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wittyknits

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Cozy winter knits

Warm up your decor by adding real — or faux — textured fabrics

BY LISA CHAMOFF
Special to Newsday

In the middle of a seemingly never-ending winter, lounging on the couch wrapped in a chunky cable-knit cardigan is an ideal way to spend the afternoon. But knits don't necessarily have to be limited to clothing. If you want to add warmth to your home, work some big, colorful knits into your decor.

Placing a knitted throw at the foot of a bed or the back of a couch are traditional looks.

"When there's a knitted accent in the room, it's very warm and cozy, no doubt," says Leslie Padron, a Melville designer who used to own a yarn and needlepoint store.

Knits work particularly well with contemporary decor. "I think it adds warmth to modern styling," says Manhasset designer Hilary Chasin. "It makes an otherwise modern space a little more playful."

There also are faux-knitted items, like upholstery, that stand up better to everyday use than a delicate hand-knit. Merrick designer Wendy Garfield goes with natural fabrics that look like knits on sofas.

"You can't really use yarn in a sofa and upholstery because

it's just not practical," Garfield says. "You'll get your jewelry caught on it and it would pull the fabric."

Knitted home accessories come in a range of prices, from inexpensive pieces at Target and the handmade marketplace Etsy to custom-knit wool throws that cost hundreds of dollars.

Of course, you could always learn to knit. With thick yarn and big needles, a chunky knit for the home "goes fast as can be," Padron says. "You can finish it off in a day."

Read on for a sampling of how local designers have made some Long Island rooms a bit cozier, and see a selection of unusual knit and faux-knit products for the home.

FUNKY ACCENTS

Knitted poufs have become common accent pieces. Manhasset designer Hilary Chasin used knitted hassocks from Target in a modern den in Manhasset, softening up a room with a dark leather couch and furniture made of metal and glass.

"The room is for watching movies and hanging out," Chasin says. "When you have kids, and even adults, they like to get on the floor and put their arm, or their feet, on the pouf."

Chasin notes that modern design always needs to be tempered with an interesting texture, especially one that pops, like knit does.

"The knit looks really big," Chasin says. "We're used to seeing knits on a very small scale in apparel. You can imagine the knitting needles used to make that."



Knit poufs add shape and texture; here, designer Hilary Chasin uses knitted hassocks from Target.

FAUX KNITS

Roslyn designer Jody Lichtenstein of Home by Jody says she loves a knit pattern in ceramics. In this otherwise modern granite and stainless-steel kitchen in Roslyn, Lichtenstein used a ceramic bowl in a loose-knit pattern from Crate & Barrel to hold fruit.

"They're great textural pieces," Lichtenstein says. "I already had a great pop of color in this particular kitchen, so the knit texture on the porcelain bowls added real interest and beauty, without competing with the other exciting elements of the kitchen."



JODY LICHTENSTEIN



CHRISTINA BYERS

KNIT LOOK

Christina Byers, a designer in Port Washington, chose a rug with a basket-weave pattern for one of her clients because it has a knit look to it.

"They're looking for the feel," Byers says. "They want that homespun look and also want products that are durable and aren't going to pull like a knit would."

LOCALLY SOURCED

In her own Merrick home, Wendy Garfield has a woven alpaca runner custom-made by Baldwin resident Robin Shatzkin of Autumn Kiss Alpacas, which sources its yarns from alpacas raised in upstate New York.

"I just love the way the material feels," Garfield says. "It's so soft."

Shatzkin has also hand-knit and crocheted smaller rugs as gifts for friends, but warns that those items are more for decoration and are not quite as functional. Rugs woven on a loom tend to hold up much better to foot traffic than something knit.

"The fiber you're talking about is pricey," Shatzkin says. "We tend not to make enormous pieces out of that. And no one is going to knit something that big."



AUTUMN KISS ALPACAS



KAREN JAY ROSEN

MASCULINE TOUCH

Centre Island designer Karen Joy Rosen placed a pair of crimson cable-knit pillows atop a chocolate and red plaid duvet cover in this boy's room.

"I find them tailored and definitely more masculine than feminine," Rosen says of cabled knits, which she uses when she wants to add texture and softness to a room.

The accent pieces are not limited to bedrooms or living rooms. "It could go from there to a library," Rosen says.

TREND SPOTTING



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