

FUNCTIONAL WAYS TO DISPLAY YOUR VINTAGE COLLECTIONS

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FROM
PROFESSIONAL
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**GARAGE WORKSHOP TRANSFORMATION:
FROM CHAOS TO CLEAN**

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Confessions of a Collector

Professional organizer Jeanie Engelbach shares the ideas behind her double duty displays.

BY JEANIE ENGELBACH
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RIKE SNYDER

WHEN PEOPLE LEARN WHAT I DO FOR A LIVING—PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZER—they assume I live an orderly, streamlined and minimalist lifestyle. And they're absolutely correct about the orderly and streamlined, but I am what is known as a maximalist. I can't seem to buy just one thing when I like it. I have to build an entire collection around it.

As an apartment dweller and somewhat obsessive amasser of things—at present I have 12 active collections—I do have to carefully consider how I am going to incorporate these things into my interior décor and home of limited space. That's why almost every collection has to serve a dual duty.

Of course, not every collection can be functional. Some are purely decorative like my Pez dispensers. However, I choose to display them as art. As an organizer, I fully support having multiples of something that makes you happy, but it better not be stored away in a box—or worse—kept in a storage facility.

The joy of a collection is to be able to see it, appreciate it, love it and possibly put it to task, like my vintage Coke bottles. I actually wanted just the crate, but the vendor would only sell it with the bottles, so I have been able



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1. COKE CRATE: A Coke crate with bottles creates a base to display another collection, while the height creates the kitchen faucet.

2. LUNCH BOXES: These once carried lunches, now they contain hundreds of duplicate Pez from the collector.

3. GALLERY WALL: Displaying the Pez collectible on a mass on the gallery wall elevates the ubiquitous candy toy to art status.

4. BOOK STACK: This series of books acts as a pedestal to better display UK artist Lucy Sparrow's hot candy.



to make use of the crate as a base that holds a silver serving tray to display my small collection of syrup dispensers. The bottles can also be used as bud vases, candlesticks and, for a Prohibition theme party, were used to disguise the alcohol. And the entire vignette camouflages the kitchen faucet when viewed from the living room. Full functionality!

Fortunately for me, the things I am attracted to—vintage soda bottles, metal lunch boxes, Coke crates—can all be utilized beyond their initial purpose, and while I covet them for their form, I am able to find the beauty in their function too.



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FOR MORE ON JEANIE, VISIT AMTMBITJEANIE.COM.

Candy-Coated LIVING

Kitschy and colorful pieces turn this rented apartment into a flea-market haven.

BY KRISTIN DOWDING
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RIKKI SNYDER

▶ **ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT TASKS FOR VINTAGE-LOVERS IS LETTING GO OF THEIR TREASURES.** It's painful to think about getting rid of even one out of a hundred antique bottles, but sometimes life requires a change. For professional organizer Jeanie Engelbach of apartmentjeanie, a recent move to a smaller apartment forced her to rethink her treasures and downsize her beloved collections. "I came from a larger apartment with more wall space," she says. "I had to eliminate three-quarters of what I own."

Jeanie's new 775-square-foot apartment in New York City required some creative thinking when it came to establishing her new look. "You have to consider the new space," she says. "You don't want it to look exactly like your old home." With less wall space and fewer display surfaces, Jeanie had to reorganize some of her collections and say goodbye to others. Rather than bring everything to her new place and decide then what to keep, she made a plan before she moved out to make the process less stressful. "I measured and did paper templates and laid it all out on paper to see what I could actually bring," she says.

COLLECTIONS AROUND in Jeanie's living room, where plates line the corner wall and pillows suggest more than comfort. "The pillows represent facets of my personality," says Jeanie. "The dog looks like my first dog, Little Dit, and my nickname is Quenie, so my friend got me the Queen of Hearts." She found the mirror on the street in Brooklyn and had to elicit help to take it home. "It weighs like 500 pounds," she says.





Steal this idea!

To create your own gallery wall, put your favorite thing dead center and work around it. Leave enough negative space to balance it, and let each piece stand on its own.



JEANIE USES an air conditioning tool kit she found at a Brooklyn flea as her nightstand. "It was grasy and dirty, so I cleaned it and lined the inside with different kinds of oil cloth," she says. The four-pandas art is an Andy Warhol print she had museum mounted to her wall.

