Got wall? Then make the most of it with some creative family portraits.

Alternative Design

LIBBY LANGDON OFFERS HER EXPERT ADVICE FOR CREATING SPACES WITH YOUR OWN UNIQUE TOUCHES

BY LIBBY LANGDON

Q My home is an open-space-plan house. The living room, dining room and kitchen are all seen immediately when you walk into it. I have a good direction with the color scheme in all three rooms so that they all relate to one another. However, the problem is that the foyer and living room ceiling is 18 feet high with a catwalk separating the two spaces. The kitchen and dining room ceiling is 9 feet high. My question is what can I do with the wall space over the kitchen and dining room? Since that is what you see when you're looking at the kitchen and dining room from the living room and foyer, I'd like to do something dramatic, modern and elegant. Help!

Mary LaVoie, via e-mail

A You can do tons of dramatic and elegant things with that wall space. You just need to think BIG! It all depends on what style your rooms are, so let that be your inspiration. If you have an Asian minimalist design you could separate a folding screen and hang the panels a few inches apart side by side, or you could frame a kimono or a beautiful silk robe. If you have an Italian or Mediterranean theme you could hang a piece of an old wrought-iron gate or large scrolling metal medallion. If you have a Moroccan design scheme you could hang several really big Moroccan platters in a grouping. If your style is more modern you could hang 20 12-inch square mirror tiles in five rows of four, each tile separated from the next just by two inches. You could also scan photos of pets, kids or family into your computer and make them high-contrast, then blow up the pictures on a black-and-white Xerox machine to 16x24 inches and put them in 24x30-inch frames with good mats. You can even print the images on colored paper to create a Warhol-esque look, and it's an inexpensive way to create large custom artwork!

Q I have an open living room and kitchen area. The only thing separating the spaces is the bar. I was wondering if I could use two different colors in the two spaces and have it not look tacky. I was thinking about red for the kitchen and maybe a caramel/gold-ish color in the living room. Also, I have light pine hardwood floors and I was wondering if I could decorate with cherry furniture. I do not want the colors to clash. Thanks!

Adrienne Ingram, via e-mail

A Red is a wonderful choice for a kitchen and a soft gold is a great color to balance the red, but make sure your red isn't bluish or orangey,

As the interior designer and expert commentator on HGTV’s “Small Space, Big Style” Libby Langdon assesses the design tactics used in the featured home and offers her own insights, techniques and tips to help viewers make the most of their own small spaces. She also orchestrated the interior design of New York restaurant La Masseria, as well as the entire design scheme and interior decor of Massimo Bizzocchi’s new York boutique. Her Long Island home was featured in the December issue of Decorating Spaces. Libby can be seen on “Small Space, Big Style” every Thursday at 8 p.m. on HGTV.
you want it to be a true red. Sherwin Williams has two great reds, Redwing (2009) and Classy Red (293). These are outdoor colors but they can mix them as indoor paint. Just be sure to use their matte finish — it’s washable but not glossy. Two good gold colors are Benjamin Moore’s Waterbury Cream (HC-31) and Sherwin Williams’ Restrained Gold (6129). With red kitchen walls, cherry furniture could be too much red, but pine furniture would look fantastic and give the contrast and “pop” it will need. In your living room, with the gold walls you could use some smaller cherry pieces (end tables, coffee table, console table) that would still allow you to use the wood you love, but not clash with what’s happening in the kitchen. Also consider using black as an accent color; it looks so wonderful with the red and gold combo. You could bring in black wrought-iron bar stools, a black wrought-iron baker’s rack and drapery rods, then continue into the living room with black shelving and reflect light. Keep in mind that when you’re designing a home office you need to carefully plan it out so it will function efficiently and you’ll be able to function in it! Sit down and make a list of all the items you need access to the time and items you only need every now and then. If you’re using storage bins, measure the bins and then plan your shelving to accommodate those sizes, because in a small office you don’t want to waste a single inch. Also, make it a comfortable room. Use a large low-pile rug (like a berber) that office chairs can roll on. Put lamps on your desks and paint the room a cheery color — you want it to be an office but you also want it to be a place you’re happy to be in!

Q I want to convert our front bedroom into my home office. It measures 8'x12' and has three doors! One door leads to my bedroom, the other to the family room and the third to the veranda. There is one window facing north. How do I place the furniture? My husband and I would be the only ones using the space.

A I’d place one desk on the wall with the window, then I would “float” the other desk out into the room by placing it perpendicular to one of the walls. You could place narrow open shelves on the other walls with the doors, and consider placing mirrors behind the shelves. Visually, it will open up the space.

Q I need ideas for my daughter’s room with painting a volleyball mural or just a volleyball painting.

A Something neat you can do for your daughter’s room that would be less of a time commitment and less permanent than painting a mural would be to take some digital pictures of all things volleyball; the net, the ball, the court and maybe even her playing volleyball. Then have huge poster prints made of all the pictures and hang them on her walls. They can make them as large as 4 feet wide by 8 feet high as long as they are files from a digital camera and at least 300 DPI (which most digital cameras are these days). If no printers in your neighborhood can make these large scale prints, check out different online resources. There are lots of them and it’s not that expensive. Your daughter will definitely have the cool look she wants, and she’ll be the envy of the volleyball team!

Coming next month...

Get a crash course in high style with Candice Olson! This internationally-known designer and host of “Divine Design” shares her favorite tips and trends on everything from window treatments, choosing the right paint colors and furniture that will stand the test of time. Be sure to see her in action every Thursday at 9 p.m on HGTV.