use of mirrors always helps to brighten such rooms. So go ahead and place them over consoles—they will make the room look brighter and more spacious," she suggests. "In case you are short on wall space, utilise the corner to set up a mirror. Though unusual, if done well, it can make the room look glamorous," suggests Din.

The perfect furnishings

Window coverings are a must, both in terms of aesthetics and practicality, given the high levels of dust and pollution in India. However, it is best to avoid heavy drapes and embellishments. "Sheers and cottons are always the better options, especially in rooms that need to look brighter," says Gupta. "They allow more light to filter in and lend a light and airy feel. Another easy way to transform a dingy space is by picking out high-shine upholstery fabrics and cushions. They add an element of brightness and with the correct amount of lighting, they can also make the room look stylish," she concludes.

Streamline the furniture

Ornately carved furniture tends to lend a sense of heaviness to a room and makes it appear darker. "In dark rooms, it is best to stick to sleek and light furniture pieces, which don't have a lot of embellishments. Go for light wood colours like oak or ash and structurally light furniture," explains Knowles. "If all of your furniture is carved and bulky, spread it across the house. Pick one or two carved pieces per room, while combining them with straight-lined furniture," she adds.

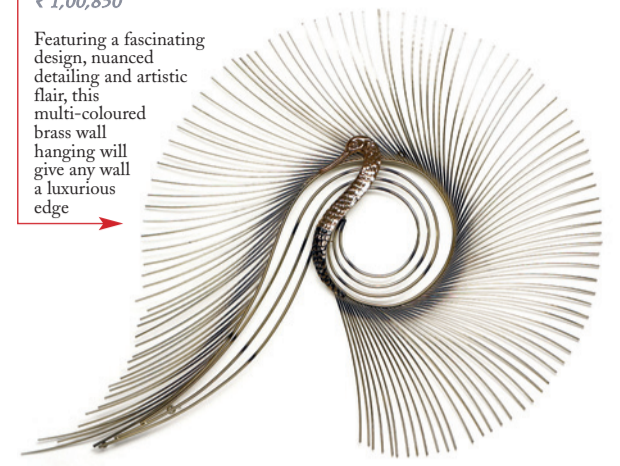
Lighten the floor

Flooring can set the tone of the whole house. So, while dark wood floors may add a feeling of warmth and elegance, in many instances, they might work against brightening up a dark room. "If you want to bring about a change in your flooring, keep in mind the budget. If the budget permits, choose oak hardwood flooring. Instead of changing the flooring, you could also highlight it with a neutral colour rug to lighten up the space," suggests Leila Erfan, owner, Aria Interiors. "The best part about area rugs is that they can be moved around the home to give a feeling of newness to any room," she concludes.

So whether you choose a marble table, an ornate table lamp or LED lights, make sure to illuminate your home and uplift your living space to keep you feeling positive.

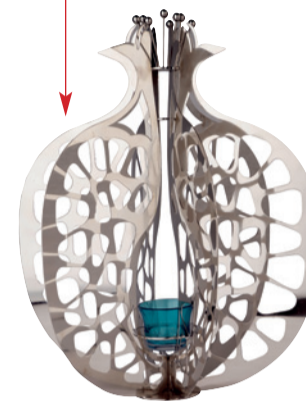
Artisan House Swan, available at Spacio, ₹ 1,00,850

Featuring a fascinating design, nuanced detailing and artistic flair, this multi-coloured brass wall hanging will give any wall a luxurious edge



Casa Pop candle stand, Anarkali collection, ₹ 12,000 onwards

Designed to resemble a pomegranate, this sterling silver stand is available in two colours and three sizes



Igrup + Ritz Rodin lamp, ₹ 22,900

This wooden lamp sports a gold leaf finish, and is inspired by the early female figures from the Cycladic civilisation in Greece



GET THE LOOK

Seasonal Treasures

Herald the festivities with compelling home décor pieces that range from spiritual idols and lamps to table accessories and more

Lladró Lord Ganesha (Limited Edition), price on request

Crafted in fine porcelain with exquisite detailing and technique, its elaborate ornamentation even includes a garland composed of 250 handmade petals to give it real-life grandeur



Safomasi Cocktail Napkins, ₹ 1,250 for a set of 4

Set in high quality cotton linen, these cocktail napkins, an ideal gift for the proud homemaker, feature hand screen printed jungle patterns