THE 5 STAGES of Downsizing

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZER JEANIE ENGELBACH SHARES HER ADVICE ON DOWNSIZING AND ORGANIZING YOUR COLLECTIONS.

- 1. MOTIVATE.** If you're moving to a smaller home or have suddenly realized your current home isn't large enough to accommodate all your collections, you need to pinpoint your motivation so you can keep it in mind when things get tough. Are you losing space? Are your collections bringing you more stress than joy?
- 2. PLAN.** The biggest mistake you can make is to try to tackle everything at once, hopping from project to project and never completing anything. Instead, make a list of every collection or room you want to go through and do one at a time. "Approach your home in bite-size pieces that you can manage," says Jeanie.
- 3. QUESTION.** When you start going through each space or collection, ask yourself, "What are the things I absolutely love, and will they give me the same structure and support that I need?" If

the answer for something is no, put it in the give-away pile. "Challenge yourself on why you need to keep it," says Jeanie. "You need to be ruthless."

4. RESIST. The urge to store extras will overcome you, but appreciate your collections enough to not store them in a box. They won't be enjoyed hidden away, so instead, give them to a friend who can display them, or sell them to someone who will enjoy them as much as you. "Always live with what you have," says Jeanie.

5. ACCEPT. Keep in mind that "the faster you can make decisions about something, the faster you'll be organized," says Jeanie. "If decision making isn't your strength, have someone help you that doesn't have a sentimental attachment and has fresh eyes." It can be a difficult and painful process, but you'll feel free when it's accomplished.

AN ECLECTIC WALL of art highlights some of Jeanie's finds over the years, including vintage cereal ad plates, graphic illustrations and Richard Heeps photography.



JEANIE UPCYCLED an antique French mirror frame into a momento board after the mirror inside broke. "I use clothespins to clip things onto strings," she says. The clown painting is by artist Greg Gossel, and the flower chair is an antique find.

ANOTHER STREET FIND, Jeanie's desk underwent an upgrade to make it functional. "It was a jeweler's table, and I added clip lights to it. I lined the drawers and added a dropdown drawer for my keyboard," she says.

HOW TO STYLE A SUCCESSFUL Display

ODD NUMBERS. When you have an even number, it's off balance," says Jeanie.

VARY HEIGHT. "Make almost a pyramid," says Jeanie. "Put the tallest piece in the center and spread out to the base."

CHANGE PERSPECTIVE. "Walk around and make sure you look at it from all angles," Jeanie says.

INCORPORATE VARIETY. "If it's not a cohesive collection, have different elements represented to bring life to it."



THE MINT GREEN piece is a vintage Chinese buffet that used to be in Jeanie's old living room. She lined the top cubbies with cherry-laden oil cloths to disguise what's being stored in them. Another old carousel piece hangs above her TV, and the lights are still functional.



While some of her vintage pieces didn't follow her through the move, her style remains the same, and her spaces boast vibrant and cheerful hues. "I love colors," she says. "I don't like muted or earth tones, and I couldn't live in a home that didn't have yellow paint somewhere." Pink and yellow walls, a yellow coffee table and a pink couch are just the start of Jeanie's candy-coated home. "I like things in candy colors in general," she says.

Most of her furniture and décor was acquired at flea markets, thrift stores, antiques shops or even on the street. "I'm not looking for something in particular when I go flea-market shopping," she says. "There are things I gravitate toward, like cartoony things and Carnival chalkware," but she prefers to shop with spontaneity rather than a wish list. Other pieces, like her leopard-print dining table, were acquired through friends. "I had my dining table painted by one of my friends 28 years ago," Jeanie says. "It's followed me through every apartment change, and I requested the leopard-print legs and a floral top."

Through this big change, Jeanie proves that you can be an avid collector and pare things down when needed. She survived her downsizing project, and has a unique and personalized living space to show for it.



COLOR SURROUNDS the TV in the form of a coral credenza and a piece of railing from an old carousel.



opposite: JEANIE TRANSFORMED the previously blank walls of her kitchen with wallpaper that depicts rainbows, diamonds, stars and planes, and she painted the ceiling yellow because there wasn't any available wall space. Two book towers take the place of unnecessary bar stools under the counter where they're accessible and out of the way. "It was a temporary solution so I could empty boxes, and decided I liked it," she says.