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Cheap and Chic

By JENNIFER S. KORNEGAY

A local interior designer shares her secret for a fabulous facelift that's very budget-friendly.

So, what do you do when your living room is in desperate need of two new chairs but funds in your home décor budget are running dangerously low? Well, if you're lucky enough to have a renowned interior designer as your mother, you simply invite her over for a visit and casually point out how sad your little flea-market finds look.

That's just what Megan Barganier Plummer did a few weeks ago, and her plan worked perfectly. Her mom, the talented Montgomery interior designer Cindy Barganier, almost instantly formulated a solution. "My daughter, her husband and my granddaughter live in Columbus, GA. They have a great house, built in the 1920s, but she has the typical newlywed complaint: 'I want my house to look amazing, but I can't spend a lot of money,'" Cindy said.

In swoops Mom to save the day. "I've helped her, but she has a great sense of style, too. She's gone through an evolution of what she wants her house to be. She started with a lot of color, but now she's back to a neutral palette. The walls are all a creamy white."

One day, while shopping around, Megan glimpsed some potential in two old chairs she found at a consignment shop. They had good bones and lovely barrel-shaped backs, as Megan's careful eye discerned, but they also had dark-stained wood and dated floral fabric. "They just wouldn't work with her look," Cindy said. But they were such a good deal for quality furniture — only \$35 apiece — Megan bought them anyway. They sat in her living room for a while, but with her baby's baptism coming up and guests expected at the house, Megan shifted into my-house-must-be-ready mode pretty quickly.

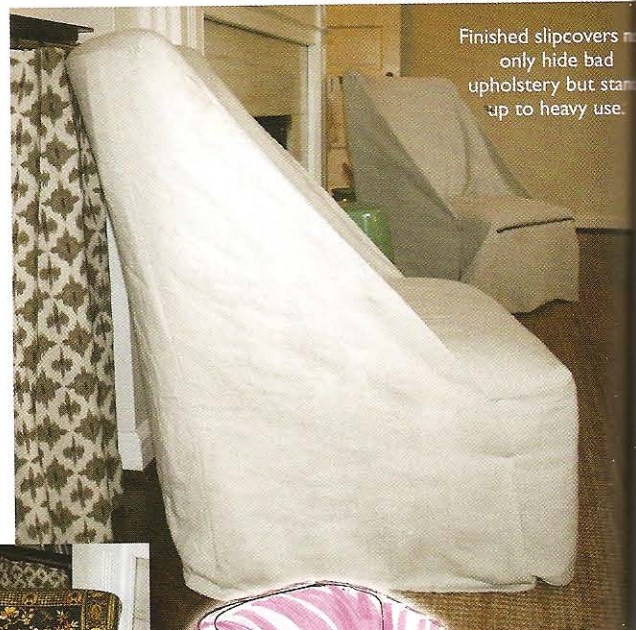
"She knew the look she wanted, neutral fabric loosely covering the chairs to form graceful, swooping arms," Cindy said. "She felt like if we slip-covered the chairs, she could get what she was after. She just didn't know how to do it."

So the search began for fabric, and, unfortunately, Megan kept falling in love with expensive fabrics. Then came Cindy's epiphany. "I was over there one weekend, and Megan had some drop cloths lying around," Cindy said. "They were soft grey with a little fleck; they didn't look like basic painters' cloths."

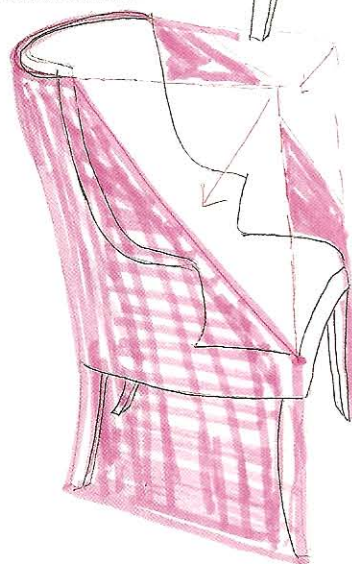
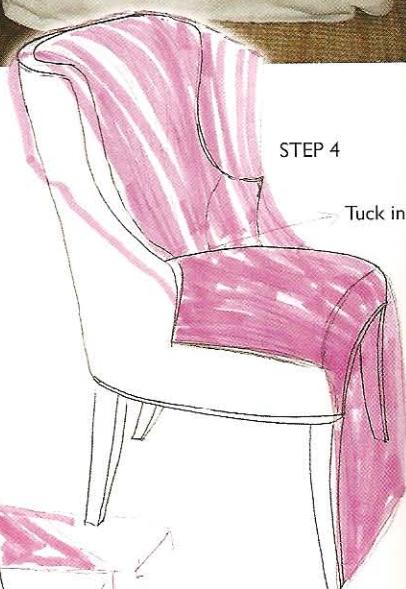
Cindy went with her instinct and just threw one of the cloths over one of the chairs. It draped perfectly, and both mother and daughter loved the result. "Painters' cloths come in 12-foot widths, and when I started measuring, I realized that if I split one, I would have enough material to do both. So for \$22, I had all the fabric we needed to do both chairs."

