

The Good-Buy Girl

Carefully chosen bargains infuse a San Francisco home with true romance.

BY HEATHER LOBBELL PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAREN ALPERT PRODUCED BY ERIN HILORAH



Walls are gallery white and furniture neutral, so vibrant accessories—pillows, flowers, art—give the living room its eclectic style. Patti McAdaragh collects art from world travels and from local artists' studio tours where she can find affordable pieces.

Patti McAdaragh is a bargain hunter. "I love to shop secondhand and thrill at a great buy," says Patti, who has a soft spot for anything vintage and everything sentimental. As an interior designer, she frequents to-the-trade showrooms for some clients, but her favorite haunts are antiques fairs and flea markets, import shops, outlets, and department stores where she scores deep discounts on nicked furniture sold off the floor. "It's going to happen anyway, so why not get it over with and get a good deal?" she says.

Patti's 700-square-foot apartment is a slightly Bohemian, utterly romantic trophy case of prized finds. In the living room, there's a glass coffee table from a clearance center, a 1980s sofa, and at the windows, iridescent gold sheers made from free fabric samples and pulled back with thrift-store tiebacks. Anchoring the mix is a shaggy flokati rug from an Indian bazaar's closing sale. Asian textiles and accessories gathered from distant travels and nearby resources like Pier 1, World Market, and San Francisco's Chinatown give the home an exotic, collected flavor.

Depression-era posters inspired the kitchen's bright color scheme. Butter-color paint freshens a found table and \$25 flea market chairs. In the bedroom (far right), Patti painted swirls and curlicues on the wall behind the metal screen to give the headboard major stature.



WHAT'S A GOOD BUY?

There's a huge difference between bargain hunting and junk collecting. "I am not a junk collector," says Patti (below). "What I buy, I intend to use." She buys something only if she can answer yes to each question on her "Keep It Real" checklist.

- Do I really love the piece?
- Do I have a place for it?
- If the piece is used, will I actually do the work necessary to make it attractive and useful?
- Can I see myself owning it for many years to come?



Bargains can build a beautiful room, but Patti cautions against sale frenzy and junk collecting. "Remember, if you buy something that needs work, you have to actually follow through with that work or you've just got a white elephant sitting in your house," she says. Which means that (gulp) every now and then even Patti McAdaragh pays full price. She has no qualms about splurging on original art, and she shelled out a whopping \$2,200 for her sofa when she was 20 years old. But quality construction, timeless style, and regular applications of protective Fiberseal have made that sofa, arguably, her best deal ever. "I always say, if that sofa could talk, ahhh, the stories it would tell," she adds. You get the feeling the same is true for most things here. It's that buzz of history and mystery that gives this home its true romance. ☺

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