COUNTRY ALMANAC®
NO.124 ■ FALL 2009

› double issue!

Small Room DECORATING®

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COUNTRY ALMANAC® NO. 124 • SMALL ROOM DECORATING • FALL 2009

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BREAK INTO THE BOX

Carving a living area, studio apartment, home office and art studio out of a small Craftsman.

ROMANTIC REMODEL
Passersby often stop and compliment Lisa and Michael Maher on their Craftsman bungalow's cheery door, in Benjamin Moore's Stop Sign Red.

1,500-SQUARE-FOOT BUNGALOW

- **STYLE:** Minimalist California Craftsman bungalow
- **RENOVATIONS:** Built a platform with storage shelving in the attic, and added lighting and ventilation; custom cabinetry built in the living room to hide electronics; created a 350-SF studio apartment for their grown son (two rooms plus a bathroom)
- **DESIGN CHALLENGES:** Maximizing the utilization of the living room/dining room area to allow for multi-use options and let the spaces work together harmoniously—while at the same time keeping the rooms separate
- **BIGGEST SMALL-SPACE ADVANTAGE:** Keeps family bond close and won't have "too big" a house once the children leave home
- **BIGGEST DISADVANTAGE:** Noise and lack of privacy
- **HOMEOWNER IDEA:** Study European design for ideas, since Europeans tend to live in smaller homes/spaces than Americans

BY KATHRYN BECHEN

Surely Leonardo da Vinci had homeowners Lisa and Michael Maher in mind when he voiced his belief that, "Small rooms or dwellings discipline the mind; large ones weaken it." Creative masters at marrying organized function with artistic minimalist flair, these La Jolla, California, natives use and enjoy every inch of their small California Craftsman beach bungalow.

"We wanted to raise our children, John and Page, in a smaller home that was well designed so our family would stay close as a unit," says Lisa Maher. "And we also wanted a home that, once our children left home, would not be too big for us as a couple—and could also accommodate aging parents, if needed."

Small-Space Specialists

With that end in mind, the Maher family remodeled their three-bedroom home over time, without altering the 1,500-square-foot footprint of the original 1926 structure. In addition, they configured the three-car garage and space over it to serve as a multifunctional vacation rental, pottery studio for Lisa and studio apartment for their adult son, who has recently returned home to live. As part of their son's transition, Michael moved his home office into his son's former bedroom in the main house.

"One of the biggest small-space challenges was maximizing the utilization of the living room and dining room areas in our main house to allow for multi-use options while at the same time keeping the room functions separate," says Lisa. "But we were able to achieve it with careful thought and planning, and we were also able to

HIDDEN ASSETS
The glass-topped willow coffee table, made by Lisa Maher's mother, helps keep the room from feeling closed in. All entertainment media is hidden inside custom-made glass cabinets.

PHOTOS BY MARK TANNER ● STYLING BY SUNDAY HENDRICKSON

WORK IN STYLE
The Mahers' dining room is a cozy space to gather together for family meals. It also can quickly double as a convenient home office space—with the cabinets functioning as files and an easy-store laptop kept handy.

NOW YOU SEE IT...
The door for the microwave/convection oven, at right, pops up and slides in for easy access when necessary.

...NOW YOU DON'T
The cabinet door behind the old weathered stool, above right, houses the microwave/convection oven, which was purposely placed in bottom cabinetry so that the glass-front top cabinets could be used to display Lisa's pottery.

stay true to the original Craftsman style."

The couple purposely chose a round table for the dining room in order to best accommodate the small room and also to enhance the family feeling at dinnertime. Because the Mahers do not have a family room, their living room must serve multiple purposes. They found that hiding electronics in the living room, and keeping the aesthetic focus on the fireplace and Michael's framed photography above the mantel were paramount to a sense of organization. They also had custom cabinetry built, and Lisa designed the fireplace surround tiles. Swivel chairs were chosen to accommodate both TV viewing and conversation.

Undaunted by small-space challenges, the Maher family hired a contractor specializing in boat and yacht cabinetry to design clever kitchen solutions such as hiding the microwave/convection oven behind a push-in door. Relocating a stackable washer and dryer to the hallway near the bedrooms and building custom shelving in the bedroom closets to avoid the use of free-standing dressers also helps the family live well in a small space. The result of all these efforts is one small property that serves as an all-in-one home, vacation rental, studio apartment, pottery studio, home business office and possibly even a future mother-in-law apartment. Indeed, Leonardo would be proud!

Quick Tip

One way to maintain a sleek look in a small home is to tuck appliances away behind cabinets, so the kitchen looks streamlined rather than cluttered. A wide variety of companies feature customized cabinets to suit your needs. Here are just a few to try:

- applevalleywoodworks.com
- plainfancycabinetry.com
- premiercb.com
- siematic.com
- wood-mode.com

SMALL BUT SOOTHING
Sweet seaside dreams come easily in Lisa and Michael's cozy yet uncluttered master bedroom. A functional, decorative quilt rack stores extra blankets for cool nights.

HOMEMADE STORAGE
The cedar-lined chest made by Michael, at left, stores extra sheets and blankets, alleviating storage challenges.

FRESH & FLIRTY
The breezy white curtains in the master bathroom, below, recall simpler times. The storage bench has a custom-made seat cover and holds extra bathroom necessities to avoid countertop clutter.

Double the Value

DUAL-PURPOSE FURNISHINGS ADD MAXIMUM FAMILY FUNCTION.

Classically styled and multifunctional, Home Decorators Collection's Craftsman Collection has compact proportions and sturdy construction that add appeal to the smallest space.

WORK IN PROGRESS Smartly configured with a variety of storage options, the Craftsman Office Center is the perfect work or study space. It is fitted with three letter- and legal-size file drawers, two accessory drawers and a pair of roomy storage compartments, so you'll have no excuse for not doing a great job!
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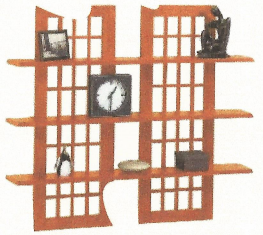

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Photos, knickknacks and other treasures all have their place on The Craftsman Lattice Double Display Shelf. Richly finished in wood veneer, its lattice design enhances most décor styles with its clean lines and stylish sensibility.
Item #367719; *homedecorators.com*, 800-530-0164

SEAT/STORE AND MORE Convenience and handsome simplicity pair beautifully with the Craftsman Lift-Top Ottoman. Reading materials stay close at hand with the side magazine rack, while the interior is ample enough for throws and other bulky items.
Item #67696; *homedecorators.com*, 800-530-0164

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