

# HOUSE RULES

## Episode 24: How to Make Your Home Feel Like You

I'm Myquillyn Smith and this is House Rules  
Welcome to Episode 24

The first decorating book I ever bought was called "A Perfectly Kept House is the Sign of a Misspent Life". It's by Mary Randolph Carter. I found it at the clearance section of Anthropologie about 13 years ago, a few years before I wrote my first decorating book.

This book truly changed my life. I remember being torn about buying it, I had never "invested" in a decorating book and always only purchased magazines if there were lots of photos that I wanted my house to look just like. This book was messy and had fake coffee stains on the cover and intentional scribbles on the inside pages. Most of the photos were overwhelming and a bit chaotic. But as I read the words, the spirit of the book is what got my attention.

Then I came across page 79 and I was sold. It wasn't that I wanted to copy the house, the room or the sofa. **I wanted to copy the attitude.**

By the end of today's episode you'll learn two mantras, maybe you could call them attitude adjustments, that will help you add more personality and meaningful beauty to your home.

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My friend Kendra, you might know her as the Lazy Genius, visited our new-to-us home for the first time and remarked that seeing our vintage stuffed fox, pheasant and pronghorn mount along with rabbit pelts and antlers around the house made her momentarily question if she should add some taxidermy to her own home.

She quickly realized that taxidermy wasn't the reason she liked our house and that it was the layers, the coziness, and the functionality that made her feel welcome. But the "dead animals," as she pointed out, also added a sense of life and texture and that's what she noticed first. Then she declared she was going to find her own version of taxidermy. I declared her brilliant and decided that needed to be a house rule. So here we are.

I believe the uniquely personal sense of self that quirky taxidermy adds to our home is the cherry on top. When it comes down to it, it's just weird and unexpected and it works.

"Keep Austin Weird" has got to be the best slogan in Texas and possibly the world. And I believe we should apply that to our homes too. Let's make home weird again!

I do think we should define weird because, well, if we don't it could get ugly — literally. But maybe that's part of the fun. Adding a sense of weirdness is sort of like adding the signature pieces to your home. You know when a person gives you that not-quite-but-almost compliment of "Oh, I love that for you," pointing out something that's good for you but maybe not for them? Let's apply that to decorating and make it a goal to add something weird or just a tiny bit quirky or unexpected to our homes.

If that scares you, great. Make it tiny, sneak it in. I like to think that we all have weird stuff hiding somewhere and we should embrace it. What do you love? What are you obsessed with? What do you want to be surrounded by? Pull it out of storage and put it on a shelf.

It might be weird, odd, or a crazy curiosity. Or it might simply be meaningful to you in a way that no one else needs to know. Every home should reflect the people who live there in its own unique way, and every space deserves to be weird if it wants.

So the first way to change or update your attitude in your home, is to do what Kendra suggested: go find your own version of taxidermy and display it proudly.

So, back to that page in the book I was telling you about at the beginning of this episode.

As I was flipping through the book I stopped on a page that featured a room that had high ceilings with a pair of super tall windows. You could see out the windows just enough to figure out that across the street was a brownstone type of building and it made you assume the room itself must be well over 100 years old. The room had a formal feel, but not to worry it wasn't stuffy at all.

The walls were empty and white with decorative molding. The floor looked like it had a classic oriental rug, the furniture silhouettes were all reminiscent of a fancyish style. But the lighting hanging in the center of the room looked like a bunch of branches wrapped in Christmas lights.

And wait. That sofa. It looked like a Duncan Phyfe sofa style that I learned about in my six months of design school. It had a classic shape, almost a reverse camelback, and had wood trim on the edges. But the fabric. That's what really grabbed your attention.

At first it looked like some type of Americana graffiti fabric. The sofa was off white and the fabric looked red and blue. Maybe like a firework. Wait, does that say PETER?? Suddenly as you look closer you see a smiley face. What is happening in this fancy high end room? I had to know more so right there in the Anthropologie I stopped and read about it right there.

It turns out the sofa was designed by none other than John Derian, and Pamela, mother and owner of this page stopping room, wasn't sure what fabric she wanted on the sofa so until she decided she had it finished in everyday, basic plain off white, muslin. It was a placeholder until she knew exactly what she wanted.

