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double issue!

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▶ APARTMENT UPDATE

RENTAL REDUX

THE RIGHT FABRICS AND FURNISHINGS
PACK A DELUXE DECORATIVE PUNCH—
THAT CAN MOVE WITH YOU.

BY CHARLOTTE SAFAVI



SMART SEATING

"I bought the two used armchairs for \$25 apiece, then upholstered them in muslin," says designer Kelley Proxmire. Other easy-to-move seating includes the Target composite stool, customized with paint and upholstery.

A mirrored coffee table surface reflects light and adds airiness to the room

900-SQUARE-FOOT RENTAL

- **STRUCTURE:** Apartment
- **DECORATING STYLE:** Fresh traditional
- **CHALLENGE:** Create a smooth flow for entertaining
- **SOLUTION:** Multifunctional bar unit
- **BIGGEST ADVANTAGE TO SMALL-SPACE LIVING:** Coziness
- **DISADVANTAGE:** Lack of storage

LAMP LIGHT

"Pay attention to lighting," says Proxmire, as it can enlarge a space. The dining area chandelier is generic, but black shades glam it up.

TABLE TRICKS

Proxmire transformed a 54" round table, right, with a glass top and a swath of floor-length fabric.

BEAUTIFUL BAR

With its contrasting trim paint when closed, this attractive mirrored bar, far right, makes the room look larger when open.



The best part about skirted furniture is the hidden storage potential beneath



WHEN PEOPLE LIVE IN RENTALS, THEY TEND TO BE WARY WHEN IT COMES TO DECORATING. THE BOTTOM LINE IS

they don't want to invest too much in another person's property. But, as Washington D.C.-based interior designer Kelley Proxmire knows, there are clever ways to make a rental your own.

Take her son Brocky and his wife, Lauren, newlyweds who lived in a once-bland, minimally furnished rental—until they enlisted Proxmire to fix it up. "I've always been fascinated by doing things on a budget, and they gave me carte blanche to decorate their home," she says.

MOVE FURNITURE, NOT WALLS

First, Proxmire came up with a practical floor plan for the one-bedroom apartment, which has a closed-off kitchen and an open living area. She based the plan on the young couple's lifestyle. "They love to entertain and watch TV," she says, "so I put the sofa in front of the television."

From there, the living room niche came together with lots of inexpensive pull-up chairs. Because Lauren likes to cook and the kitchen is miniscule, Proxmire set up a separate bar in the living area to keep food preparation and beverage service separate. Opposite the bar is the square-shaped dining nook, with a round table to maximize usage of the cubic space. Again, Proxmire opted for flexible seating: four chairs are in active use; two sandwich the sideboard.

"I also knew storage was key, so I put the long sideboard in the dining area," says Proxmire. "It's a junk store find that I had hand-painted. Such a useful storage and serving piece."

GREEN THUMB

"I found the great green-and-white pillows at Target," says Proxmire; the pattern inspired



“ONCE GREEN WAS A GIVEN, SHE CONTRASTED THE BOLD HUE WITH WHITES AND BLACKS”

her vibrant color scheme for the apartment. The sofa, which Proxmire donated from her old sun-room, was then slipcovered in green, stain-resistant fabric. Other green furnishings also appear throughout the rental, bringing it to life.

Once green was a given, Proxmire chose to contrast the bright color with neutral whites and blacks. The apartment was painted a crisp white, and most of the furniture was hand- or spray-painted black. Proxmire played around with black-and-white animal prints, too (especially zebra-inspired striations), as well as with other organic elements, such as botanical prints, rounded shapes and natural fabrics.

FEELS LIKE HOME

“I think every room on a budget needs something special to look high-quality,” Proxmire says. Select pieces of furniture in the apartment are more expensive, such as the mirror-topped

and iron-legged coffee table, and the lacquered white parson’s table above the radiator. Both pieces can travel with the couple when they move to their next home. The custom-made headboard and canopy in their bedroom can also be taken down and reassembled elsewhere.

Window treatments are harder to take. “But it’s always important to dress up ugly windows, especially in a rental,” says Proxmire. “In this case, the curtains are not operable because you can’t draw them all the way. That cuts down on the cost of fabric.” Behind the curtains the Venetian blinds remain cleverly hidden, and can be used for privacy or glare as needed. As a less-expensive window treatment option, Proxmire suggests buying ready-made panels and adding a simple trim to dress them up.

Of the completed apartment, Proxmire says, “Brocky and Lauren love it; it looks so pulled together. And it doesn’t look like a rental!” ♦

CLASSIC HEADBOARD

The custom-made headboard and canopy add height and drama in the bedroom, and will go with the couple when they move.

PEGGED POTS

"I have a peg board in my office to store my fabric samples, so I thought to add one in this kitchen," far left, says Proxmire.

SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

A peg rack and a leather cube, left, increase storage.



The bed canopy can be taken down and reassembled elsewhere

DRAPE A CANOPY

"I'M A BIG BELIEVER IN MAKING A BEDROOM LOOK LUXE, NO MATTER WHAT THE SURROUNDINGS," SAYS INTERIOR DESIGNER KELLEY PROXMIRE. "Instead of putting money into artwork above the bed," she continues, "put it into fabric and draping." She shares tips on how to make a less-expensive version of the canopy shown using pre-fab pieces that anyone can get.

1. Find ready-made drapery panels in matching fabrics. We recommend JCPenney as a source for affordable window treatments. If you have tall ceilings and can't find panels that are long enough, you can sew on a wide panel of fabric along the bottom of each drape

so it will run from the ceiling to floor. Sew panels together vertically so they're equal to double the bed's width for a luxurious look.

2. Purchase a wood valance (also sold as a cornice) that's as wide as your bed. You can attach the drapery panels inside of it using curtain rods, a hook-and-loop fastener like VELCRO® or even a staple gun, and then hang it on the wall according to the directions that come with the one you purchase. Note that you can cover the wood with matching fabric for a soft, coordinated finish.

3. Complete the assembly with a ready-made tufted headboard. Ballard Designs (ballarddesigns.com) is one inexpensive option.