

BY DANI GRACE  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK LOHMAN

# Small Homes With *Big Style*

Inspiring décor ideas are featured in Fifi O'Neill's new book on making the most of limited living space.



**| ABOVE, LEFT | SWEET SITTING.** This Solvang, California, home balances farmhouse charm with contemporary functionality for a timeless look. Whether it's a delightful book, a sundowner, the California weather or a conversation with friends, this modest porch provides plenty of room to enjoy life's finer things.

**| ABOVE, RIGHT | COLOR FLOOD.** A monochrome color palette keeps things bright on this Rhode Island porch. These shades of blue have us feeling anything but, with a painted midcentury-style floor pattern, plump cushions and antiques presenting an inviting and exciting environment.

**| RIGHT | NOWHERE BUT UP.** When every room juggles multiple identities, the walls are your friends, so don't be afraid to use them, O'Neill writes. Hooks or knobs, wall shelves, built-in cabinetry and any other wall-affixing tool keeps clutter off the ground and countertops.

**| OPPOSITE | CONNECT WITH NATURE.** This back porch alludes to its natural surroundings with fresh oak, neutral furniture and a chandelier that has become the homeowner's family heirloom. A variety of plants keeps the area sprightly and connected with surrounding nature.

*Homes come in all shapes and sizes* but sitting on the smaller end of the square-footage spectrum shouldn't force a sacrifice in design or creativity.

In her latest publication, *Small Spaces, Big Appeal*, Fifi O'Neill discloses "the luxury of less"—or the advantages of packing practicality and personality into a living area that lacks large room space. Smaller homes are becoming more popular as society considers environmental impact and housing costs, and there is also a greater desire to rely on fewer physical belongings to better connect with people and places.





**| ABOVE | AWESOME ARBOR.** European influence is evident in this lush cottage yard, complete with an arbor overflowing with greenery. The homeowner's eye for style transformed what used to be a pink and brown exterior into this fairytale 1920s façade that matches her vintage and upcycled interior décor.

**| BELOW | KEEP IT SIMPLE.** Small rooms can feel cramped if you try to incorporate many colors, so adhering to a pared-down palette or theme is key. If your belongings don't match, consider adding a curtain to the front of your shelving to match the room but retain its functionality.



**| ABOVE | NEW HOME FOR OLD FINDS.** Nothing creates a cohesive look in a small farmhouse-style living area like reclaimed wood. The authentic floors and beams are not the only reimagined pieces: the wood coffee table found its way from an old Los Angeles hotel, while the doors and windows found new life after a stint at an antiques shop.

**| RIGHT | SMALL AND BRIGHT.** When your kitchen is small, a neutral palette of textures and materials will keep your space calm and charming rather than minimalist or devoid of personality, the author writes. Lighter, natural colors that don't compete with each other will make your kitchen look and feel larger.

"Contentment comes not in amassing things but in being selective about including only the most useful, beautiful and meaningful ones," O'Neill writes in *Small Spaces*. "Though the homes in this book are small, their owners have big dreams, which they have realized by choosing creativity over conformity."

The opening section presents the small-homes equivalent of Hollywood movie magic: a slew of insights that can make any small space, no matter the style, seem twice the size. Then, case studies on 12 different homes display those tips and more in action, providing insight from the homeowners about their functional ingenuity, color-palette approach and adding personal touches.





**| ABOVE, LEFT | DOUBLE UP.** Fifi believes every corner of the house has potential and should play multiple roles. Breakfast-nook benches can moonlight as storage containers, couches with pull-outs can work overtime as extra beds, credenzas can become home offices and baskets on shelving can double as décor/organizational tools.



**| ABOVE, RIGHT | SMART REFLECTIONS.** Soft, cheerful wallpaper and funky, fun mirrors add heaps of personality to this small room. Oversized mirrors are a fail-safe trick to creating the illusion of more square footage due to their ability to refract light into the darkest corners and reflect the room's charm.



#### SINGULAR STYLE

The beauty of the properties O'Neill includes is each space presents a unique example of cleverness and style. Whether you're drawn to classic cottages, modern farmhouses, sleek minimalist, eclectic Boho or any other look, the examples in *Small Spaces* run the gamut.

"Limited square footage requires a healthy dose of creativity and resourcefulness to achieve comfort and functionality while still allowing a favorite aesthetic," O'Neill writes.

*Small Spaces, Big Appeal* will help any first-time homeowner, renovator or downsizer make the most of a condensed footprint. **CB**

**| LEFT | SHADE PLAY.** Rather than search for colors that pair well without overpowering your quaint haven, focus on just one color story: How many different shades of that color can be incorporated? This simple design approach also reinforces that living with less can still produce a joyous space.



***Small Spaces, Big Appeal: The Luxury of Less in Under 1200 Square Feet***  
by Fifi O'Neill with photography by Mark Lohman, published by CICO Books, 2023: rylandpeters.com.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT FIFI O'NEILL, FOLLOW HER ON INSTAGRAM @MISSFIFI2610 AND FIFIONEILL.COM.