



Different is Good

When it comes to creating a unique space in your home or office, think outside the box by using your furniture in unexpected ways

Options, options! As a designer I'm always looking for more options for the spaces I create for my clients. Some spaces are small and cozy, others are large and spacious, and no two clients want the same colors and decorating styles. The pieces I need are rarely exactly what I want, so I've trained my eye to see things not for what they are, but what they could be.

I love to use pieces of furniture in unexpected ways. You've seen many times the multipurpose ottoman that can serve as additional seating, storage or a coffee table. This is exactly what I'm talking about: Why not look at other pieces to see how they can make your space more unique? This column is all about tips to train your design eye.

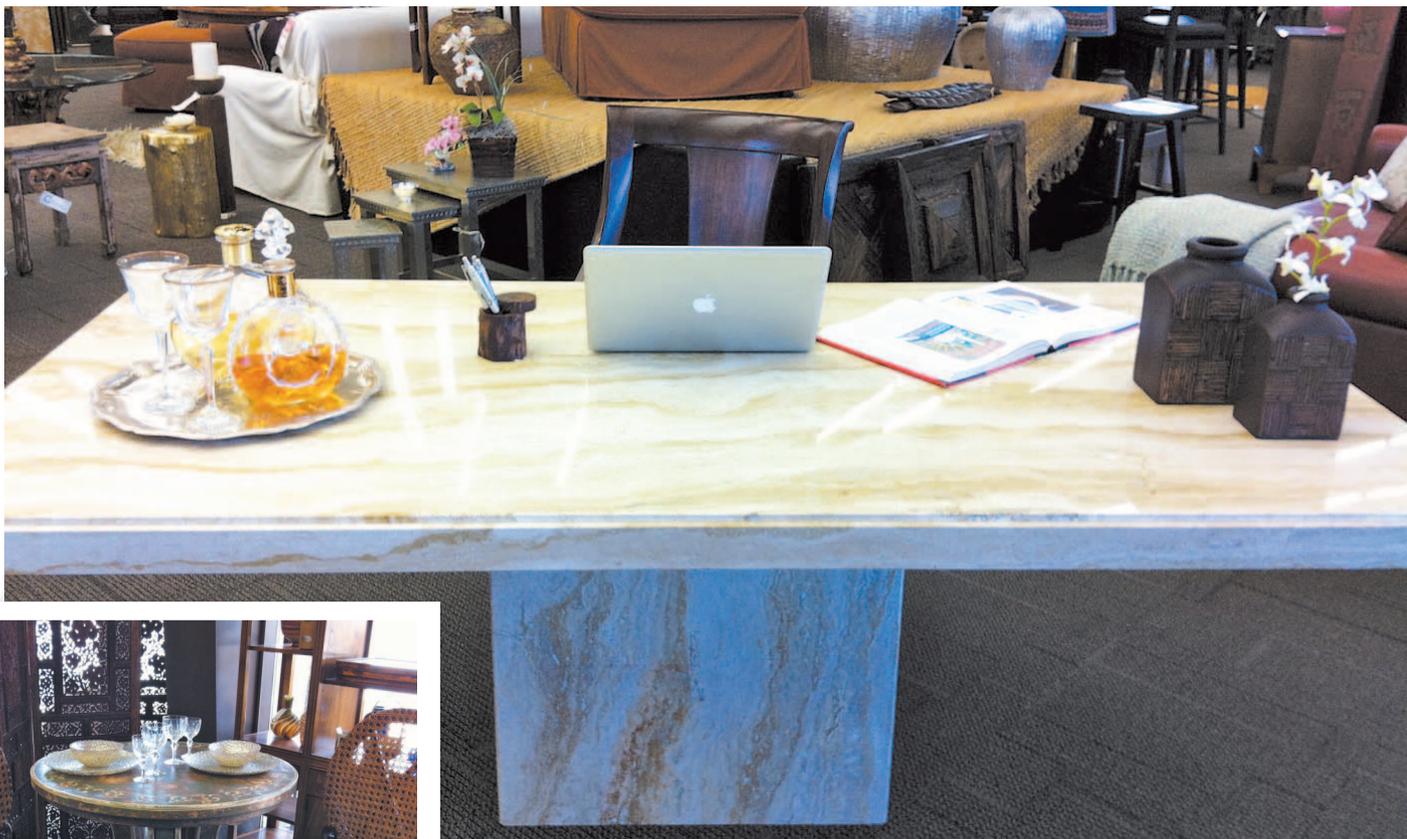
With my Cathy's Marketplace showroom and reStyle, our second location in Kakaako, I have two fantastic playgrounds full of furniture and home accents to play with and get inspired by. Take these two tables. Some may see them as very limiting because of their size or style. I see endless possibilities.

This marble dining table from Italy seats six. Before it came to us on consignment, the owner paired it with very traditional chairs. This table may speak to someone with a larger home who would be attracted to its style, but someone with a more formal dining area may want a table that can seat eight.

If you use it for dining, I would mix things up a bit and pair it with vintage chairs or fully upholstered dining chairs with a large graphic pattern. Either would be hot!

But what else could I do with this table? How can I think outside the box?

What about using it as an amazing statement desk? This would be a great piece for a man or woman and would fit in



an urban, modern, Asian, island or Mediterranean setting. In fact, it would look good with just about any décor — all you have to do to blend it more seamlessly is accessorize it in your chosen style.

Or how about as a conference table in an office? A large buffet? A display table for a store? The possibilities are endless, especially because the style of this table is at once traditional and contemporary and will stand the test of time.

Next we have a beautiful Mediterranean-inspired accent table that is 32-inches in diameter. It could create a challenge as it's definitely too big for a smaller space. But how would you use it in a larger space?

In an average-size home, this could be perfect in a foyer under a beautiful vase of flowers. In larger homes, it could be a wonderful accent table used to display a piece of art alongside larger furniture pieces.

But a trained eye wouldn't rule this table out even for a smaller setting. Why not use it as a small bistro table, as we've done at the showroom? In an apartment or as part of a sitting area in a bedroom, this could serve as a beautiful accent table where you could have your coffee or tea, or in really small spaces, even as your main dining table. As I've always said, small spaces don't have to be small in style!

Keep looking for inventive ways to use pieces in different ways. You'll create a more unique space — and each time you look at the piece, you'll have the satisfaction of knowing it was your trained eye that found the perfect spot for it.

Cathy Lee is president and designer of Cathy Lee Style and Cathy's Marketplace, a furniture and accessories showroom with design services at 1110 University Ave. She recently opened reStyle Hawaii, an affordable, style-conscious consignment warehouse with upholstery and repurposing services at 420 Keawe St. in Kakaako. Lee's interior design work has been featured in local and national publications, on HGTV and in her DIY design workshops that teach homeowners the basics of style. To find out more, go to www.cathyleestyle.com.