



Is This the Most Stylish Basement Renovation Ever?

Fair warning: The spectacular way designer Lisa Kooistra transformed her clients' once-gloomy underground space will have you itching to reimagine your own basement ASAP.

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How to Maximize Style, Sustainability and Space

When Ontario, Canada-based designer **Lisa Kooistra** reimagined this 1,800-square-foot home, she knew she'd have to get creative. The energetic young family of four living here craved bright, versatile spaces that could grow with them (and stow their stuff with style), and their dark, leaky 570-square-foot basement wasn't pulling its weight.

Lisa partnered with local craftspeople, sourced durable, eco-friendly building materials and sourced locavore Toronto decor to transform all three floors of this home from the bottom up. Today the basement is the home's signature feature — and it now boasts office space, a home gym, a walk-in pantry, wine storage, a reading nook *and* a multipurpose family room. When it comes to underground living space, she's proven the sky's the limit.



Use Rich Materials to Make a Strong First Impression Foyer

Transitional spaces like this foyer benefit from touchable textiles just as much as cozy gathering areas do. "We wanted to create a sense of luxury with chenille and velvet fabrics throughout," Lisa says. With the lozenge-shaped aubergine bench, "the idea was to add this fabric with a sense of impact and to help add a statement in the newly-designed entry."

That impactful shade also has significance to her clients, one of whom is Indian. "This color is rich but still neutral and has some unique meanings," Lisa explains. "Purple is associated with spirituality, the sacred, higher self, third eye, fulfillment and vitality. Purple helps align oneself with the whole of the universe."



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Adding a Wall Can Increase an Open Space's Functionality

Though flow-anywhere layouts are massively popular, Lisa and her clients were less than infatuated with how the home's front-door sight line carried all the way through its ground floor. The solution? Dividing the entry and living areas with a wall (adorned on this side with a seaside painting) added storage and created a place to pause.

"I knew by leaving [the layout] as-is that you would walk in and have a lack of storage but also see directly into the kitchen and the back of the new sectional," Lisa recalls. "The clients had mentioned that they struggled with looking at homes with a similar footprint. I had this *Aha!* moment and thought [the wall] would be such a great addition to the space. This way we could solve all these problems and add a beautiful, well-designed entry that they can enjoy."

READ MORE: [How to Create a Floor Plan and Furniture Layout for Your Living Room](#)



Hire a Pro to Create the Stop-and-Drop of Your Dreams

Lisa enlisted [RusticHouse Interiors](#), a local woodworking team, to create the bespoke storage space her clients craved. They and their little daughters now have a warm, stylish spot to sit and stow outerware, as well as under-bench cubbies for additional items.

SEE MORE PHOTOS: [20 Ways to Keep Wet-Weather Muck Out of Your Entryway](#)



Photo By: Blynda DaCosta Photography

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For Kid-Friendly Dining, Pair Wipeable Surfaces With Textural Accents

The pretty and practical dining area combines visual pizzazz for Mom and Dad with rough and ready durability for their little daughters. "We needed this space to be very family-friendly, so we found the perfect dining table with a ceramic stone top," Lisa says. "That made it stain resistant and easy to wipe. We then found these fun molded chairs that would be wipeable for the kids. [For] the end chairs, we were able to find a fun, beautiful chair that complemented the simplicity of the other ones. The unique woven back that you can see when walking into the room adds interest." A stylish mixed dining set that maximizes function: win-win.

SEE MORE PHOTOS: [Family-Friendly Home Decorating Ideas](#)

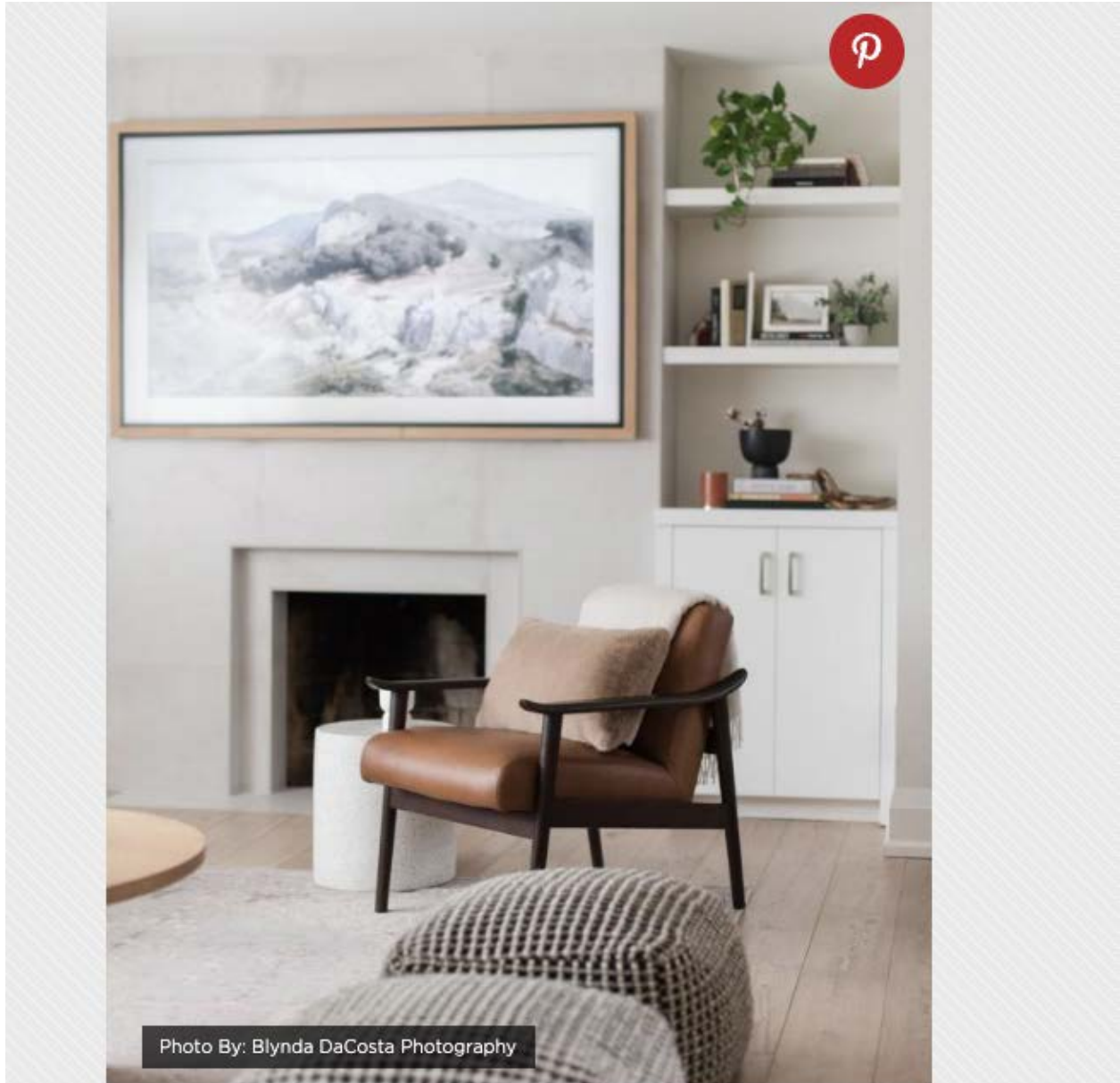


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Anchor the Living Room With Art That Establishes Its Palette

When Lisa found the artwork now hanging above the sectional, she knew she had a hit on her hands that would come to define the color palette of the entire space. "The colors were calming and the clients loved this painting," she recalls. "We got this piece custom-made in a large format to create impact in the space. The art set the overall look and feel for a room with the exact color palette." For the sectional itself, she chose a soft polyester chenille that could repel stains and survive the exuberance of two active little girls. The poufs beside it, in turn, are a durable wool blend; "the woven fabric with the black helps to tie in many other black elements in the dining room," she explains.

