

**this picture** At the touch of a button, the Hidden Kitchen by Warendorf tucks the cooking area away. Shown in rust, it's also available in a wide range of sizes and finishes. Price on request (+49 258 1590; warendorf.com)

# MULTI-USE INTERIORS

With clever design and flexible furniture, you can now get a lot more function from your footprint. Follow our room-by-room guide to find out how *Words Luke Tebbutt*

**M**any of us are doing so much more in our homes these days with a lot less space – in fact, a report by insurer LV claims the average British home is 2sqm smaller than a decade ago, at 96.8sqm. But the good news is, less really can become more with multifunctional designs.

'With this approach, you get a variety of tasks in one space, and a greater sense of discovery,' explains architect Robert Garneau (studiogarneau.com), who transformed his 50sqm New York apartment into a studio that opens and closes with a sliding wall, a folding bed and

lots of hidden storage (check out his YouTube video to see how it works). The key is to invest in design time to make sure your spaces align and adapt with your needs. 'You have to allow more time because of the complexity of what you're building, but also to reflect on what you're proposing – we developed 3D models to visualise how the elements in our space would work,' he says. And of course, you need to invest in the details, too – sliding tracks, hinges, concealed handles. 'There's not a lot of room for error when a wall is sliding or a bed is folding, so the hardware they rely on has to be of the highest quality,' says Garneau. →



## HALLWAYS

Storage is one of the best ways to make the most efficient use of a linear entrance hall, especially for things you only use when going outside – shoes, coats, umbrellas and buggies. As little as 20cm will give you enough width for a shoe cabinet, and 40cm will give you enough for a bench, which you can store bulkier things beneath.

Use dead-end hallways and landings (such as those leading to bedrooms) for more fixed functions – a fold-down desk for work or a pull-out clothes airer. And don't forget about stairs – you can tuck a lot of storage or a small WC beneath them, or if space is really tight, you can make them disappear with

bespoke options that pull out from the wall or fold down from the floor above, or industrial-style staircases on wheels.

For new-builds or major renovations, incorporate a number of functions into your structural elements, advises architect Jeremy Ashworth (01223 322 331; ashworthparkes.co.uk), who fitted his three-bedroom home into a 79sqm plot.

'We had to support the upper floors with concrete, so we shaped it so it could double as a larder on the ground floor and a recess for our coats,' he says. 'Designing structural elements to do another job is much cheaper than building these features independently.'



**this picture** This integrated piece of furniture from Sikes Design studio (ig.sikesdesign.com) gives this narrow apartment an all-in-one kitchen, storage area and staircase (see page 15)



**above** Great for tight hallways, the Filo 10 vertical pivot door sits flush with the wall on both sides for a seamless look. Available up to H300xW120cm, price on request from L'Invisible (invisible.io)

**left** A fold-down work space with built-in shelving sits snugly in an alcove. Designed by AR Design Studio (01962 864 645; ardesignstudio.co.uk) and Carpenter & Carpenter (01702 569 520; carpenterandcarpenter.co.uk)



**this picture** Get clever and use multifunctional furniture to reveal or conceal a host of functions. The white sliding wall in this apartment opens to uncover a bedroom at one end and hides the home office at the other (studio.garneau.com)



**this picture** A clever bathroom box by Craft Design sits in the middle of this loft space to divide the cooking and living areas. It also doubles as a mezzanine for the bed – reached by steps along the wall (craftdesign.co)

## LIVING ROOMS

Multifunctional furniture comes into its own in the living room, which often acts as a TV space for the whole family, a play zone for young children, a homework area for older children, and a place for adults to entertain. A wall unit with storage, shelves and a desk can fulfil all these functions, but try to include elements that fold, slide or swivel away so you can hide the TV or computer when they're not in use.

'You don't want to clutter your space with lots of functions,' says architect Robert Garneau. 'You want to overlap them, so when one is needed, the other disappears. Then your space feels more generous,' he says. Likewise, sliding partitions should divide up an area seamlessly, so use solid materials that will keep sound out and won't wobble when the windows are open, and invest in good-quality, ceiling-hung hardware to avoid an unsightly track on the floor.

