

MOOD MAKERS: BIG-FEEL ROOMS

BY BARBARA BALLINGER

**IT'S ALL ABOUT
LONG-TERM
VALUE, WARMTH
AND DOING
MORE WITH LESS.**

Just because your home may be tiny, that doesn't mean you should be shortchanged on style. And the pros agree. Small-space design triggers some of the best results because it encourages stretching creative boundaries. Here are some new ways designers are expanding their thinking.

drop an anchor
Define a zone by having its elements touch, but not cover, an area rug



▲ GRAY IS THE NEW BLACK

Tom Segal, designer/principal, Kaufman Segal Design

To make a small downtown Chicago loft/condominium feel larger, business partner David Kaufman and I used shades of only one color—gray, which is the hottest new color today. The rug, chairs, sofa and one painted wall are all varied shades of this hue. But to keep the room from

looking too monochromatic or boring, we mixed together different textures (a shag rug that contrasts with the smoother chair fabric) and also different shapes (two rectangular chairs versus one classic Womb chair that's much more organic). And the room doesn't look small at all.



◀ FOLDING BEDS GET BETTER...AND BITTIER!

Bernadette Castro, CEO, Castro Convertibles

Everyone loves having guests, but not everyone has a place to put them up. Castro Convertibles, a pioneer in convertible furniture in the 1940s, is relaunching its furniture line with two ottomans—33" x 29" and 39" x 29"—each of which folds out in seconds, transforming into a 75"-long single bed, complete with a 5"-thick mattress. In their original position, the ottomans can be used as extra seating, a footrest, even a coffee or occasional table. Talk about multifunction!



▶ STORAGE THAT DOUBLES AS FURNITURE

Claudia Juestel, designer, Adeeni Design Group

Storage should be decorative and provide visual interest as well as being functional. In one entry, I used a custom cabinet to provide an attractive place for guests to place their shoes upon entering. In another home, in a corner of the dining room, I designed a handsome wine cabinet that remains in view for the homeowner, who keeps empty bottles of his most prized wines there after enjoying them. And in my own living room, a tight space, I designed a buffet that is mirrored, which minimizes its scale and also makes the room look larger. Inside, it holds all my china and crystal. It's my secret that it's so functional.



◀ STAINLESS GOES TO SLATE

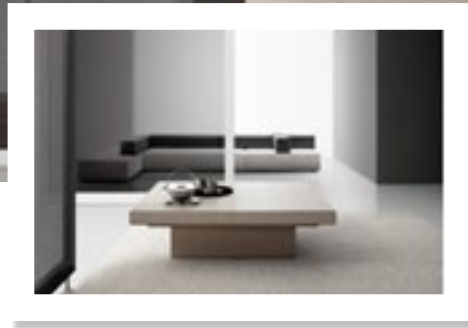
GE, new slate finish

If gray is the new black, then slate is the new stainless. After being a popular choice in kitchen surfaces and appliances for years (slightly more than one-third of all appliances sold today, according to GE consumer research), stainless is now being rivaled by this more subtle, sophisticated hue. In keeping with this trend, GE has launched its version. "Slate" is a warm, muted gray metallic with a low-gloss finish that complements flat-screen TVs and iPads as well as more natural surfaces. Slate also emphasizes a more green, back-to-nature feel.

► DITCH THE DINING ROOM

Gideon Back, president and CEO, Milano Smart Living

You work hard, so your furniture should, too. Cool and chic, Milano Smart Living manufactures a line of furnishings that is designed specifically for small living spaces. Each piece in the line can be used in at least two ways—a sofa converts to a bed, an end table to a console, a coffee table to a dining table or desk. The all-wood coffee table shown here measures 3' x 3' and stands 14" tall, but it expands to more than 7' long and 30" high to function as a dining table or desk. To raise it up, you simply push a button on the underside.



◀ TILE TO THE TOP

Erica Islas, principal designer, EMI Interior Design, Inc.

An easy way to make bathrooms appear larger is to take the tile all the way up to the ceiling; it uses the vertical space and adds volume. For the same reason, if you place a shower curtain on a track all the way up at the ceiling, your eye is drawn up and the bathroom appears bigger. Lighting is also important in making spaces appear more expansive. Always have more than one light source. In one tiny guest house, a cramped space was made to look larger by painting the oak cabinets a creamy white and painting the wood beams a brighter white to “lift” the ceiling. Another way to make spaces feel airy is to add glass details, something that adds reflection and sparkle. Also, restrict colors to two or three hues, max, and then add in textures to prevent boredom.

► WALLS EQUAL WORKSPACE

Karen Lyon, vice president of brand marketing, IdeaPaint

To make a small at-home office seem bigger—and squeeze the most use out of every inch, literally—turn a wall, or even the desk, into a writing surface with IdeaPaint. This also works well in laundry rooms or pantries, to track appointments and maintain grocery lists. Because the surface becomes the equivalent of a dry-erase board, you can write and erase over and over again. IdeaPaint comes in white or clear, which can be applied over any latex paint.



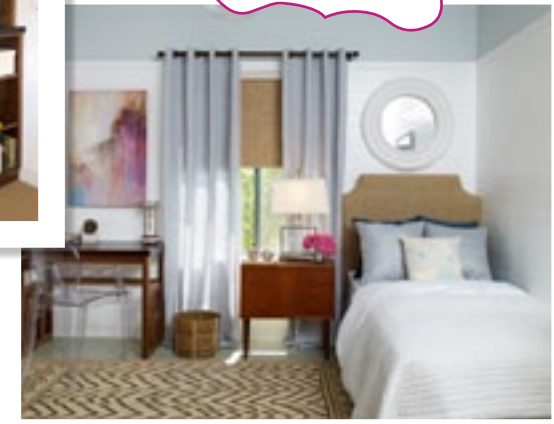
► SHELVING GOES FOR A FLOAT

Christopher Grubb, designer, Arch-Interiors Design Group

I like to use floating shelves, because then you don't have a piece of furniture that sits on the floor and occupies space. That immediately makes a room feel larger. You can also achieve the same effect by mounting a buffet ledge on a wall. Still another idea is to use small stools in a room, which provide extra seating if you don't have room for a lot of chairs or sofas; these can also be a cute way to accessorize without taking up much space.



break it up
Throw a curve to boxy rooms with rounded-edge accessories



► SUITES FOR THE SWEET

Erica Islas, principal designer, EMI Interior Design, Inc.

With many adult children moving back home and elderly adults moving in with their kids, now is the perfect time to consider adapting a spare room into a permanent guest area. Whereas a guest room might have a sleeper sofa and a small chest, this space should be able to host people long-term. Here, Islas creates the feeling of a home rather than just a place to sleep. Her trick? A custom-built divider sections off one part. A bookcase on the bottom and latticework above provide function but stay open. The desk in the bedroom area is the same material as the divider. Minimizing colors helped enlarge the space, too. ♦