

Cheap change artist

**Frank Fontana knows
how to design on a dime**

By Judith A. Stock

FRANK FONTANA WANTS to change your concepts about interior design with his low-cost, high-design home decorating ideas. As the lead designer and host of HGTV's *Design on a Dime* show, he gets the chance to do just that on a weekly basis.

"People are looking for function and form, so multi-function everything is the trend of the future," Fontana explains. "The days of just getting a piece of furniture or décor because it looks cool doesn't flow with today's tough economic climate."

The show's design team makes over one room for design-conscious homeowners who are short on funds. Their challenge is to complete the makeover for \$1,000 and do it in a day. The longest-running, highest-rated, low-budget design show, *Design on a Dime* has been on the air for 11 years, five of those with Fontana as the host.

His relaxed and easy charm, along with the ability to deliver information in an entertaining fashion, makes him well suited to be the do-it-yourself design guy who offers tips and makes affordable design come to life.

"I had that creative flair and artistic ability as a child, which came through as an adult with home design," Fontana, a Costco member, tells *The Connection*. "Through lots of summer jobs painting houses, laying tile and being a carpenter's assistant, I honed my hands to do the work I do today."

Fontana (www.frankfontana.net) started on HGTV as host and designer of another show, *Takeover My Makeover*. When that show ended, HGTV wanted him to take over *Design on a Dime*. Living in Los Angeles at the time, Fontana jumped on a plane for Chicago, where the show is taped, and shortly became a resident of the Windy City.

Asked about his design philosophy, Fontana calls it "Quantum Design Element," or QDE for short. It's designing for the feeling first. "I can't go anywhere without being aware of the nuances that make up the energy in room flow," Fontana says.

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Frank Fontana is a dime-conscious designer who values creativity over spending.

Buyer's pick

Nino Garcia
Furniture Buyer



IF YOU'RE LIKE ME, you may tend to get bored with your décor from time to time. Rather than donating furniture to charity or recycling a piece of perfectly good furniture, I like to go for versatility. That's why I love the Dellamore 7-Piece Modular Set from Emerald Home Furnishings.

More commonly known as a sectional sofa, this resourceful piece, or rather pieces, of furniture allow you to change the look and suit the needs of your living space without draining your bank account. The 8-way

hand-tied coil spring construction provides superior comfort and durability, and it's upholstered in high-performance microfiber for easy spot cleaning. Two matching pillows are included with each set. When the pieces are all put together in the traditional way, the sectional measures 106.5 inches by 148 inches by 35 inches.

The Dellamore 7-Piece Modular Set is so versatile, you might want to rearrange your living room or family room more often. And the price can't be beat. We're able to offer this for significantly less than a similar sectional sold elsewhere. 



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"On a quantum level, all objects, whether furniture, accessories, etc., all exude a particular energy that, when combined with the right function, cohesive colors, patterns and material, and not to mention the proper flow of a space, can bring to life a collective, amazing energy and ambience that then exudes a particular style that's polished and alive," he continues.

His recent book, *Frank Fontana's Dirty Little Secrets of Design* (Abrams Books, 2010), explains QDE, "Each room has a distinctive feel. It's something that hits people within their first thirty seconds in a space, and they know whether they like it or not. That is what we are trying to craft when we design a room."

A frequent bargain seeker, Fontana says Costco is on his list of go-to stores for deals. He says be sure to measure your room first and create a simple blueprint before you purchase any new furniture. This tip keeps size and scale in mind for balanced energy.

Clearly, Fontana knows his way around color wheels, fabric swatches and drafting tables. But without the show, would he still find the low-budget approach attractive? "Absolutely, I live by it! Why spend money on something you can make yourself?" he says. "One man's garbage is another man's gold ... with the right color spray paint!" 

Judith A. Stock is a Los Angeles-based freelance journalist.

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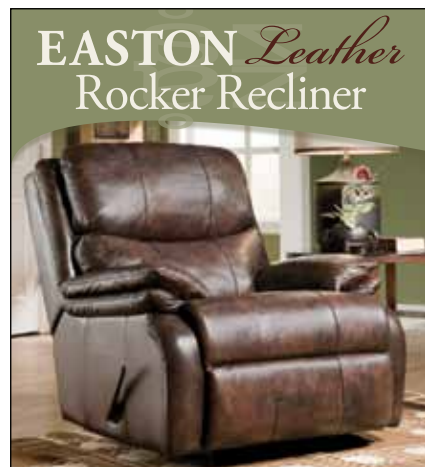
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WAREHOUSE ONLY



Fontana's low-cost decorating

CREATIVITY IS MORE important than income, says Frank Fontana. Here are some creative "secrets" from his book, *Frank Fontana's Dirty Little Secrets of Design*.

- Turn an old bookcase into a hall catchall for shoe and boot storage. Turn the bookcase on end, add casters to the bottom of the bookcase; fasten coat hooks on both sides, and a full-length mirror where shelves would have gone.
- Convert a toy chest into a country-style entry bench by adding a white picket fence as a chair back, a chair pillow on the top and casters to the bottom of the chest. Once it's assembled, paint the entire piece white.
- Bicycle-wheel pot rack. Take a large, clean bike wheel with spokes, attach three chains to one side of the rim with an S-hook, and join the other end of the chains together with another S-hook at the top. Use an eyebolt to mount the wheel and chains to your ceiling. Use additional hooks for hanging pots and pans.
- Doorknob coat rack. Take several old doorknobs, mount them on a piece of painted barn wood and screw to the wall.—JS



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A CASUAL APPROACH to CLASSIC RECLINING

- 100% hand-rubbed and hand-finished semi-aniline cowhide leather—excellent combination of softness and durability
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Sydney Collection

Convertible 4 in 1 Crib - Conversion Kits included

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Toddler Bed



Daybed



Full Bed

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