

BIG IDEAS FOR SMALL SPACES

Studio Apartment in Puako Gets Extreme Makeover



Table and chair from Pier 1 Imports in Kailua-Kona.

By Karen Anderson

Don't let a small studio apartment cramp your style, says Diane Bobek, project designer for Fine Design Interiors in Waimea. No matter the size of your nest, there are plenty of ways to max out your living space with lots of pizzazz.

Working with Shirley Wagner, ASID (owner and design principal of Fine Design Interiors), Diane recently completed a brilliant transformation of a previously dark, dank and confined downstairs studio that measures only 300 square feet. Part of a vacation home compound, the humble little apartment — located beneath a two-story artist's studio adjacent to the main residence — was long overdue for an extreme makeover.

“The kitchenette was dated, the ceiling was made of drywall, the bed was by the front door, and the bathroom had an old, built-in plastic shower in it,” said Diane. “We wanted to create a lofty feeling of openness and airiness conducive to the seaside setting of the owner's beautiful property.”

The first order of business was to remove the low-hanging drywall ceiling and expose the joists. This simple fix immediately eliminated the constricted feeling of the ▶



The tiny downstairs apartment measures only 300 square feet. A cozy, screened-in patio borders the entrance of the studio. The apartment was recently transformed by Fine Design Interiors in Waimea.

Photos by Karen Anderson



Exposed joists help open up the ceiling and add more height to the studio apartment. The bed is now located under the windows where the old kitchenette used to be. The L-shaped counter provides a place for barstool seating.



The old bed was awkwardly positioned in front of the entrance where the new kitchenette is now.

(Left) Sourced from Aloha Woods in Kailua-Kona, wide-plank laminate flooring enhances the plantation look. Stylish TV trays slide up against the sectional sofa to save space.



A small clawfoot tub replaces the old built-in plastic shower (see “before” photo below). Diane added wainscot to the walls, plus a custom-built vanity paneled in beadboard.



Shelves built inside a wall help to maximize a small space.



room. A fresh coat of whitewash on the joists added to the illusion of height.

Painted linen white, the original tongue-and-groove walls provided an excellent canvas for creating a plantation-style look. In the bathroom, the addition of wainscot carries out the plantation theme, as does the rustic, wide-plank flooring from Aloha Woods installed in the main room.

“The house was built in the ‘60s,” Diane said. “The French doors are original to the studio and open up to lovely gardens at the front and side of the apartment. When you have a small space in Hawai‘i, you can extend your living quarters by adding an outdoor shower and seating area or garden patio.”

For the remodel, which included a new kitchenette, Diane enlisted the help of friend Greg Erickson. The homeowner came up with the idea of an L-shaped counter featuring cupboards made of mahogany and topped with white Corian (called “rice paper”) for a fresh and simple look. The ►



The old kitchenette (inset right) was dated and clunky. The new kitchenette features custom mahogany cabinets topped with a Corian counter and accented with glass backsplash from Davis Tile & Marble in Kailua-Kona.



configuration of the kitchenette allows for barstool seating within view of the flat-screen TV. Diane designed the floating TV shelf with touch-latch cabinet doors crafted by local woodworker Doug Anderson, of Waikoloa. She then painted the unit linen white so it would “disappear” into the wall.

With storage space at a minimum, Greg converted the entryway to the garage into a closet, installing a sliding pocket door that saves space. On either side of the bed, he affixed “floating” bedsides tables (designed by Diane and built by Doug Anderson) to the wall, another space-saving idea.

In the bathroom, porcelain tile sets the stage for simplicity. Original to the studio, built-in shelving disappears into the wall to maximize space. Greg made an all-new bathroom vanity paneled in beadboard. A small clawfoot tub with handheld showerhead replaced the old shower.

“We could only fit a small tub into that space, so it’s actually more like a soaking tub,” Diane said. ►

Five Tips for a Small Space

1. Add windows to bring openness and light.
2. Use light color for the ceiling and expose the beams if you can.
3. Extend your living space outside if you have room.
4. Install hidden storage to minimize clutter.
5. Scale furniture to the room and keep it minimal.

“The outdoor shower is so convenient and private, it’s not an issue that there’s no actual shower in the bathroom anymore.”

As with any small studio, choice of furnishings was essential to maintaining an uncluttered and unencumbered space. Diane purchased two glass TV/laptop tables that slide neatly into the sectional sofa when not in use. The sofa, which she ordered from CB2 Modern Furniture and Home Décor online, is topped with pillows, some custom, from Somace Lifestyle in Honolulu.

According to Diane, it takes resourcefulness and a little creative thinking to come up with big ideas for small spaces.

“Always keep your eyes open for ideas. If you can’t find what you’re looking for, design it and make it yourself. Be sure to keep everything clean and simple to maximize space.” **AH**



Affixed to the wall, the floating bedside table (designed by Diane Bobek and built by Doug Anderson) accentuates the uncluttered feeling of the newly transformed studio apartment.

Name: TILE WAREHOUSE
Width: 9.653 in
Depth: 10.75 in
Color: Black plus three
Ad Number: 000075296r2

Name: KALOKO SHUTTER & BLIND
Width: 4.7383 in
Depth: 5.25 in
Color: Black plus three
Ad Number: 000075266r1

Name: SCV POOLS SPAS & MASONRY
Width: 4.7383 in
Depth: 5.25 in
Color: Black plus three
Ad Number: 000074790r1