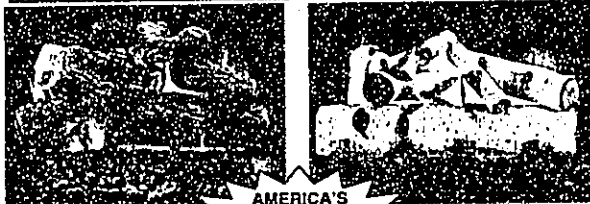


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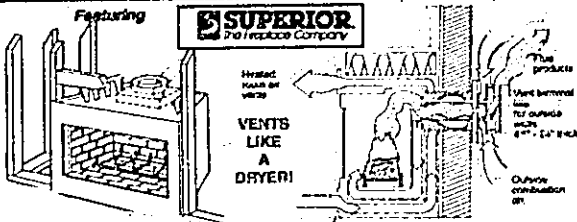
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INTERIOR MOTIVES

Small rooms demand an attention to scale

NAOMI STONE
LEVY

I come to the rescue of a reader who has requested that I deal with very small rooms in very small apartments or homes. Any light that can be shed on this subject is summed up in one word. Scale. Scale. Scale. It is the core of my advice, and bears repetition.

It is hoped this home has a small vestibule and/or hallway. In drafty Michigan a door to eliminate the cold is critical. Cut the opening to accommodate the widest door possible. Gorgeous beveled clear glass will open up the tiny area. Don't be tempted with colored glass — that will close you in. The walls and woodwork should be off-white. Small spaces seem to be cut up with contrasts in color.

A small living area may not be receptive to a sofa. Instead, use no more than a 68-inch wide loveseat. Be sure the arms aren't excessively large. Even a typical Lawson arm with a "T" cushion seat will visually diminish the loveseat's size more than high arms that completely enclose the cushions.

The selection of chairs is crucial to the scale of this room. I recommend several open arm styles; the more open, the less crowded the room will seem. The legs should be exposed — no skirts. None of the foregoing needs to eliminate comfort. The seat cushions must be plump and inviting. Contemporary furniture of its own nature is low, and that is helpful to the overall scale. Height cuts into open space unless it is furniture against a wall.

Tabling the issue

It becomes evident that all tables must also be of smaller size. A drop-leaf table has the advantage of opening up one or both leaves to gain surface, only when needed. Small tabourets at chairside afford a place to set a cup of coffee, always cordial.

The ubiquitous coffee table is best with a glass top, whatever its size. The base, which will thus become accentuated, shouldn't be ponderous and heavy. The see-through of glass tends to maximize the space. I recommend the 3/4-inch thick glass top have an oval or round configuration, rather than square or rectangular, because they will avoid shine in these smaller areas.

Table lamps should never tower over the furnishings. A word regarding lamp shades. Too often they overpower the lamp, and should be "fitted." In a small room allow the shade to be a mite smaller rather than larger. There are all brass or chrome floor lamps that have metal hoods and are unobtrusive. I call them non-lamps. They are most helpful in developing that less crowded look. In any case, floor lamps will help.

Accessories also need to be scaled to

avoid overcrowding. A low bowl of flowers or greens on the coffee table will be welcome. A pair of small figurines are subtle additions. Stack two or three small size art books for visitors to peruse. Always keep in mind — small.

Dining areas can deceive you. Try to use a pedestal base that avoids legs. The base can be flexible, from Duncan Phyfe to polished chrome in style. If modern is the styling, a 3/4-inch round glass top will once again seem to occupy less visual space. The chairs should have open backs, ranging from Windsor to Chippendale to Lucite.

The lighting must be inconspicuous. The best solution would be recessed bi-hate, but if there has to be a hanging fixture it should be small in scale, and in keeping with the size of the area.

Side tracked

A serving sideboard is essential. Since storage space is at a premium in a small home or apartment, find the most commodious piece you can. Opt for a wall-hung sideboard in a light color. If contemporary it could be off-white plastic laminate (UGH!) but the exact same piece in a light color lacquer will be super.

If traditional is in order, search for or bleach a Georgian cabinet of small proportions. Blondish knotted pine is another good option. A large-sized mirror above either chest will expand the space. Or why not mirror an entire wall? It will surely enlarge the room. A painted armoire or bonnetiere can afford other much needed storage space. Mix and match!

How pictures are arranged in a small dining area is crucial to success. A large group of small pictures wouldn't be deemed as overcrowding. The frames need be innocuous, not necessarily matching. Heavily carved gilt frames aren't in order.

Small bedrooms again elicit smaller furniture. If twin beds are essential, keep them together, with twin, very small nightstands on each side. Remember that twin beds at 33 inches wide are also available, rather than the standard 39-inch width. Eliminating that 12 inches of extra bed is essential to your happiness within your bedroom.

An armoire affords fantastic storage, including housing a small TV set. If a chest of drawers becomes your choice, by all means top it with the tallest mirror you can find. Make the frame up at a frame shop thereby availing yourself of every reflective inch possible. A very small open armchair, lightly upholstered, will be welcome. Accompany said chair with a floor lamp.

Naomi Stone Levy, a Franklin resident, is an interior designer and a former secretary of the American Society of Interior Designers. You can leave her a message by dialing (313) 853-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then her mailbox number, 1897. Her fax number is (810) 644-1314.