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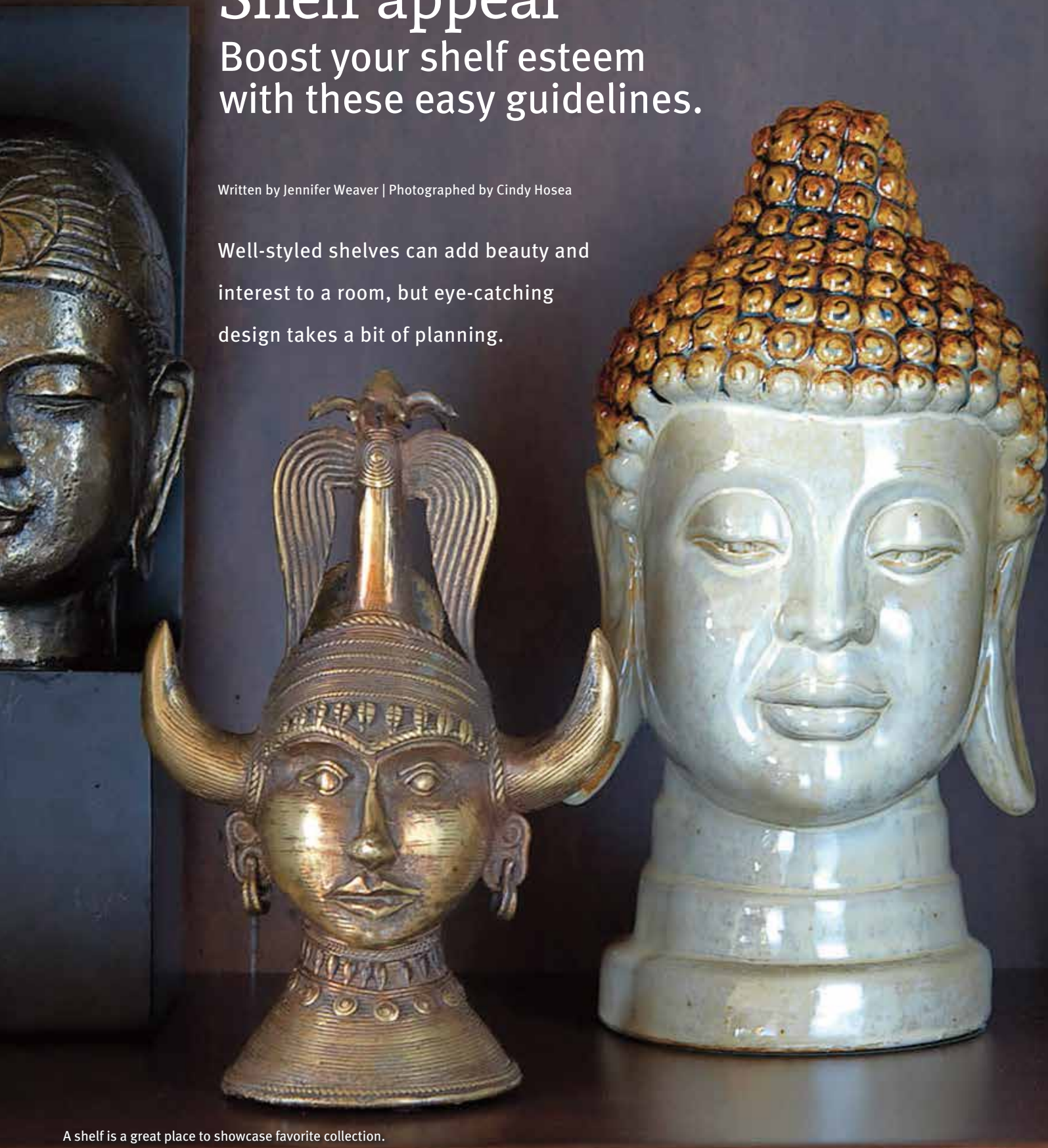
You and your
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Shelf appeal

Boost your shelf esteem with these easy guidelines.

Written by Jennifer Weaver | Photographed by Cindy Hosea

Well-styled shelves can add beauty and interest to a room, but eye-catching design takes a bit of planning.



A shelf is a great place to showcase favorite collection.

We asked designer Cynthia Masters, owner of Panageries, to help us come up with an easy plan for decorating shelves. As you begin decorating, you should decide what you would like to highlight, Masters says. Typically, people will choose one of three plans: fill shelves completely with books, fill shelves with a mixture of books and accessories or fill shelves with a personal collection.

Filling your shelves with books can be a simple and elegant way for voracious readers to share their interests with others. Masters cautions, however, that tossing any old book on a shelf can take away from the look of a room. She uses leather-bound books or coffee table books. Chosen books should reflect the color palate of the room. Serious do-it-yourselfers sometimes choose to create book covers using a room's color palate. You can also remove the book jackets.

The subject matter of the book is important, too.

"You don't want a shelf full of cookbooks in the living room, but they would look good in a kitchen," she says. "You want your books to reflect the function of the room."

Using a mixture of books and accessories is a second option. Varying placement of items is key to making this look work. Masters recommends starting with the most visually heavy look on the bottom. For instance, if you will have one shelf that is just books, it should be the bottom. A large bowl might decorate the top shelf and shelves in between would have a mixture of books and accessories. As you mix books with accessories, it is important to vary the heights. You will want some books placed horizontally, perhaps with an accessory such as a small urn or framed photograph on top and others placed vertically. You can use bookends to add interest or even a small painting propped with books to the left or right. She advises starting with the top shelf and working your way down or starting with the bottom shelf and working your way up.

"Each time you fill a shelf, stop and stand back and look," she says. "When it feels right, move on to the next shelf."

She suggests using accessories to add visual appeal through color and varying textures.

The last way she suggests is using your shelves to house collections.

"Collections look best when they are all together, as opposed to all over the house," Masters said. "Shelves offer a great place to display them. You can fill the

shelves with 20 to 30 percent books, and use the rest of the space for a collection."

Some mistakes people make when decorating shelves include placing things in a straight line, using colors that do not complement the room and not adding enough to shelves.

"If you are going to do bookshelves, they need to be full enough that it doesn't look like you ran out of money or creativity," Masters says.

While decorating shelves can be a bit overwhelming, by following these few simple rules, you will have shelves that you love!



Varying the heights, colors and textures of items will add additional interest to your shelves.