

Home & Design

London Design Fair

Our 10 favourites from the creative trail Page 6



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Big ideas for small spaces: how to uncramp your living style

From Dublin to Prague, Tel Aviv to Moscow, smart storage is the secret to living in compact homes



Alanna Gallagher

We all want to lead less cluttered lives and to inhabit spaces that look well ordered. Although some of us are better at achieving this than others, the secret to tidy homes is a well-planned space.

For Dublin architect Dave Leyden of LHA Architecture it's about maximising light. See his recent reimagining of an artisan cottage on Gordon Street, in Ringsend, Dublin 4. The house originally had two small bedrooms and had been extended to encroach into almost all of its small but sunny, southwest-facing back. To increase the sense of space in the single-storey terraced house, he went up, building a double-height open-plan space to the rear and creating an internal courtyard by lining the L-shaped room with floor-to-ceiling glass to allow light to stream in.

While the overall square footage has been reduced, the house now exudes a sense of airy liveability – something its original warren of rooms didn't have. By keeping the colour palette neutral and picking the same colour to use on the kitchen cabinets, splashbacks, glass door frames and windows, there is a sense of cohesion throughout. You could easily forget you were in the heart of the city.

And on those rare nights you feel the need to escape from it all, there's an attic space under the eaves, accessed by a docks-inspired ladder, where you can do a bit of stargazing if you get clear skies.

Freshways to work

Small Homes Grand Living is a new book that focuses on small urban dwellings and offers fresh ways to work within those confines. "It's about how to make living in those spaces attractive so you don't feel like you're living in a shoe box, says its editor, Caroline Kurze.

Kurze lives in a two-room apartment in Berlin that measures 50sq m. Her attempts to find a bigger space for her and her boyfriend prompted the book. "It was and is really hard to find anything in Berlin, so we had to think about how we could make more of the space we currently live in." Her answer is built-in storage. "It is what is missing most – it means storage for everything. If a place looks cluttered, it will always feel small. If you have proper storage you free stuff from lying around, books and so on, and visually you add space.



■ Above and left, a Ringsend cottage redesigned by Dave Leyden of LHA Architecture; below left, apartments in Moscow and Tel Aviv. PHOTOGRAPHS FROM SMALL HOMES GRAND LIVING (PAGE 2)

"The idea was to showcase spaces that appealed to families, couples and singletons – not just students – and that all the spaces were adjustable. In one story a family of four was living in one room, but because it had good ceiling heights, they were able to build a second bedroom at mezzanine level for the kids to sleep in."

The book focuses on underutilised areas within the home, such as staircases and entrance hallways. One of her favourite homes is Nicholas Gurney's Mighty Mouse apartment because, while only 27sq m in size, it feels quite open and spacious because all the furniture and belongings are stored behind panels. It is a flexible space that can be turned from living- to bedroom depending on your needs and the time of the day. "That's key when living in a small home."

She believes a home is not just a fashion statement. It needs an investment of

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Arminta Wallace

Move over hygge, here comes ikigai



We've had feng shui. We've had hygge. We've tidied our sock drawer in the style of Marie Kondo, we've spiralled our veggies, and put breakfast – mindfully – through the Nutribullet. But hang on to your lifestyle hats, because another international craze is about to wash up on our shores.

Ikigai is a Japanese concept that, basically, means "a reason to get up in the morning". According to Japanese culture a strong sense of ikigai will not only infuse your life with meaning, but makes it longer and happier in the process – as exemplified by the Japanese island of Okinawa, famous for having a much higher number of centenarians than

anywhere else in the world. So far, so good. The problem is to figure out where your ikigai can be found. This being Japanese philosophy, it's not simply a matter of cosying up to the curtains, or even painting them white (though if you love white, and hate your curtains, that might help).
Ikigai is sometimes defined as the intersection of what you like to do, what you're good at, and what people are prepared to pay you for. Or "the place where passion, mission, vocation and profession intersect". Which hardly helps. For many people, those components move around on a regular basis – so you could be wandering in the desert for a long time before you'd arrive at ikigai central.
The exhibition *Shotai*, which runs at SO Fine Art Editions on South Anne Street in Dublin until September 23rd, offers a gorgeous place to start thinking about all things Japanese: it's a funky selection of works by artists who created lithographs, with master Japanese printmaker Satoru Itazu as well as prints by graduate students from the prestigious Toyo University of the Arts.
To go the more philosophical route, a new book, *Ikigai: The Japanese Secret of a Long and Happy Life*, to be published by Random House in early September,



