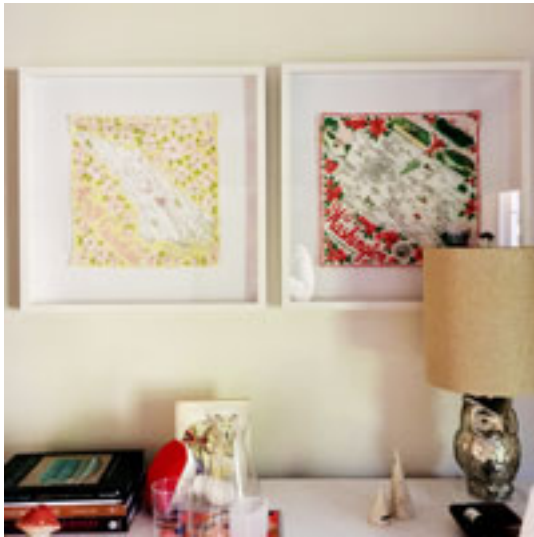


Let's thrift shop!

Second hand shopping for household items, clothes, and other unique items can be thrifty, fun, rewarding, and yield you some pretty awesome stuff. Here are my 10 tips to optimize your thrift shopping excursions-



I found the vintage North Carolina hankie several years ago (where I'm from), and waited patiently to find the Washington State one (where we live). Now they hang in our guest room, which now has a travel theme thanks to vintage finds like these.

1- Keep a running list.

Just *walking* into a thrift store can immediately feel overwhelming if you're not sure where to start (*candy! candy! everywhere!*). Keep a running list and jot down items whenever, as you think of them (I keep a list on my phone). Carry it with you shopping and start there. Things I always look for:

- White mixing bowls.*
- Vintage craft books*
- Floral cotton sheets*
- Original oil paintings*
- Storage for my studio*

2- Set a budget.

If you're looking for a specific item, like a dresser for instance, decide how much you want to spend. Bring that amount of cash with you to shop to avoid overspending. Better yet, leave your debit card at home to avoid the temptation to overspend. (In some cases, you can get a better deal by paying cash anyway.) It's tempting to overspend when you're in the moment. If you're unsure about the price on that perfect piece you want to buy, do a quick search on your phone to see what comparable items are selling for on ebay, for example. Knowledge is power!

Not everyone's cup of tea, but I'm crazy about these vintage Nemadji pottery pieces from the 1980's (is the 80's **really** vintage????). I'm always on the lookout of ones to add to my collection. I never know where I'll find them!



3-Just ask.

Get comfortably asking if there's room on the price in a very polite, but direct way (this takes practice, but worth it). Know that most vendors expect to be asked this question, and may have even priced the merchandise with this question in mind. Asking "*is the price listed the best you can do?*" or "*can I get a better price if I buy the pair?*" is not offensive if asked politely, don't shy away from doing it.

4- Take it home when you buy it.

If you go out looking for a dresser or dining room table, have a way to get it home. Try not to impose on the vendor to hold it for you for an extended period.

5- Not all stains are bad.

If you find a vintage curtain with some mildew staining, but you absolutely *love* it and the fabric seems in decent condition, buy it for a fair price and clean it. My favorite products to clean the vintage and used textiles I use in my work are Bac Out and Retro-Clean. See more [in this blog post](#). Both products are gentle on old fibers and work wonders on removing stains and odors. Follow the package directions and give it a try. Trust me, they can work miracles!

6- Keep an open mind.

If you are looking for a set dining room chairs, it may not be in the cards that day to find 4 identical chairs. However, you might find 4 interesting chairs. With a little imagination and work, it is very easy to create a unified look with paint and new fabric on the upholstered seats. This is not a difficult project to tackle, and the results can be beautiful. I walk you through how to do this project in my book, [Wise Craft: Turning Thrift Store Finds, Fabric Scraps, and Natural Objects Into Stuff You Love](#).

7- Think outside the box.

Can't find a pretty floral fabric to make pillows out of, why not take a look in the women's blouse section? (You could even use the button placket for the pillow's closure.) Or how about the sheet and bed linen section? What about a very large pair of denim jeans or a skirt to yield lots of usable fabric? It's all about creative problem solving and sleuthing to find what you want.

8- Restocking days

Get to know these days at your favorite thrift stores. I know from experience that I have good luck on Thursdays and Fridays in a few of the thrift stores I go to. Fresh stock is going out for the upcoming weekend, and I can often get lucky finding new things (hello, Heath coffee mugs for \$1 each!). Some stores are constantly restocking, so this may be irrelevant, but any clues about when most of that happens is always good to know.

9- Discount days

Goodwill has specific color tags discounted on specific days of the week. If I am looking for denim clothing to cut up and use in my work, I will note the day's sale tag color when I walk in and simply shop by tag color. Since I will be cutting the pieces up to reuse, style isn't important, only finish.

10- "Me" time?

Most of the time, I prefer to be alone when I thrift shop. If I'm looking for supplies for a work project, I have a lot of thinking through to do while I'm shopping and don't want to be distracted. Other times, like when my daughter and I redid her room with DIY'ed thrift store pieces, our collaboration was fun and our comparison shopping together sparked all kinds of ideas. Sometimes, feeding off the excitement of your shopping companion can get you motivated to tackle redoing that super cheap dresser with huge potential.

Happy Shopping!

Blair

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