'Make sure you employ people with the right skills and tools to build your complex kit, too. 'Some companies will come and pitch-up in your home for a couple of days, but the quality will never be as good as something made with equipment off-site in a workshop', advises furniture maker Andrew Carpenter (01702 568 520; carpenterandcarpenter.co.uk). If you're looking for a good furniture maker or carpenter, try searching through the Guild of Master Craftsmen (01273 478 449; findcraftsman.com). →



**this picture** This modern studio by i29 Interior Architects features a wall of storage with laser-cut holes in the panels that reveal what's inside and act as handles (t+31 20 695 6120; i29.nl)

**above** Remember to utilise your floor and ceiling when maximising space – it can provide room for hidden storage or even furniture, as shown in this Spanish apartment by Elii (+34 911 157 658; elii.es)

**right** Scenario Architecture created a multi-zone family space in this London home by cutting a void between the upper- and lower-ground floors, and adding built-in wall seating and storage (020 3096 9797; scenarioarchitecture.com)

## KITCHENS

Wheels could be your best friend in a bijou kitchen, says architect Jeremy Ashworth. 'Commercial kitchens use trolley benches, and these can be useful in domestic kitchens, too. You can wheel them out when you're preparing or cooking food, then slot them back into a recess,' he says.

There's also plenty of scope to make your kitchen island more multifunctional, by incorporating storage, shelving, a breakfast bench for informal meals, sound speakers, or even a fold-out worktop for extra cooking space. Alternatively, you could follow Robert Garneau's lead and have a height-adjustable table instead of a kitchen island. At the push of a button, he can transform his from a dining table to a standing-height bench, ideal for food preparation or drinks.

Hideaway kitchens are also great for small kitchens, with folding or sliding doors to conceal the food-preparation area after dinner or during parties. Try Warendorf (+49 258 1590; warendorf.com), Dada (020 7631 2345; moltenidada.co.uk) or Boffi (020 7590 8910; boffik.com), which all offer a range of designs that are ideal for this function.



**this picture** There's a huge amount of function in this 28sqm flat, including pull-down beds and sliding walls (freetest.com)



**this picture** A bedroom-cum-home office – the bed folds up into the wall and a desk pulls down from the cupboard (+34 93 363 0811; m2arquitectura.es)

## BEDROOMS

As these rooms are unused for most of the day, they're the one area where you can devote a portion of the floor space to storage solutions – great for long-term items that you don't need access to on a day-to-day basis. You need about 60cm on either side of the bed and one metre at the foot to move about easily, but the rest can be filled with cabinets.

Alternatively, you could convert a bedroom into a home office, especially if it's a spare room. Bonbon Compact Living sells a range of fold-down beds that convert into desks, or you

could design your own. On his compact three-bedroom 79sqm plot, architect Jeremy Ashworth hired a carpenter to build bedside tables on either side of his fold-down bed, with a desk that sits on top of them when the bed is up. It cost him about £600.

If your bedroom is longer than four metres, you could also incorporate a dressing space at one end, with a wardrobe to partition the area behind your bed. Allow about 60cm for the wardrobe and 70cm to walk around it. →



**this picture** A funky piece of flexible furniture that's perfect for a style-conscious teenager's bedroom and includes a fold-down bed, desk and neat wardrobe by Bonbon Compact Living (020 7823 9090; bonbon.co.uk)





**left** Kaldewei's relax lounge is a bath that can be covered up with upholstered panels, converting it into a seat or display surface. From £1,746 (01480 498 053; kaldewei.co.uk)

**below** A wall of pull-out shelving is the ideal storage solution for a small bathroom and will hide away all your toiletries (susannacots.com)



**this picture**  
Suppose Design Office added landscaping inside the bathroom of this Japanese home to give its owners more light and some outside space (suppose.jp)

## BATHROOMS

Most spaces in the home are defined by their function, none more so than the bathroom, but it is possible to elevate that function from a wash-and-go space to a spa zone, even when space is at a premium.

'It should be a place where you can relax and spend time. You should celebrate its intimacy,' says Robert Garneau. To do this, make as many of the surfaces as flush as possible and limit the amount of materials used. Garneau, for example, covered the walls, floor and ceiling of his small bathroom in blue mosaic tiles to create an enveloping environment, and set the shower, and even the track for the shower curtain, flush into the ceiling.

Thickening your walls with storage is another good trick. Build out around your WC to conceal the cistern, and then extend that thickness across other walls, so that all your cabinets and shelves are recessed. Installing an electric mat under the floor will also allow you to clear the radiator from the wall, creating a more streamlined look. **GD**