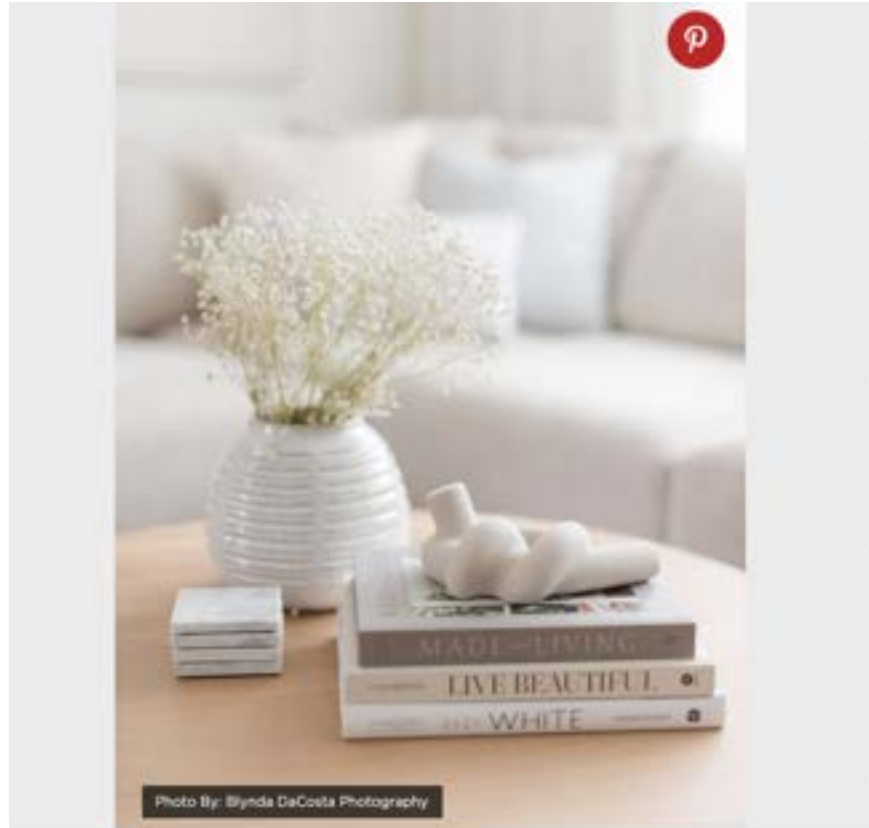
READ MORE: [10 Best Sectional Sofas for Every Space](#)



Invest in Tech That Complements Your Decor

If camouflaging your television isn't an option, consider upgrading to a unit that can go toe-to-toe with a gallery wall. Here, Lisa hung a [Samsung Frame](#) (with a picture-frame trim and a display that cycles through art when it's not in use) to complement the living room's minimalistic fireplace surround and oak flooring.

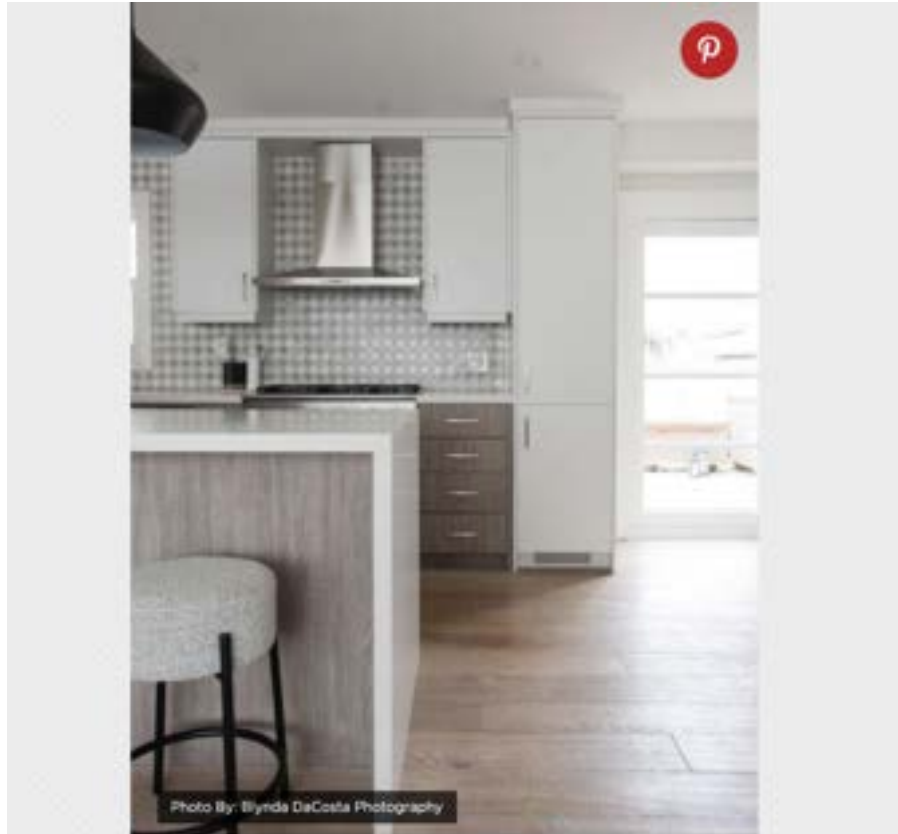
READ MORE: [How to Hide Your TV in Plain Sight + Save on Style](#)



Keep It Simple on the Coffee Table

This lovely, bespoke oak coffee table — created by the same team that crafted the floating bench and paneling in the entryway — needs little in the way of embellishment. Lisa created a tone-on-tone display of baby's breath in an earthenware vase, marble coasters and a trio of design books topped with a curvaceous ceramic sculpture.

SEE MORE PHOTOS: [15 Designer Tips for Styling Your Coffee Table](#)



Soften Hard-Working Areas With Extra-Touchable Fabrics

Lisa returned to her "mostly work and some play" formula to finish the existing kitchen, where sleek elements like a full wall of tile, stainless steel appliances and minimalist cabinet hardware called for a comforting counterpart. She tucked nubby stools under the island's quartz countertop to introduce some softness, then added a pantry that matched the cabinets to help keep that countertop clear.

