



REDUCE, REFRAME, REFRESH

RESOLVE TO KICK CLUTTER TO THE CURB

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It's the same song every January: After the excesses of the holidays, we promise to rein in purchases, waistlines, and especially clutter. We set out with sincere intentions, but what do we actually do? Most of us throw out some knickknacks and rearrange the office, purchase shelves and sock-drawer separators, scan receipts and files, and fearfully avoid the garage. Some of us put money where our mouths are and hire closet and garage experts to help us find lasting solutions in problem areas. And a very brave few will take the plunge and hire a designer or architect to address the problem holistically.

Organization paves the way for serenity, or at the very least, sanity. Long-term fixes may require changing the way we think about organization and its importance in our lives. For inspiration on how to start, read on.

In DC's Capitol Hill neighborhoods, storage space is a prime concern. In this remodeled row house by Ossolinski Architects PLLC, the owners couldn't change the historical façade, but they wanted it to look like "California in the back," says Michael Merschat, the project's designer. The modular windows help visually compartmentalize the space and show off the streamlined interior.



Reduce the 'Annoying Moments'

For a full week, take inventory of the little issues that distract you – both visually and physically – around the house. Are the kids' shoes always piled at the door? Do you lose your keys or electronic accoutrements? Hate a certain painting or chair?

Then, prioritize those issues as a household. Edit your space with a focus on "cutting down on the annoying moments," says Vincent Sagart, principal of Poliform Washington by SagartStudio. It could mean two entries to a shared walk-in so partners don't have to step around each other to dress for the day. It could

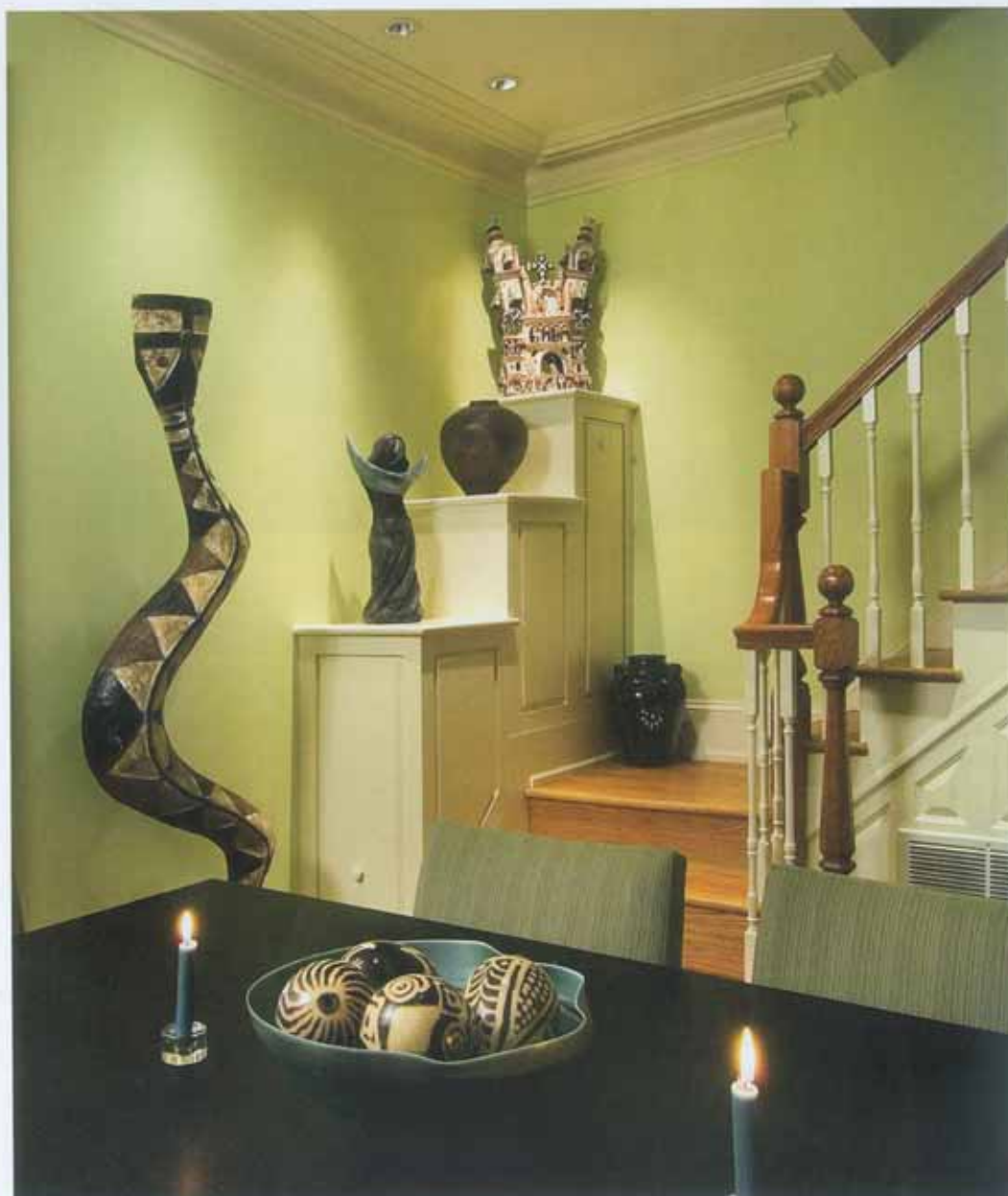
mean transparent or translucent cabinetry – or shelves instead of cabinetry – so you'll never have to open a door to see what's behind it, and so you'll always have an external reason to keep it clutter-free. It could mean a sleek appliance garage for the kitchen so you can have fresh-ground coffee every morning and easily hide the grinder afterward. It could mean setting rules for yourself, and it's okay to start small – no more than three magazines in the living room at any one time, say, and cancel or recycle the ones you know you'll never have time to read.