Not only was it cheap — it turned out to be amazingly easy. After the first cut to divide the cloth, no other cuts were made. There was no sewing machine needed either. Cindy simply folded, tucked and did some stitching directly to the chair. Nail-heads, also inexpensive and available at any hardware or home improvement store, provided the finishing touch.

Slipcovers



Before: A classic slipper chair's fabric makes it a challenging fit for a neutral decor.



Want to Cheaply Slipcover Your Chairs?

Cindy has shared the technique she used, broken down into step-by-step instructions, with *Montgomery Living*.

**Note: This technique works best with a chair that is the same general shape as the one shown in the photo. It is a pretty common chair type, though, so keep a look out in flea markets, antique shops and consignment shops.*

1 Measure from the floor on the left side up to the top of the seat, over the seat and back down to the floor on the right side. (This will give you your width for your first cut of cloth, which will cover the front half of the chair.)

2 Measure from the top back seam of chair, down the inside back, across the seat and down the front to the floor. (This measurement will give you your length for your first cut of cloth, which will cover the front half of the chair.)

3 Spread the drop cloth out on the floor and study the size of the first cut needed to cover the front half of the chair. Cindy and Megan were able to cut the canvas into two equal pieces on the seam line using one piece for each chair. Cindy then cut the piece needed for the front so that she retained the pre-hemmed edge as the final bottom hem on the covered chair.

4 Pin the top cut edge of fabric to the top back seam of the chair. Stretch it firmly – but not too tightly – down the inside back and tuck it into the gap between the seat and back. Continue over the seat and allow the fabric to fall freely to the floor. Adjust so that the hem is just resting on the floor. Put excess fabric loosely around the side of the chair and pin it temporarily.

5 Take the remaining piece of fabric and fold until it is the right length for attaching to the seam at the top back and hanging straight down to floor.

6 Take remaining side “wings” of the back fabric that is now dangling and fold the top front corner down at a 45 degree angle, creating a creased diagonal line that will become the fake sloping arm.


7 Using a staple gun, secure the fabric at the front leg and the top of the wing.

8 Repeat on the other side.

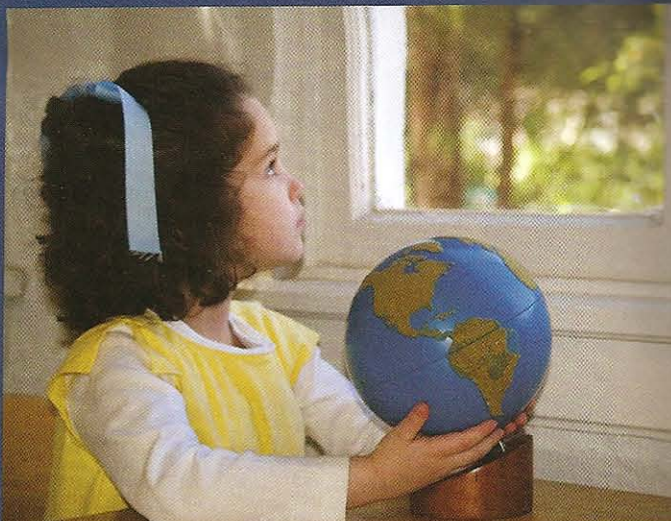
9 Go to the inside of the new “arm” that you just created and turn the first piece of fabric (the one on the front of the chair) down at the corner to match the 45 degree angle of the outside piece of fabric and hand-stitch those together using a blind stitch.

10 Go to the back of the chair and whip stitch (by hand) the fabric onto the chair, removing pins as you go.

11 Add nail-head trim hammered into the wood frame at the seat front (optional).

Voila! New chair! 

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