SEE MORE PHOTOS: [Kitchen Seating Options: Ideas for Chairs and Stools](#)



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Keep Your Eyes Peeled for Storage Opportunities

In reimagining the basement, Lisa made every last inch of the now-inviting space count. The 34"x34" cellar behind a custom glass door features custom oak storage that accommodates up to 80 bottles of wine. The handsome trio of panels under the stairs, in turn, swing open to reveal space for errant toys.

SEE MORE PHOTOS: [12 Creative Ways to Use the Space Under Your Stairs](#)



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Lighten Up the Basement With Versatile Pieces and Pale Tones

With apologies to '70s-era chillout caves and gloomy game rooms, contemporary basements should reflect the overall aesthetics of the home. In developing the largest part of her clients' basement as a lounge and movie-night area, Lisa chose customizations and pieces that reflect their home's ground and second floors and adapt at will to spontaneous new situations.

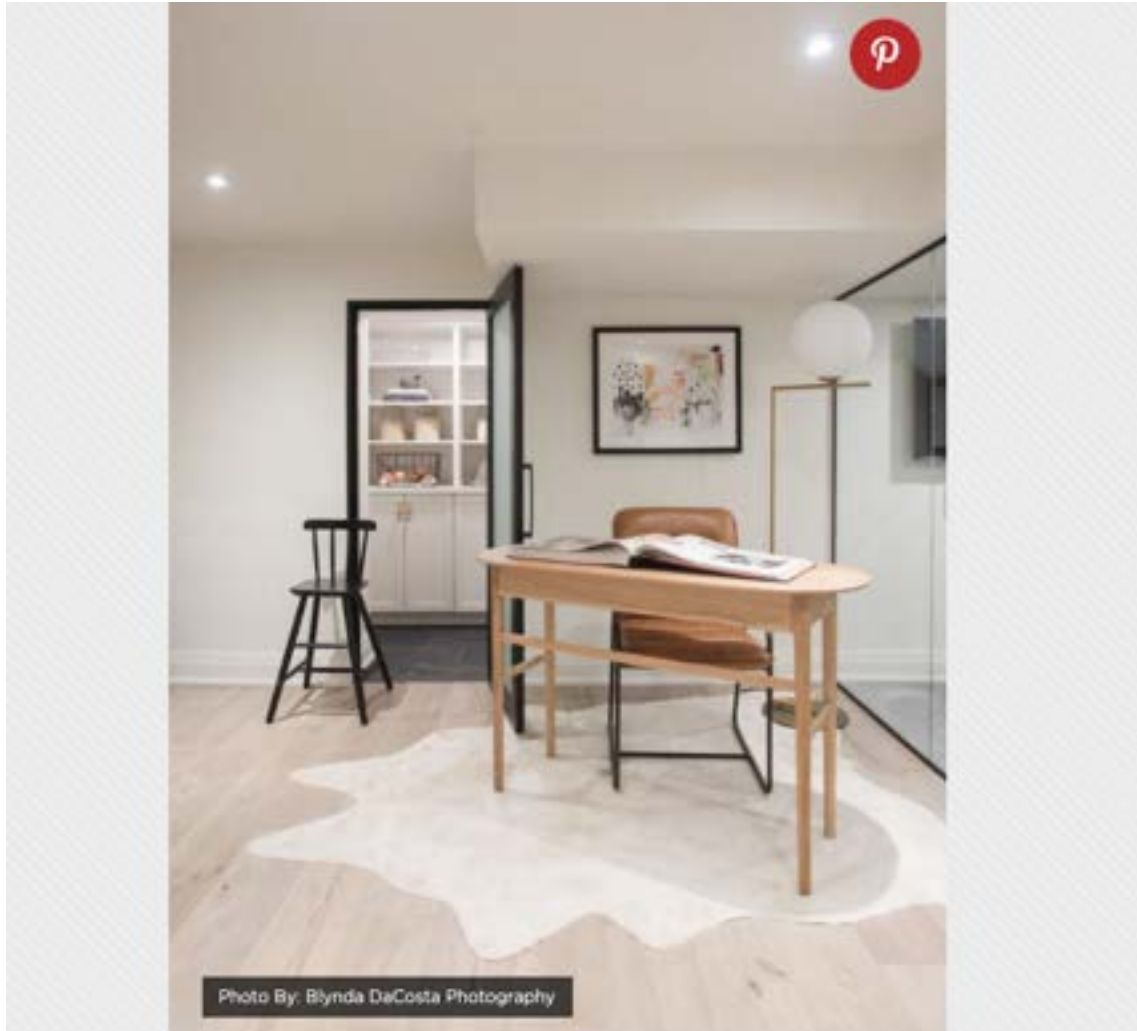
"We added a large and deep sofa but knew it would be very tight with a lot more furniture," she explains. "We wall-mounted the TV unit and added white oak around it for a custom look." Ottomans can serve as extra seating anywhere, and the swivel chair can supplement the bar area or the TV room. "We also added some custom, large-scale artwork of the girls over the sofa because this is a shared space and play area. Keeping the space light and floating some of the furniture and millwork helped to achieve [that] feel."



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Don't Skimp on Decor in Functional Spaces

The fantastically clever basement gym features a space-defining, sound-muffling glass wall and door, equipment galore, recycled-rubber flooring and playful fine-art photography. "These were the clients' pieces and they were fun and added a nice vibe in the gym area," Lisa says.



Let Your Desk Have Pride of Place in a Multi-Use Space

"This basement needed to be very functional, and the husband needed a small area to work," Lisa explains. "I didn't want to put a desk in one of the corners, so we ended up emphasizing this area and making it part of the open area." She created a layered vignette by pairing a Scandinavian-style white oak writing desk with a decorative leather chair, then defining the space with framed art, an angular floor lamp and an organic area rug.