Reframe Your Passions

Once you've streamlined the things that bother you, there's usually space left over for beautification. In the Capitol Hill house, the owners' passion is their impressive folk art collection, which is full of exquisite souvenirs from their many travels. The new built-in maple shelving has plenty of horizontal space for displaying the objects they love, allowing them to be focal points in the room. When you realize your sanity and your space are integral concepts to each other, Sagart says, it's impossible for organization not to be a top priority.

OPPOSITE: Ossolinski Architects PLLC redefined the row house's small kitchen as a space unto itself. The owners like to entertain, and they want the chef to be able to interact with everyone else. It was also important to have a versatile, multi-planar island with a swing-out nook for a laptop, so online recipes could be consulted while cooking. "There's often a lot of dead space in kitchen corners," says Mersch, so they installed pull-out shelving to make the most of it. The built-in maple wall shelving allows plenty of space for the owners' art collection and storage.

BELOW: Some parts of the original staircase couldn't be moved, so they were repurposed into surreptitious storage that doubles as pedestals for artwork. "It just works," Mersch says.



Refresh Your Outlook

If you think back in your life, Sagart says, you can probably come up with a small handful of decisions that, in the grand scheme of things, brought you roughly to where you are today. We're talking about actual decisions you made, not dumb luck – to attend a class, to write a meaningful letter or make a crucial phone call, to follow your gut and accept a proposal. These decisions were made in a moment, and if you "weren't there during that moment," Sagart says, "you might have done something else." If your mornings begin by running around the house in a frenzy because your shirt was in the wrong place or you tripped over a toy, you might be scatterbrained at crunch time and make the wrong call the next time a big decision arises. Deciding to get organized, then, is the mother of all decisions – a decision to be present and have a fresh mind for all the other important judgments you have to make. **ws**

For specific tips on organizing your home office, kitchen, mudroom, garage, and kids' rooms, go to washingtonspaces.com and type code: wi09115.

RESOURCES

■ **BoConcept**
202.333.5656
boconcept.com

■ **Ossolinski Architects PLLC**
202.966.9449
ossolinskiarchitects.com

■ **Poliform Washington by SagartStudio**
202.554.8658
poliform-dc.com