

northshore
home

vignettes

PIED-À-TERRE DESIGN

SALEM-BASED INTERIOR DESIGNER ANITA CLARK DECORATES
A SMALL SPACE FOR A NORTH SHORE COUPLE IN BOSTON.

By **Mary Grauerholz**
Photographs by **Kyle Caldwell**

Contemporary art
offers pops of color
in this space.



THE FRENCH COINED THE PHRASE CENTURIES AGO: *PIED-à-terre*, a part-time home. Today the expression (literally, “foot on the ground”) carries the same meaning, but with a chic understatement. A *pied-à-terre*—usually a small, compact living space in a large city and within driving distance of the primary residence—gives homeowners, including many on the North Shore, an urbane home away from home.

For one North Shore couple who purchased a 600-square-foot studio apartment in the heart of Boston, the *pied-à-terre* means the freedom to take full advantage of Boston’s vibrant city life without the worry of traveling into the city for early business meetings or back to the suburbs from late-night commitments. “The homeowners use it frequently,” says Anita Clark, principal of Anita Clark Design in Salem. “It gives them the best of both worlds.”

From the outset, the *pied-à-terre*, located in a stately brick building on Boston Common, had all the *je ne sais quoi* we would expect from French tradition. Dated and ill-designed, the living space was poorly lit and not particularly functional, and downplayed the remarkable view. After living there for several years, the homeowners gave Clark *carte blanche* for a complete makeover. Clark—working with the contractor, Our House Design+Build in Reading, and custom cabinetry makers Furniture Design Services in Peabody—transformed the



space with a complete gut renovation, including new furnishings, finishes, and treatments.

“I immediately walked in and addressed problems that the homeowners had not noticed,” Clark recalls. “I saw things they didn’t see, an opportunity to make the space more functional and efficient.” The apartment didn’t have a closet, she noticed, and the bed

Anita Clark designed a new floor plan for the small space. She also used space-saving techniques such as built-in shelves, cabinets, and benches, and added a Murphy bed into the space.

was in the entry way. Designing a new floor plan and replacing the furniture opened up and brightened the space. "Keep it timeless and simple," Clark says of her working philosophy.

Today the pied-à-terre is a sleek, comfortable getaway wrapped in soft colors, a gleaming maple floor, and crafty, often hidden, storage spaces. Clark began by establishing three big design linchpins: a multifunctional combination bed and shelving unit, custom cabinetry that organizes and hides household necessities, and a walk-in closet with dressers and storage space. "The right furniture makes a huge difference," she says. "They were accustomed to the way the space always functioned before and had no idea that even with a small space there were many options available."

In the daytime, the queen-size wall bed by LGM Tavolo appears as a 35-foot shelving unit and a five-foot fold-down work table. Come nighttime, rotating the shelving exposes the Murphy bed and a pair of slide-out night tables. Clark also had the bed moved toward the back of the space, facing Boston's gorgeous city views.

The bathroom, across from the walk-in closet, is now a pleasing extension of the rest of the apartment, with much more storage in the vanity, a concealed medicine cabinet, new fixtures, and excellent lighting. Appliances in the kitchen are concealed, allowing the style to flow uninterrupted and playing up the quartzite counters. Mirrors reflect the views while also giving the illusion of a more spacious interior.

The wall and window treatment's color palette includes soft neutrals, with pops of color here and there for impact. Having a space small enough that every piece counts means that individual beauties can shine. Above the banquette is artwork created from spooled pieces of comic books by contemporary artist Don Morris, from Quidley & Company Fine Art Gallery in Boston.

Clark wanted the beautiful style to go hand in hand with low-maintenance care. Millwork is stained for easy cleaning. Area carpets are indoor-outdoor for durability and easy care. Custom-made bench seating is crafted from leather-like polyurethane upholstery fabric.

The couple's pied-à-terre has brought them freedom of movement, a way to balance their lives in two stunning locations, and far fewer headaches dealing with traffic. "With the increase in traffic, there are a lot of people who are thinking of how to design a new way of living," Clark says. "People don't want to give up their North Shore home to enjoy all that Boston has to offer."

Last July Fourth, immediately after the completion of the renovation, the owners relished the opportunity to have friends over to see the Boston fireworks from what might be the best seat in the city—their pied-à-terre's balcony. ■

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A light stain on the wood cabinetry keeps the apartment bright.