Photo by: Blynda DaCosta Photography

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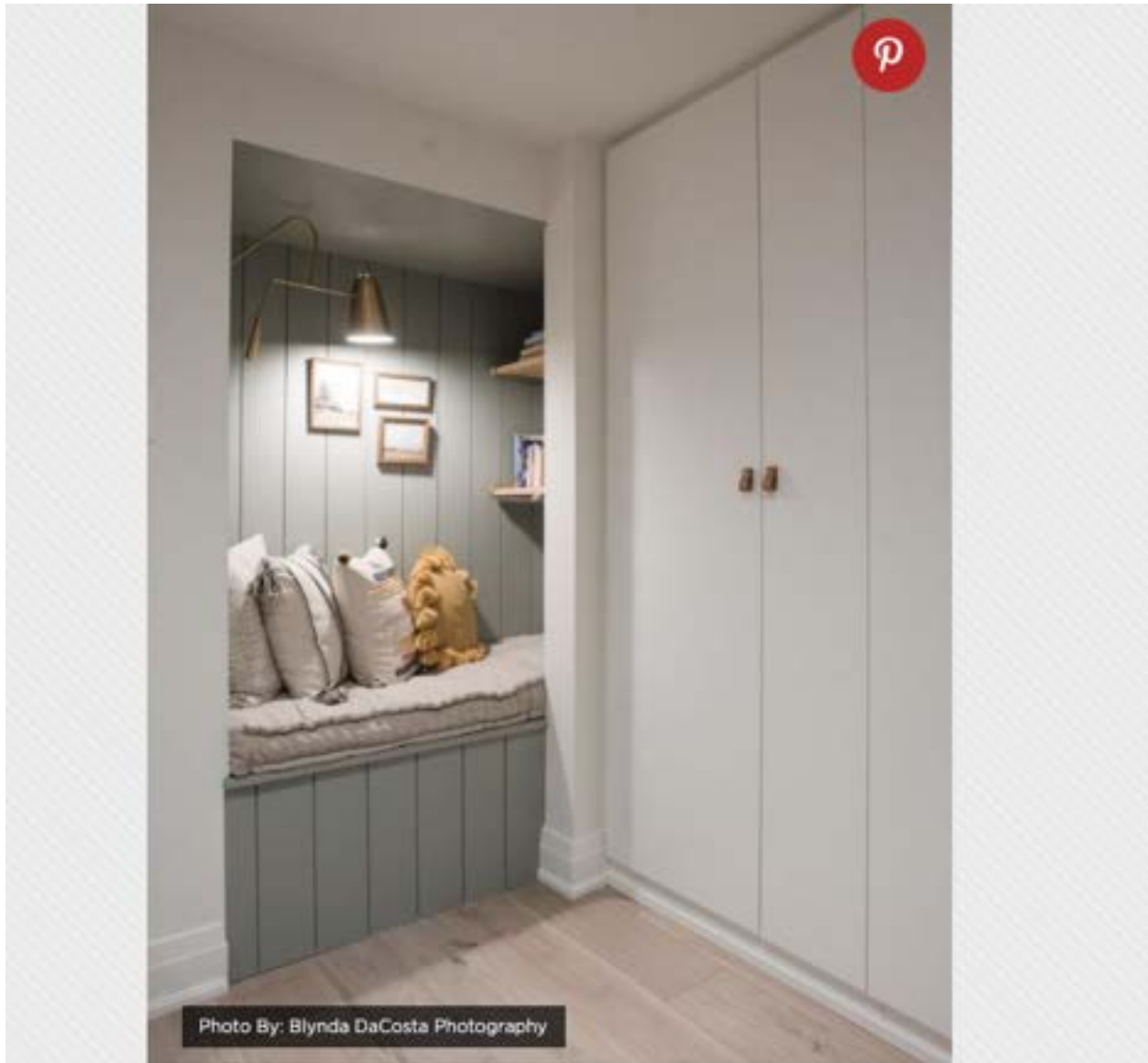
Experiment With Color on Bar Cabinets

Dazzled by vivid kitchen cabinets but unsure if you're ready to commit to a floor-to-ceiling hue? Smaller storage arrays like these bar cabinets offer a lower-stakes opportunity to explore your feelings about straying from neutrals. The paint Lisa chose here — [Evergreen Fog](#), Sherwin-Williams's 2022 Color of the Year — is both on-trend and subtle enough to stand the test of time.



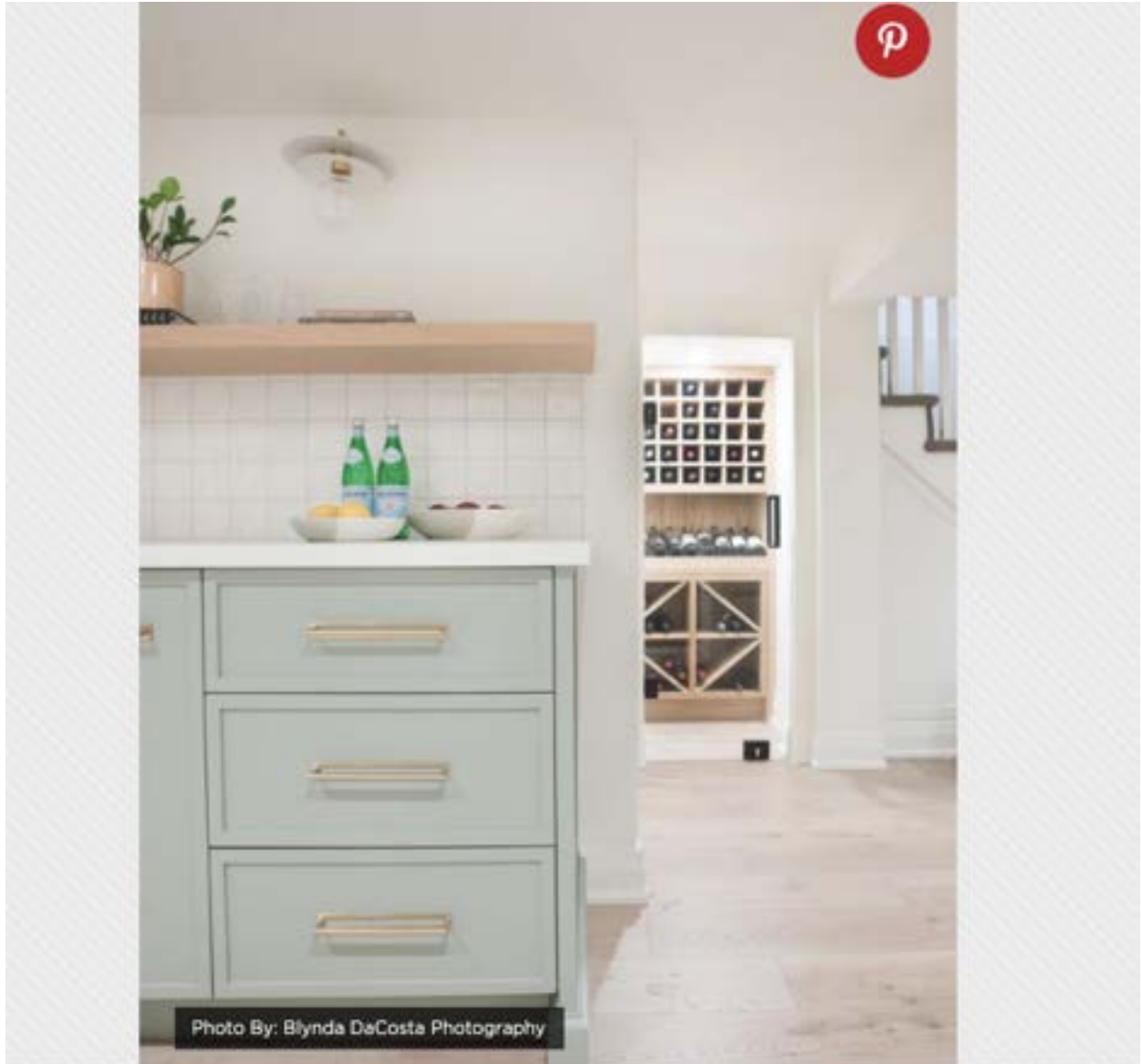
To Outfit Secondary Serving Areas, Think Outside the Kitchen

Lisa's clients wanted this space to centralize entertaining supplies *and* feel fun for their kids, so she leaned into rich metallics and pale wood that reflected the luxe, playful Scandinavian aesthetic she developed throughout the home. "The wall sconces had a funky and fun vibe to them," she explains. The gold cabinet hardware had a similar feel; "I found that they looked more like furniture hardware than cabinet hardware," she says.