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suggests tuning in to your ikigai by exploring the concept of flow, which is the art of being immersed in whatever you're doing, whether decorating a room or preparing veggies for dinner.
To research the book the authors – one of whom, Hector Garcia, worked at Cern in Switzerland before moving to Japan to develop voice-recognition software –

interviewed the residents of the Japanese village with the highest percentage of 100-year-olds to find out what they eat, how they move, how they work and how they foster a sense of community.
Tom's secret
One of Okinawa's most famous exports over the past couple of years has been 92-year-old Tomi Menaka, singer with the "girl band" KBG84: average age, 84. Despite being a pop sensation in Japan and across Asia, Tomi-San claims she eats mostly rice balls, cup noodles and milk tea. Then again, she and her fellow pop idols live on a remote, sub-tropical, coral-fringed island surrounded by hibiscus flowers. Or as Garcia and his co-author, Francesc Miralles, describe their chosen island village, "lush green hills fed by crystalline waters".
Better for the ikigai than an Irish winter? Maybe. I'm an ikigai agnostic. I'm still struggling with ikebana, and green tea gives me a headache. Plus, not all Japanese cultural influences are as cool, calm and collected as tatami reed mats and shoji room dividers.
If you're about to embrace your inner ikigai, be warned. It might turn out to be a pikachu: plastic, chubby, and very, very yellow.

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money and time to make it the way you want it to look and feel, and you will still need to love it in three, five and even 10 years' time.
It should also reflect your personality. "There is space for a piano if you really love to play the piano, but if you don't there isn't. There is only space for what is important to you, stuff that you are passionate about and use. If you don't use it, give it away or sell it."

Bedding down in the open

An L-shaped timber partition wall hives off space for two bedrooms in a 64sq m (689sq ft) apartment by Sinato in Kanagawa, Japan. The partition becomes a large piece of furniture on which you can hang a painting, store books on shelves and sit on its bench seating, which has deep storage drawers underneath. Behind the partition are two open-plan bedrooms divided by a concrete wall with light filtering through to the accommodation through the clerestory windows at its top. At each end of the U-shaped partition is an open doorway – the entrance to each bedroom.
sinato.jp

Cartoon caper

The bedroom of a 27sq m (290sq ft) studio apartment is part of a design by Australian



Nicholas Gurney, who specialises in modest spaces for that country's fastest-growing demographic: singletons. The Sydney home features a clutter-free bedroom thanks to its ceiling-to-duvet-level storage cupboards and a recessed shelf for books, all hidden behind painted plywood panels. Below the bed are deep drawers. This bedroom is part of a timber pod that was inserted into the space with a sliding panel to close off the sleeping quarters when it is not in use. The pod also contained an entrance hall, bathroom and storage, and the apartment has been colour-blocked in the graphic shades of Mickey Mouse: a red bedroom, yellow bookshelves and a black kitchen.
nicholasgurney.com.au

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Fascinating facets

In a Moscow flat of 60sq m (646sq ft), architect Vlad Mishin divided the space using a bank of faceted plywood panels set into black metal framework to shut off the mechanical "rooms" of the home. Touch the panels and they move, pivot and undulate to reveal everything an apartment should have. The two central panels slide open to reveal a decent-sized kitchen. At the far end of the room is a door that swings open to access the bathroom. The wall opposite the yellow L-shaped couch features a wall that pivots to open through to the bedroom. It is a beautifully engineered idea that creates clean lines and means that if you're not a neat freak you can keep clutter at least out of sight for most of the time in the bedroom.

