

FEBRUARY 2009

House Beautiful

101 DESIGNERS...

101 MAKEOVERS!

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February 2009

101 Makeovers

"Decorating is never an exercise in spending money. It's more a quest to get the details right—the fringe and the lampshade and the pillow that's cut just right. Details give a room soul."

INTERIOR DESIGNER CARLETON VARNEY, FROM CLASSIC TO WILD, PAGE 88

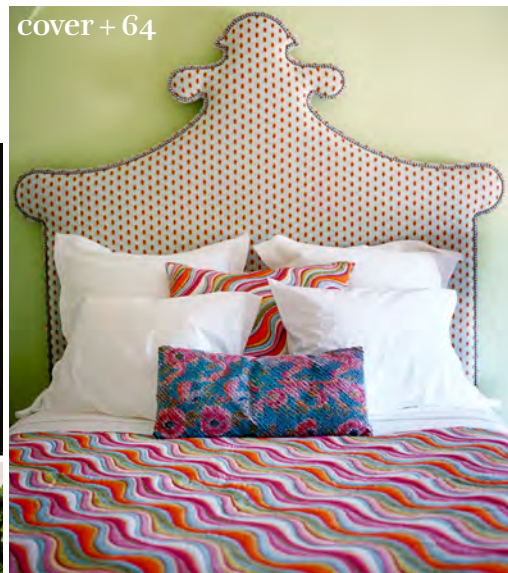
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FROM SMALL TO SPACIOUS

Making the
most of
a 900-square-foot
bungalow

In the tiny living room of his Santa Monica bungalow, designer Chad Eisner used a pair of sofas because “they seat twice as many people as one sofa and two armchairs. And the long horizontal lines also make the room seem bigger.” Farrow & Ball’s Tented Stripe wallpaper heightens the low ceilings, as do the Rogers & Goffigon curtains that he hung “as high as possible.” The French doors open to the courtyard (ABOVE), which Eisner considers “vital square footage” for entertaining and relaxing. Woven wooden shades here and throughout the house are Ultima’s Bora Bora in amber from 3dayblinds.com.



Dining chairs from H.D. Buttercup are upholstered in Larsen's Duo in White Sand (used in reverse) on the outside, and Scandinavian by Le Gracieux on the inside. Eisner designed the glass and nickel-plated metal table. Robert Kime's Algiers is on the leading edge of the curtains. Pendant light from Reborn Antiques. OPPOSITE: "I needed something strong to give this tiny kitchen character," says the designer, so he covered the wall with handmade Star and Cross tiles that he designed with the Lascaux Tile Company. Ceiling and cabinets are painted Pratt & Lambert's Glacier Sand. Pro Series dishwasher and Pro Harmony range from Thermador. La Toscana faucet by Paini. Light, Reborn Antiques.

ALEXANDRIA MOTT: **Forgive me if this sounds hackneyed, but it's never been more true: Your little house is a jewel box.**

CHAD EISNER: When I bought it a client said, 'Oh, tell me about your new home.' I said, 'Well, it could fit inside your swimming pool.' And it actually took me a while to come to terms with the fact that this is a 900-square-foot beach shack in Santa Monica and not a 10,000-square-foot mansion in Beverly Hills—I'd love to put Fortuny curtains in every room! But this is a Cracker Jack box. You just can't do that. It'd be funny.

As in ha-ha funny?

As in not right, not appropriate. When something is this small, you can't fight it. The owners before me stripped it down to one room to make it feel bigger. But that's fighting the era and spirit of the place. I wanted to keep things consistent with a 1920s beach bungalow. And I wanted a real home, with separate rooms and a garden.

So you divided it into a living room, dining room, kitchen, bedroom...

Yes, four square rooms with a central hallway. If you put the rooms right next to each other, it's like you can't catch your breath. And you need to be able to see through them. The bedroom is all bed—I had to have a California king—but you can see through the room from the hallway through the glass doors to the garden. It doesn't matter if a room is 100 square feet or 1,000, you have to see beyond things to be able to breathe. **There's big-house furniture in the living room, too.**

I needed things to be comfy. I'm 6-foot-1 and 200 pounds plus. Dollhouse furniture wasn't an option. And sofas have to be at least 40 to 42 inches deep to be comfortable. **Comfortable for watching that TV that you framed so beautifully?**

There's no room for a big cabinet in here, so I had the TV recessed into the wall and thought I'd leave it at that. Then I was at an antiques fair and saw this old Flemish frame and adjusted it to fit. But again, it's about not fighting things, not trying to hide a TV. It's like, 'I watch TV, I'm not ashamed.'

Is that your overall approach to making a small space feel almost grand? Not fighting it?

If there's a trick, I don't know the formula. I do use the outside area as sort of my second living zone. And my ceilings are only nine feet tall, so I painted them a light color to make them seem higher. The wallpaper in the living room helps, too. The vertical stripes pull the eye up. And symmetry.

Symmetry?

Balance helps alleviate smallness. You need to keep consistent lines and create a focal point, like the two sofas, the TV between the



two sconces. The house is a shoebox—but it's perfectly balanced.

The curtains help the rooms feel more important than small—even if they're not Fortuny.

That's because I hung them high. I used cotton linen everywhere, and then in the dining room I splurged with that Robert Kime print. I kept it on a roll under my bed for five years until I got up the nerve to cut it. There were times when I thought, 'Maybe I should just use it for this.' So glad I didn't. It was waiting for this dining room. It's handblocked silk, and there's something both traditional and contemporary about it.

You've mixed period fixtures with modern pieces, Italian with Moroccan... how did you keep it so coherent?

The neutral palette helps. If I had painted my dining room red, I couldn't have moved so seamlessly through the eras and have a metal and glass table and an antique Chinese console and the Kime curtains.

But there is color in the house.

Less than you think. The amount that I've used is very pointed. For the bedroom I wanted blue because—and I know this sounds corny—I have blue eyes. It took about three tries. I had one that looked like a little boy's room. By the third try, the contractor asked, 'What's the name of this paint?' I knew it was a good sign.

Tell me about the lighting.

I wanted the rooms to be lit as they were lit when this house was built, like sconces, chandeliers. I fought myself tooth and nail about where I'd put recessed lights. I like a house to be moody, almost to the point of darkness. At the end of a long week, I like to turn the lights *waaay* down, put on music, and light about five incense sticks to the point that it's totally smoky. It mellows me out.

What about so little storage space?

I'm not a big *stuff* person. That's one thing I've been blessed with. I don't get attached to belongings. In this business, it's so easy to fall in love with a fabric or a color or an object. So the things I have are well chosen and they can transition from one thing to the next. There's not just a mix here, I have slipcovers for the dining chairs so that I can swap them out and it feels like a new room. Just new flowers can really change the feeling in a room.

But you did make room for your surfboard against the garden wall!

There is room for a complete life here. I've had parties for up to 100 people. Truly. This really is a home. I wish there were another 300 square feet for more closet space. But I also know that no matter how big any house of mine was, I'd always want another 300 square feet of closet space.

PRODUCED BY KATHARINE PEARSON
& WHITNEY ROBINSON
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The small bedroom is dominated by a California king bed, but glass doors and a courtyard view make it feel expansive. Pencil Post bed in walnut from Shelter. Walls are painted Blue Slate by Pratt & Lambert. The blue print coverlet is from Urban Outfitters. Curtains are Arts Decoratif by Le Gracieux. The Moroccan parchment star light is from Mosaik. Eisner designed the geode table lamp on the 19th-century walnut bedside table from Italy. Drawing by Jacques Clauzel.