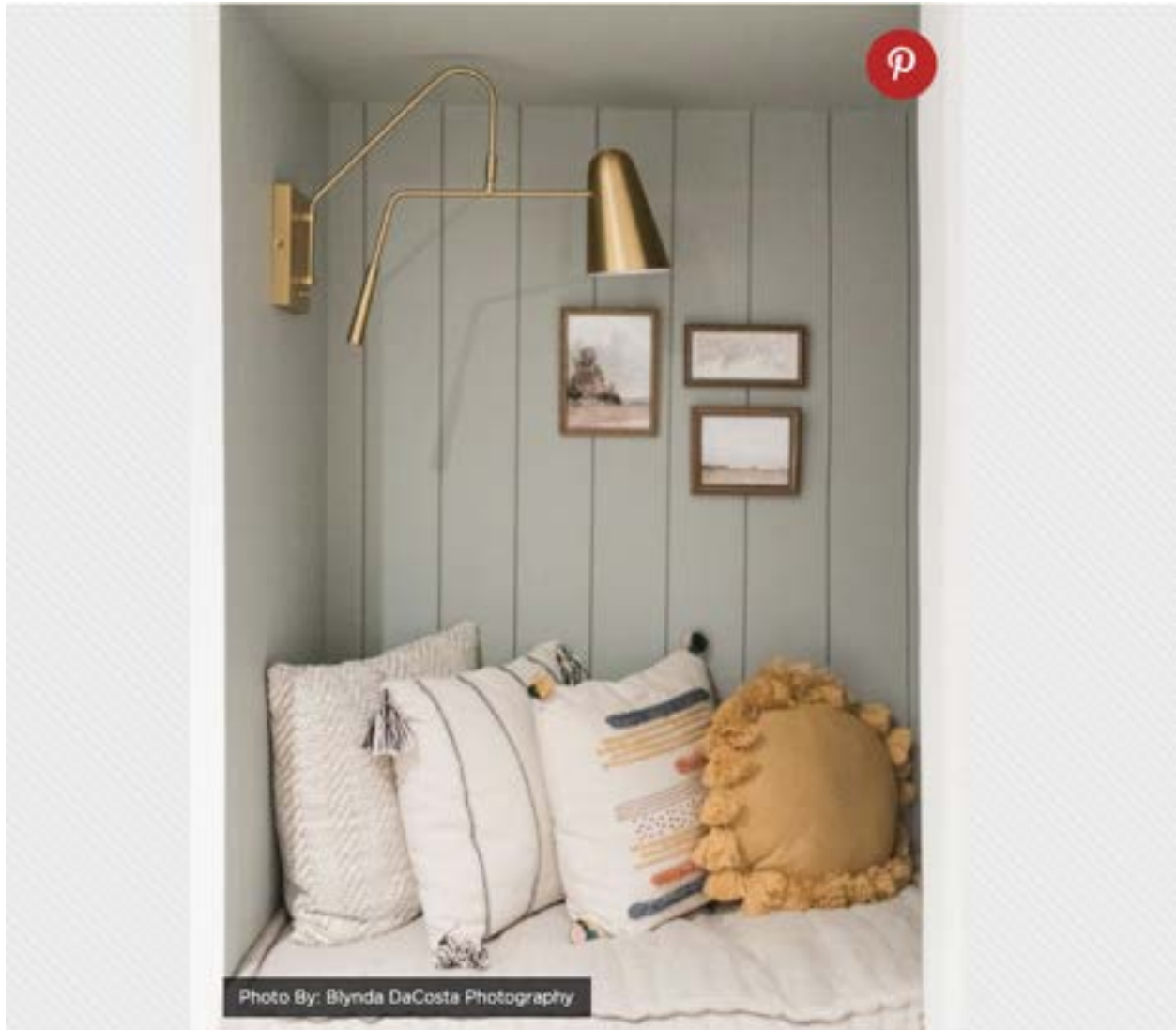
Turn an Extra Closet Into a Reading Nook

Lisa's reconfiguration of her clients' spaces was so successful that she was able to convert a closet in the basement into a sweet reading spot for their girls. Sage green paneling (once again, [Sherwin-Williams Evergreen Fog](#)) adds subtle texture and makes the space feel special, shelves provide a place to stash favorite titles — and custom white cabinets with unique leather pulls located to the right of the nook conceal the area's heavy-duty storage. "Behind the doors we added pull-out wire bins, shelves, cubbies and drawers for all the kids' crafts and toys," Lisa says.



Outfit the Basement With an Extra-Tough Version of Your Home's Flooring

The pale, engineered oak already covering the first and second floors was pretty durable stuff, but Lisa decided to go one better in the basement. Her team installed ready-for-anything vinyl with a tone and grain that match its look.



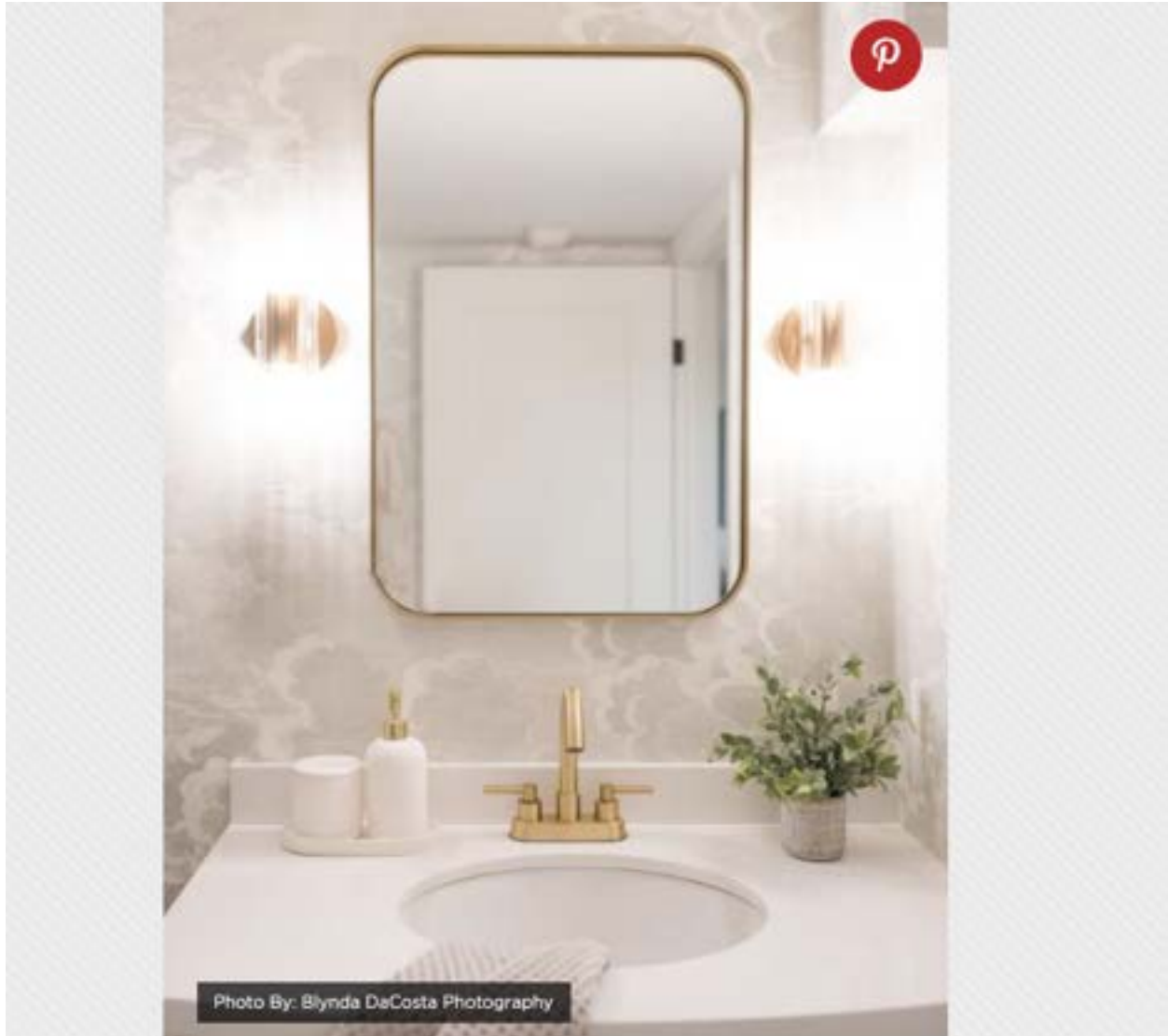
Load Up on Pillows to Make a Tiny Space Sing

