

# JUNK DRAWER

Q+A

## Bringing spirit to the home

By Pamela Sherrod  
Tribune staff reporter

Open "Living Spaces" by Marlee LeDai and you are taken in a different direction than that offered in most decorating and design books.

LeDai's book (Fleming H. Revell, 256 pages, \$14.99) isn't about the latest color or style trends. There's something else going on here.

It starts with the image on the cover. A breeze lifts the curtains at a window. This feeling continues in the text that follows. In her chapter on great rooms, LeDai writes about the importance of "puttering" and how it connects her inner and outer worlds.

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The soothing comes, LeDai tells us, because as we hold objects of history, we find pleasure and create art.

LeDai's recommended decorating budget is next to nothing. The thread throughout her book is to use what you have and see it in a different light.

When we finished her book, we wanted to know more about LeDai, who is engaged and a new grandmother. She makes her home in northern California and in Oregon.

"A kind of serenity comes over me when I move around my house studying the objects of my affection and looking for ways to create different harmonious groupings," writes the former editor and columnist for the women's magazine Virtue. LeDai also has won a C.S. Lewis Gold Medallion Award for her children's book "Grandpa and Me: We Learn About Death."

"Sometimes I move a chair closer to a window or a stack of books nearer to the woodstove," she continues. "In any case,

The connecting thread in Marlee LeDai's book "Living Spaces" is to use what you have and see it in a different light.



Tribune illustration

**Q** What moved you to write a book about the spiritual values of home?

**A** I love to redecorate and remodel, but as a single mom, I never had money to do it. I had to use what I had in a beautiful way. That meant I had to create ceremony out of what we had, which really was each other.

**Q** When did home start to become less about the physical and more about the emotional space for you?

**A** When you go through something difficult and painful, you look at yourself and where you are differently. I got divorced when my daughters were 10 to 17 years of age. My way of saying things were crazy then was to hang all the pictures in the house upside down. My daughters were embarrassed by my behavior. It was my way of saying things weren't the way I wanted them to be, but it was the way it was then. The upside-down pictures didn't last long. When I got over that, I hung them back up right.

**Q** Didn't you think the upside-down pictures on the wall were too much?

**A** Too often families try to be perfect and not express what is really going on. They continue as if everything is perfect and they have perfectly matched homes with everything decorated, so designed and in the right colors. But nothing in life is like that. We're all full of flaws. Sometimes windows get broken. There will be a crack in the wall. The flaws are just as important as the perfectly matched curtains.

**Q** You set the tone for your book from the first page with a quote from C.S. Lewis about God building a different house in our lives. What do you say to critics whose eyebrows rise at the book's spiritual hand?

**A** I love that quote. The book is about home as a metaphor for spiritual life. Home is the spirituality of our lives.