

The Everyday Alchemist

Designer Jonathan Fong says he can't cut a straight line with a pair of scissors to save his life. He also claims that he doesn't really draw. But what he does have is a vivid imagination.

BY BARBARA THORNBURG | PHOTOGRAPHED BY DOMINIQUE VORILLON



Jonathan Fong had never decorated anything before moving into his Santa Monica townhouse 12 years ago. "I have never been by nature a particularly creative person," says the former vice president at Suissa Miller Advertising. "I was into math and science as a kid—I'm Asian." The all-thumbs Fong needed to find a way to fix up his place that would be easy and economical, he says. "I kept asking myself, 'What can I do on my own that will look really cool and not cost a lot of money?'"

For five years he lived with white walls. Bored with his "minimalist museum" and feeling stifled creatively, Fong, like many people, wanted more color but didn't know how to begin. A close friend, costume designer David Zyla, advised Fong to wear "vital spring" colors and surround himself at home with the same hues.

Armed with his color palette, Fong headed to Home Depot, where he stocked up on Pop Art shades of tomato soup red, lilac, teal blue and wedding-mint green that now enliven his living room walls.

His creative genie on the loose, he found that he couldn't stop with just painting. He raided a local craft store, where he bought foam stamps in star, diamond and swirl shapes and added the motifs to the walls. A soffit the length of the room got a dose of red stripes. Fong applied a grid of letters to

Idea | Flower-power stairwell

Inspiration: "Escalator rides at Neiman Marcus. Department stores always make use of the airspace." **Music to craft by:** "Paper Roses," by Marie Osmond. **How to:** "I hung two large roses and six smaller ones with fish line attached with pushpins to the ceiling above my stairwell. It adds interest to a boring space, and if you don't have a garden, it's a way to bring the outdoors inside in a very dramatic and surreal way." **Cost:** \$50



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Jonathan Fong's easy-to-make licorice-straw vase sits atop an Isamu Noguchi coffee table in his cheerful living room. Posters from MOCA's Andy Warhol exhibit in 2002 hang on one wall, while the adjacent wall is enlivened with lilac and mint green paint.