

Decor Score: Every house has room to spare

by *Rose_Bennett_Gilbert*

Q: Our loft is tall, but really, we only have one room with the bed in a sleeping alcove and the galley kitchen across one wall. I work at home and am desperate for a place to keep my records. I work occasionally on the computer. My husband thinks we should have one of those temporary rooms built in that looks permanent but can be taken out if we should sell. Is that really a viable idea?

A: Can be, but it requires some inspired space juggling. The " juggler " who carved a small but serviceable office from one end of the loft we show here did it with such skill that author Wendy Jordan included it in her remarkable new book, " Making Room " (Taunton Press). Like all the space-maker case studies Wendy shows, this one comes with an " aha ! " guaranteed. It all started with that glorious 19th century Palladian doorway, bought lock, stock, frame and all, from an architectural salvage yard.

SPACE JUGGLING - This is one way to add a little space to a room. In this loft, a 19th century Palladian doorway was built into a new wall to set off an office. CNS Photo courtesy of Anne Gummerson Photography.

At 11 feet tall, it required a special space, and the city loft offered plenty of that - at least, vertically. It was the loft's soaring ceiling that facilitated the project: the owners simply built a new wall across one end and set the doorway into it. The space inside is just 2 feet wide at its maximum point.

But, oh, what those 2 feet can do! Out of sight behind that splendid traditional doorway is a complete little office, including a desktop keyboard pull-out, monitor and shelves to hold the printer and plenty of reference materials. Even with the door closed, there's no cause for claustrophobia, thanks to the light that streams in through the window.

Wendy's book is stuffed, cover-to-cover, with other clever ways to find space in unexpected places. For a closer look, click on www.thetauntonpress.com.

WHAT'S UP IN DECORATOR SHOW HOUSES?

Paltry pun, but it pays to look up, literally, when you tour some of this season's abundant decorator show houses. For example, the Atlanta Symphony's swell, elegant 2007 production in a colonnaded and balconied Buckhead estate has a lot to say about high overhead on several levels.

The mansion, which was built in 1986 and channels famed Oak Alley, the 1840s sugar plantation in Louisiana, has 12-foot ceilings throughout. The opportunities they afford was not wasted on the talented Atlanta designers, who gussied them up in imaginative ways. Kay Douglass and Dixie Peeples zapped the ceiling of their daisy-fresh "lady's studio" with sunshine yellow paint. Christy Dillard calmed her sitting room ceiling with soft gray. Park Place Interiors topped milk chocolate walls with a malted milk ceiling in their teen retreat, complete with a tiger-striped painted armoire. Jim Weinberg and Kenny Rogers burnished their Moroccan music room allover copper, including the ceiling.

But Gary Gay's eccentric morning room was the top over-the-top story. He orchestrated Bradbury & Bradbury's metallic Arts and Crafts wallpaper into an overhead patchwork of patterns that really had show house visitors craning for a look.

Rose Bennett Gilbert is the co-author of "Hampton Style" and associate editor of Country Decorating Ideas.

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