Floor filler

If your sleeping quarters have good ceiling heights, apply some boat-building techniques and install built-in storage at floor



Left, an L-shaped timber partition wall hives off space for two bedrooms in this apartment in Kanagawa, Japan; above, shopfloor treatment in the entrance hall of an apartment in Moscow; below left, concealed storage in a Sydney bedroom; below right, drawers concealed in a Japanese stairwell.

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS FROM SMALL HOMES GRAND LIVING



Top, built-in floor storage in a Prague apartment; above, an under-eaves en suite in a Spanish apartment

level, as architect Bogdan Ciococidea did in this 42sq m (138sq ft) apartment in Prague. It also adds visual interest to the space. When closed it can be a platform on which to scatter cushions for seating. When open it offers a sizeable place for toys or bedding.

Stairway to tidy heaven

In an open-plan space in Koriyama, Japanese architect Kotaro Anzai installed drawers and pigeonholes into the ply and ash construction, using Japanese carpentry techniques to combine the stairs with storage. The owners house their kitchen crockery here, and helpful numerical handles quickly help them find what they're looking for.

Floor-to-ceiling storage

The studio of artist Sylvie Ye'arit Sheftel makes much use of birch ply to create a wall of colour-coded drawers to house the various materials the painter and photographer uses in her work. She lives in a studio apartment in Tel Aviv of 25sq m (270sq ft), originally designed by Israeli modernist Dov Karm in the 1950s. Raanan Stern and Shany Tal of Rust Architects reimagined the space for her, installing further drawers and shelving on the adjacent wall.
rustarch.com

Making an entrance

In Moscow, Proforma Design built an open closet for the entrance hall of an apartment of 38sq m (409sq ft). The firm has taken a shop-merchandising approach to the boundary wall of the flat, painting it a deep and restful blue and using wooden pegs to hang garments and keys and adding a shelving box for shoes, books and other stuff. A mirror set flush with the wall is useful for last-minute check-ups and also helps reflect light.
proformadesign.ru

Look down

The en-suite bathroom in a Spanish apartment designed by Elii is set under the eaves. A tiled area, home to a sunken bath,

delineates the wet area, while in the rest of the attic space, secret storage has been set into the unused volume between the rafters to open and reveal extra horizontal "cabinets" in which to stock toiletries. A second cabinet, to the fore of the toiletries cabinet, opens to reveal a make-up mirror set on to its inverse. To use it, you have to kneel into the space and pout. It won't suit everyone, nor will it conform to building regulations, but your teenager will love it.
elii.es
imagensubliminal.com

Small Homes Grand Living is published by Gestalten
See lha.ie

Happiness is a small space: writer's tiny city home is big on storage



SOPHIE GRENHAM

Writer Catherine Ryan Howard moved from Cork to her 34sq m flat off Leeson Street when she enrolled in Trinity College three years ago.
Every single inch of space is fully functional in this diminutive dwelling, allowing for excess possessions to be carefully stowed away. There's a living area with a couch and pull-down Murphy bed, a built-in wardrobe, a kitchen and a bathroom, as well as a skinny hallway leading into a walk-in wardrobe that would appease Carrie Bradshaw.
Howard's top tip for tiny rentals is to display only items that soothe the soul; everything else must be put away. Her focal point is a desk with multiple drawers, adorned with inspiring, colour-coordinated

items of personal significance – mostly in dusty pink – including a classic typewriter. "When you're at home all the time, you want to be surrounded by nice things that remind you that there's a world out there," she says.
"I can't look out a window because I would just be distracted, so what I like to do at my desk is just point to things that make me happy, that I have good memories of, or else remind me of something that I get to do when the novel is finished."
Howard's only regret is that her apartment has limited room for books, the vast majority of which live back in Cork.
"I think it's a small price to pay – I really have no complaints," she says. "As soon as I walk out, I have the canal, where I put dead bodies in my book! You have endless coffee options and you just can't beat the location."

■ Catherine Ryan Howard: 'My desk has things that remind me of something that I get to do when the novel is finished.'
PHOTOGRAPH: EGIN RAFFERTY

Catherine Ryan Howard's novel *Distress Signals* is published by Corvus