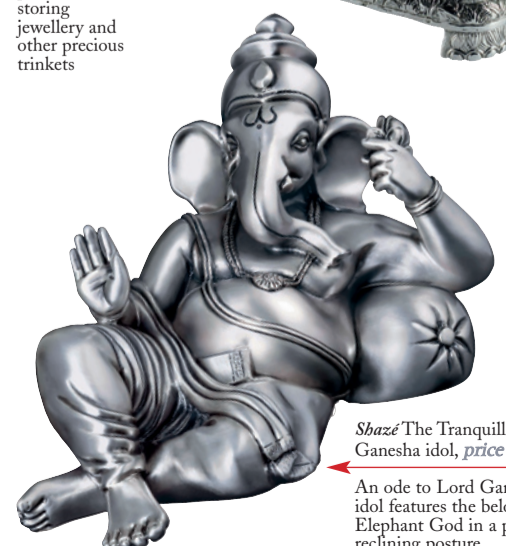


Fanusta Blue Pottery by Lyla Serving bowl, ₹ 5,000

Enhance your table settings with this Persian glazed blue pottery serving bowl that's hand-painted and hand-moulded by artisans from Jaipur

SR Artefacts The Elephant Trunk, price on request

This ornate multi-purpose box, with intricately carved wild elephants running free in a jungle, is perfect for storing jewellery and other precious trinkets



Shazé The Tranquille Ganesha idol, price on request

An ode to Lord Ganesha, this idol features the beloved Elephant God in a peaceful reclining posture



PHOTOS COURTESY: BENT CHAIR

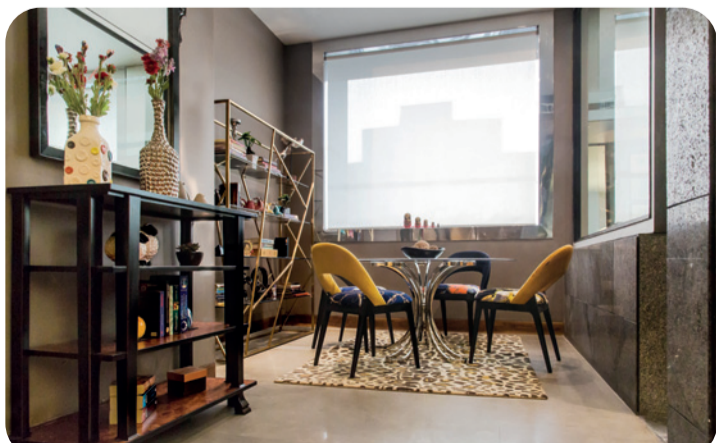
DESIGNER SPEAK

Mastering the rules

Natasha and Neeraj Jain, the father-daughter duo at the helm of quirky furniture and accessories e-tailer Bent Chair, talk about their out-of-the-box product range, the importance of promoting and uplifting Indian artisans and the makings of good design

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What drew you to design and home décor?
Natasha: I hold an undergraduate degree in Industrial Engineering and a Master's degree in Management Science Engineering from Stanford University. Before founding Bent Chair with my father last year, I set up a supply-chain system for my family business, formed an online mentoring service for college applicants and founded a payment app. I've always been interested in design and technology. Having lived in the US, the furniture designs there inspired me to create a go-to home décor and furnishing brand, manufactured in India yet with a global presence. And it made



perfect sense, as there is a dearth of brands in India that packs in high design, affordable pricing and caters to the 25-45 age group. At present,

the customer has access to either boutique home décor brands or online aggregators, but there is nothing in between.

Tell us about Bent Chair, its approach and USP.
Neeraj: We're a furniture and accessories e-tailer and one of the first Indian start-ups to not only create an online portal for selling furniture and home décor, but also creating an end to end supply chain—from designing and manufacturing to selling products. We have a unique business model where we follow an omni-channel approach, which includes selling online, creating a marketplace, selling offline through pop-ups and a Bent Chair studio and also entering into a franchise model. Our website also curates and creates a marketplace for other brands.

Take us through your design process and inspiration.
Neeraj: The first pillar of our brand is creativity. We want to bring forth unique, customisable products that are a reflection of the owner. Therefore, all products follow a concept, prototype and production cycle. The design

team's final sketches are turned into 3D renderings, following which they are made into polyurethane-based prototypes and then sent for production.

What is your key focus?

Neeraj: We are heavily invested in technology and want to make sure our products and processes are world class. To enable this, we have five manufacturing facilities that employ the best in processes, such as Plasma Vapor Deposition, unseen till now in the Indian market.

What are your thoughts on promoting and showcasing the work of artisans?

Neeraj: The manufacturing sector has greatly benefited with the advent of industrialisation. However, what it has lost is the personal touch. The intricacy of handcrafting or *karigari* has been replaced with mass-produced goods, thus lending handcrafted materials a sense of premiumness. The flip side, however, has been that the artisans have not benefited as much as the middlemen have. Our goal is to give them (the artisans) an opportunity to showcase their craft and thrive in an extremely competitive environment, as well as grant them a decent standard of living.

What are the essential elements that make for good home design?

Natasha: Stick to a theme and let it be a reflection of your tastes and choices; your home is simply an extension of you. Don't team an antique piece with a modern one. I believe, less is more, so don't put more than what is necessary, while focusing on comfort.

What are your design tips to transform a home?

Natasha: Use vibrant colours and add curios, knick-knacks and soft furnishings, while utilising vertical spaces. Decorative mirrors are a great way to instantly light up your living space.