The impulse to install this nook's reading lamp and call it a day on decor is understandable. Every inch counts here, right? But it stops short of making the space magical, and Lisa accomplished *that* by piling on fabulous toss pillows and hanging not one but *three* diminutive frames above them. "We found those vintage pieces of art and hung them in an organic pattern that would be fun for the girls," she explains.



Arrange Dried Greens in Less-Visited Areas

A sweet, simple spray of mixed eucalyptus branches in an oversized Mason jar are the ideal accent for the basement's activity table: it makes an otherwise-utilitarian space feel sweeter, and it'll look just as lovely as it does now if it sits undisturbed for a few weeks (or months!).



Pair an Ethereal Print With Gleaming Gold in the Powder Room

The once-grim basement bathroom is now lighter than air, thanks to atmospheric [Cole & Son Nuvolette wallpaper](#) and rich metallics that carry through the mirror, sconces, hardware and vanity accessories. Lisa left the room's neutral porcelain flooring in place, then updated the vanity with creamy paint that complements the clouds scudding across the walls.



Apply Curio-Shelf Style Moves to Beautify a Pantry

Lisa chose an elegant neutral tone ([Sherwin-Williams City Loft](#)) and luxe geometric hardware for the basement pantry's shelves and cabinet, then arranged humble kitchen staples with the same eye for balance and aesthetic appeal one usually associates with living rooms and libraries. Who knew onions and spuds could be the ultimate *objets*?



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Use Gentle, Enveloping Off-White to Create a Restful Bedroom

Lisa created cohesion throughout the home by tinting the walls off-white — here, [Benjamin Moore's Cloud Cover](#) — to let furniture serve as its focal points. In the primary suite, that strategy foregrounds this gorgeous sleeping space. Just as the landscape photo downstairs provides a palette for the living room, this throw tells the room's bedtime story. "The faux fur had all the tones in it that we needed in the space," she explains.