Ok, I'm going to read the next part straight from the book: "Pamela explained that a year had gone by and she still couldn't decide what to upholster the sofa with, so one evening when her daughter had a party and some of her friends were sitting in a corner looking kind of left out, she spontaneously grabbed a handful of fabric pens and stirred up the crowd with 'Do you guys want to paint the couch?'

In a minute the pens were gone and the sofa became the life of the party! Ever since then, whenever young and not so young friends stop by, the pens are passed out to add a peace sign or another stylized signature to the sofa's crazy maze of colorful hieroglyphics. It's become the family's supersized guest book."

I'm in LOVE with this.

This works especially well because the setting is formal, the sofa feels a bit formal, almost everything else in the room is grown up and serious. So Pamela combined the opposites and the result was and is relatable, charming, meaningful, remarkable and I think really beautiful.

I know you are now dying to see this so I'll be sure to get a photo of this page of the book to Karrie to add to the landing page for this episode in the show notes. You've got to see it.

I am not telling you to let your kids paint your sofa. I'm not telling you that your home needs taxidermy.

What I'm telling you is that your home needs you.

It wants a surge of your personality. What's meaningful for your family? Where do you find joy in the world? What's important to you? What matters?

Okay, but how do we start?

The art over my fireplace began its life at a big box store as a \$49 canvas with a white globe printed on a black background. It's a recognizable piece of, what I call, FART (factory-made art) that I bought for our son's room when we were doing a quick makeover.

After a few years, it had served its purpose and I was loading it up to drop off at Goodwill. I realized that if I ever needed a canvas that size, it would be cheaper to keep the FART and paint over it than go to the craft store and buy a new, empty canvas. A few weeks later I needed to fill a big wall, so I grabbed that canvas, put an old sheet under it to protect the floor, and gathered all the craft paint and cans of wall paint I had in the neutral colors I needed.

Over the course of a few days I poured, spattered, and layered paint on the canvas. Because I used my own wall paint, it looks great everywhere, so these days it gets moved around the house. This was the least risky DIY I've ever done in my life. Why? Because I had nothing to lose. I was going to literally give the canvas away. It was more work to drive the canvas to Goodwill than keep it. I basically took the lazy way out.

You can't ruin something you already hate. Which is the second attitude change I want you to embrace.

This is exactly what happened with Pamela and her designer sofa. It was temporarily covered in plain muslin. It wasn't that she hated it, but it was a placeholder until she chose the "real fabric". So believe it or not, the risk was low to let a bunch of kids draw all over it. Maybe it would just spur her on to go ahead and finally make a fabric decision. OR, maybe, she'd end up falling in love with it and it would get featured in a book about beautiful imperfection.

Before investing in a two-hundred-dollar dresser from Facebook Marketplace for your first ever makeover, asking your husband to drive across town to load it up, then painting it in the driveway in view of every curious neighbor — start with what you have. Learn in private without an audience who will question your every move.

Is there any little random piece of furniture in your garage, dining room, or attic that you've been giving dirty looks to because you hate the color? Start with that. Start with the thing that's already so not your style that the worst that could happen is you'll still dislike it. *What if the best happens and you actually love it?*

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Today's episode features House Rule #94: Find your own taxidermy and House Rule #7: You can't ruin something you already hate. Those are just two of the 100 House Rules included in the brand new book called, *House Rules: How to Decorate for Every Home Style and Budget*.

*House Rules* is available everywhere books are sold April 23, 2024. If you are listening before that date, you're lucky, you can preorder and reserve your copy now and as a thank you for

preordering, we've created a new masterclass House Rules in Action. I invited a video crew to my home and we walked through the rooms of my house and I shared which rules helped me make decisions in every room. But that's not all, you'll also receive the audio book FREE. That's a thank you gift for preordering, you need to claim your bonus. The audiobook includes 5 extra house rules and I read them to you. There's a link in the show notes to order your copy and to claim your gifts. And don't forget to go look at that landing page so you can see a photo of this amazing sofa that we talked about.