

Decor Score: Pull it together with more style than money

by *Rose_Bennett_Gilbert*

Q: We just moved to our first house where we also have our first dining room. Our old apartment had an eat-in kitchen. Scraping together the down payment on the house took all our cash. Maybe you can help us furnish our new dining room ... without buying new furniture?

A: Your oxymoron makes more sense than you might expect. Furnishing a dining room just takes a table, chairs and a lot of color ... all of which **SKIRTING THE ISSUE** - Designer John Loecke serves up grosgrain-beribboned slipcovers in a spring-fresh dining room. CNS Photo courtesy of [Grosgrain Style](#).TM brighten the room we show here. Designer John Loecke has pulled things together with much more style than money, dressing an ordinary round table and non-descript chairs with slipcovers and multi-color grosgrain ribbons.

That Loecke has a thing for grosgrain is evident in his recent book, "John Loecke's Grosgrain Style" (published by Potter Craft Books), where he shows and tells how to use grosgrain all through your house (and clothes closet).

Here, he's tossed a flirty skirt on the painted table (which could have come from a yard sale). Then he sewed lengths of grosgrain to skirted slipcovers, the kind you can order from catalogs (or sew yourself). Underneath, who'd know if there were mismatched chairs from yard sales?.

The rest of the room is furnished with color. A gallon of spring-green paint perks up everything. You could hang curtains, perhaps made from sheets thumbtacked to the window frame. Add a random collection of plates and a chandelier resuscitated with enamel paint, and the room is ready for your first dinner party. With Loecke's money-saving ideas, you might even serve something fancier than cheese-mac.

Q: What's the coolest color in interior design today?

A: Good for you who guessed green. We have the word from two women who view the issue from different perspectives, Jackie Hirschhaut, vice president of the American Home Furnishings Alliance, and Celine Cousteau, member of the famed "oceanaut" family and a star in the "Jean-Michel Cousteau: Ocean Adventures" on PBS.

Jackie says "green is the new beige but you don't have to settle for bland" when you shop for environmentally friendly furnishings today. There's been what she calls an "astounding flurry of research and development" in "green" furniture components, everything from adhesives to foam and fabrics and finishes.

Not to mention eco-friendly basic materials. For example, five generations of the Harden Furniture family have crafted products from wood grown in their own sustainably managed forests. Bernhardt Furniture is building pieces from plantation-raised rubberwood with sustainable walnut veneers, and embedding table tops with natural river rocks. Other manufacturers like Precedent are opting for post-industrial, recycled polyester fill materials and fabrics made from recycled or organic materials. And Vaughn-Bassett Furniture is planting a new tree for every one it harvests for its furniture. For more eco-info, click on www.findyourfurniture.com.

Celine Cousteau may spend much of her time at sea, but she's also concerned about the health of the good earth. "We all have to be more informed about the choices we make in our homes," Cousteau said at last month's International Forum on Design and the Environment in Paris, sponsored by Electrolux in conjunction with its fifth annual student design competition (check it out at www.ElectroluxDesignLab.com).

Moving to Santa Fe, N.M., recently, Cousteau said she installed eco-friendly concrete countertops and pulled out the existing rugs ("to avoid breathing old chemicals"). She also maintains a vegetable garden and uses worms for composting.

"It's uncool not to be green," the animated, long-haired Cousteau told journalists at the Forum. "We are all connected to the same destiny. If we each make just one change in our lives, such as conserving water or electricity, we can make a huge difference for the environment."

Find Cousteau's blog at www.oceanfutures.org.

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