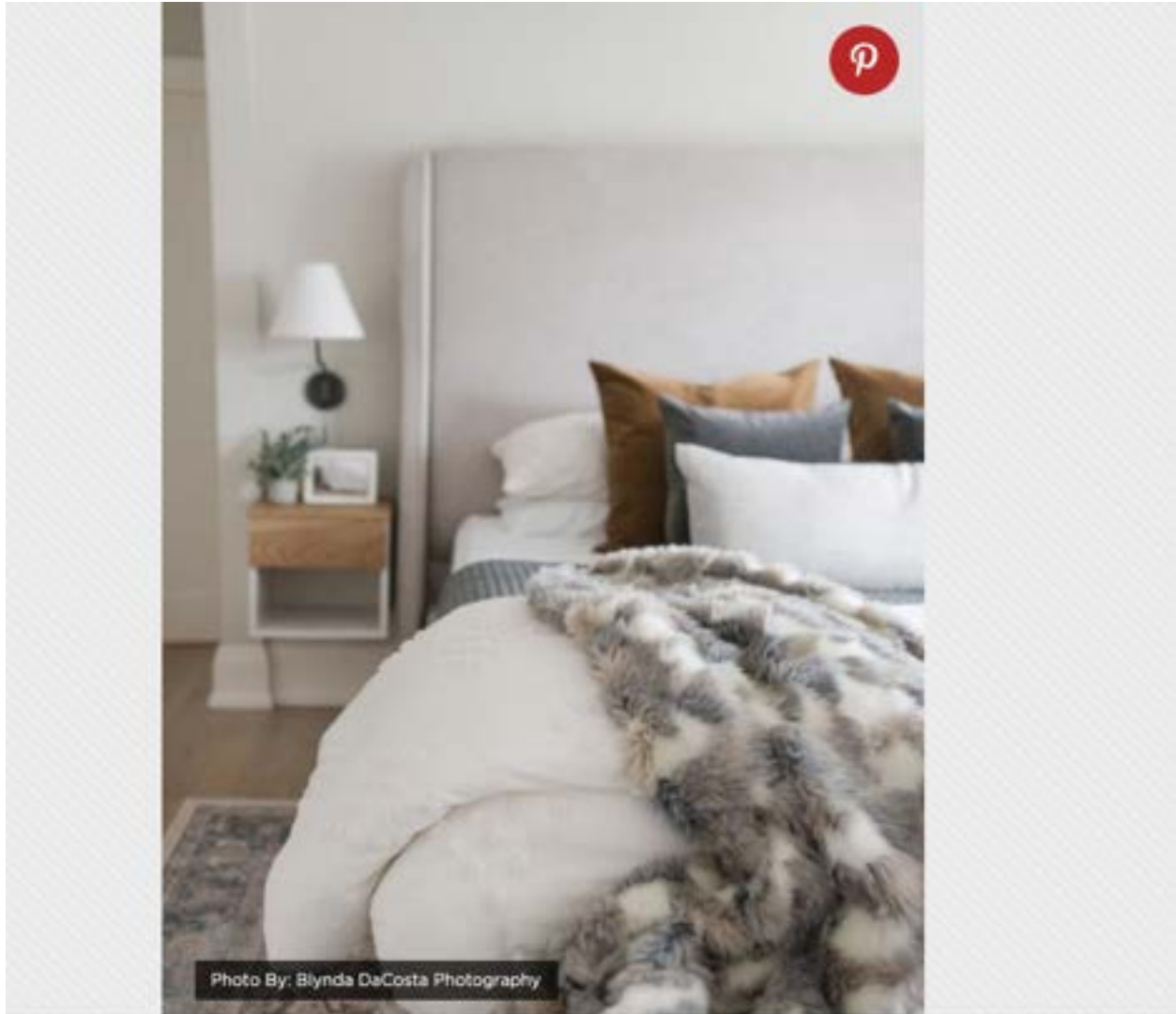
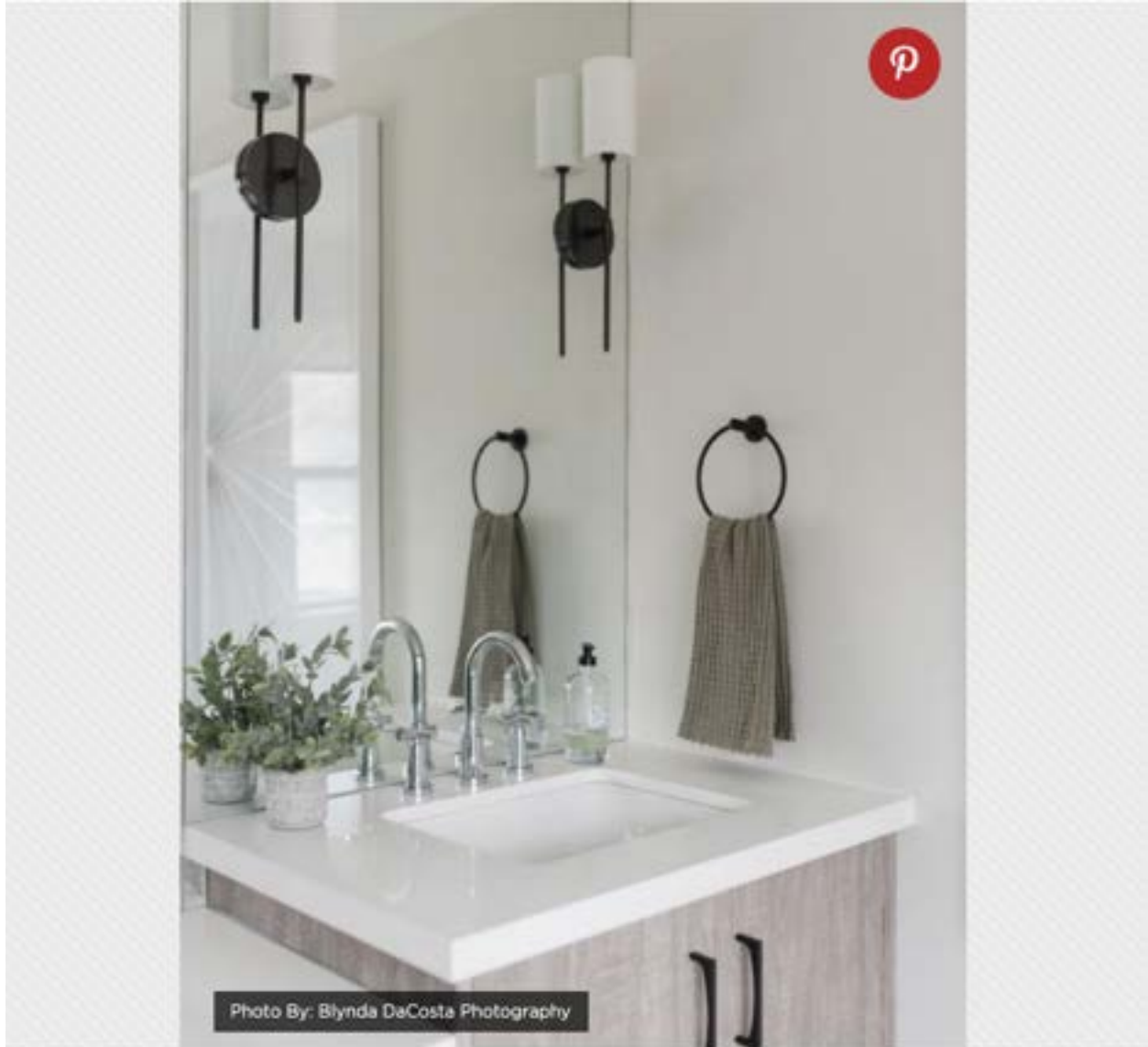


Photo By: Blynda DaCosta Photography

Build an Extravagant Bed and Keep the Rest of the Room Simple

Once Lisa had chosen that throw, she kept on going (and going). "We added [velvet pillows](#) from Tonic Living and [bedding](#) from Urban Outfitters with a white linen comforter and a dark silk [coverlet](#) from Crate & Barrel," she recalls. "The drapery is a white linen and the bed is a cream velvet. We used a lot of velvet, silk and faux furs in this room!"



Mount Sconces on the Bathroom Mirror to Maximize Light and Space

The plate mirror that doubles as a rear wall in this bathroom suite reflects the sleek, architectural sconces Lisa chose to illuminate the area and bounces around the natural light pouring in from the room beyond it. Why mount a framed looking glass when you can create a grand effect like this?



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Use Vintage and Neutral Pieces to Add Timeless Style in Kids' Bedrooms

"We like creating rooms that kids can grow into," Lisa says. "This can mean adding main investment pieces that are in neutral tones while letting the kids add their own personality with decor, pillows and art." The vintage rug (which the clients' daughter loved) was a first find; Lisa then sourced the removable wallpaper on Etsy and carried its warm blush tone into blackout drapery panels.

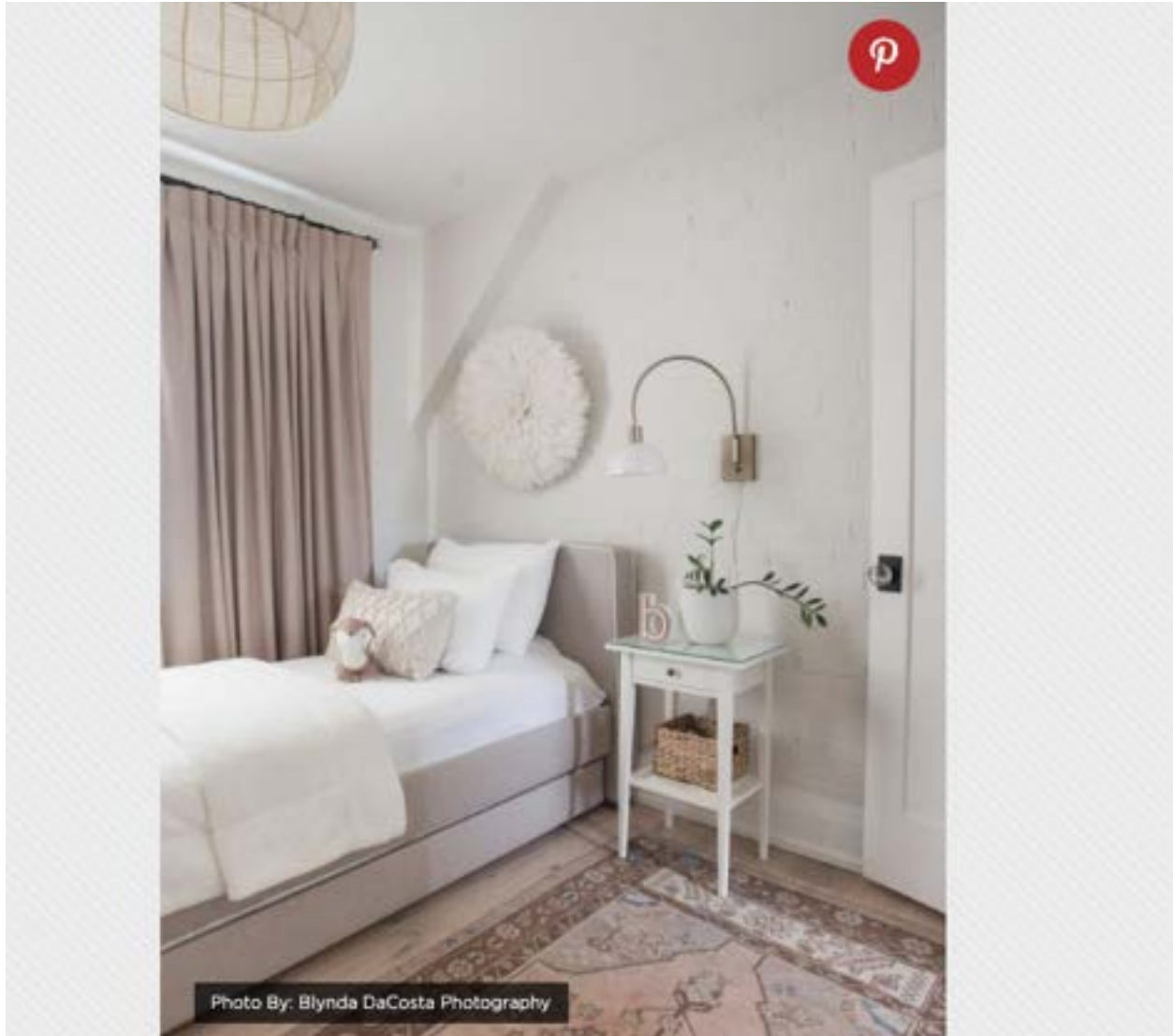
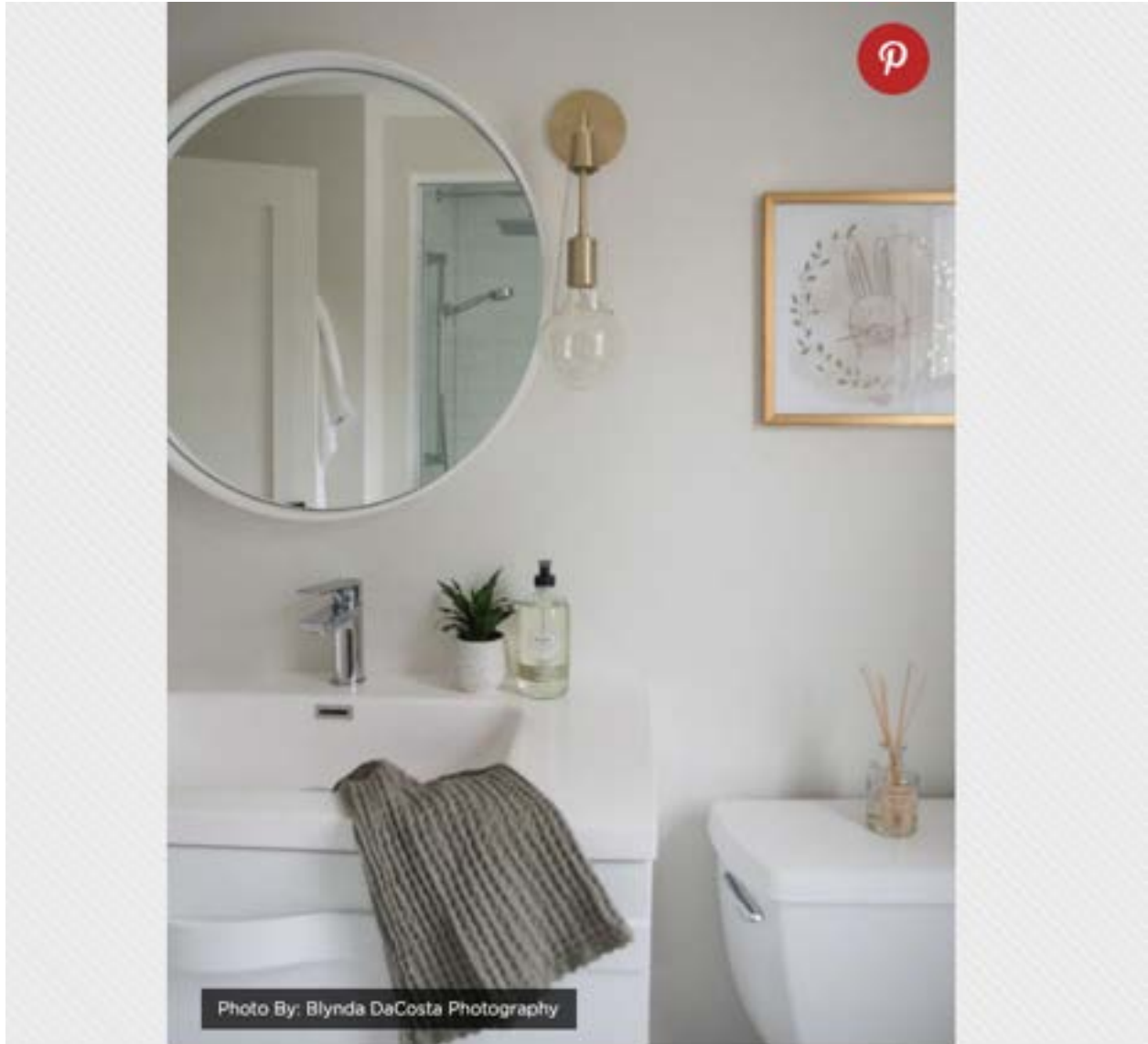


Photo By: Blynda DaCosta Photography

Choose a Child's Bed That's Sleepover-Ready

One of the room's coolest features is a rather subtle one: the locally-made bed incorporates a trundle. "Monte is the brand, and they are a sustainable, green company," Lisa notes. The spectacular white juju hat mounted above the bed brings the drama and continues the family's aesthetic. "We used a lot of unique pieces, finds and textures throughout the home, so adding a unique piece like this feathered headress over the daughter's bed made for a good story," she says.



Bring a Favorite Item Into Your Kids' Bathroom

The charming, whiskered fellow beside the bathroom mirror infuses the room with personality. "This was a cute print that the clients had for [their] daughters," Lisa explains. "Then we added some fun wall lights to bring in the gold in this space."