



DECORATING
IDEAS



RAISE THE ROOF

*Three creative attic renovations
prove just how much fun you
can pack into a small space.*

By Chantal Lamers

Up a notch
CASSANDRA LaVALLE
TAKES THE HOME OFFICE
TO NEW HEIGHTS

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KEEP IT CLASSIC WITH BLACK-AND-WHITE POLKA-DOT SHADES



BLOGGER CASSANDRA LAVALLE

lighting, and furnishings, she created a cozy and chic dressing room that she chronicled on her design and lifestyle blog, *Coco Kelley* (cocokelley.com).

At the same time, LaValle—whose company, Emerald Studio, styles shoots for clients such as Amazon and Starbucks—had been using a breakfast nook as her occasional workspace, complete with laptop cords and piles of paper. But after their kitchen demo got under way, she realized she had to put plan B into effect. What better place to work than the attic? “It’s tucked away from the rest of the house,” she explains, “so I can close the door and not see laundry in the corner.”

LaValle opted to outfit her new office with pared-down, slightly masculine pieces and a neutral palette to better reflect the home’s evolving aesthetic: “Steep stairs, low ceilings, and a very tiny doorway limited what we could get in there.” Luckily, there was room for well-chosen touches—lush wallpaper, polka-dot window treatments, and a sheepskin thrown casually over a chair—that bring subtle femininity into the picture.

1 THE HOME OFFICE

A longtime design blogger carves out a quiet nook in a shared Seattle nest.

TWO YEARS AGO, when Cassandra LaValle moved into her fiancé’s South Seattle Craftsman, she was faced with the daunting task of merging not only closets but also disparate decorating styles. Craving dedicated space for her wardrobe, LaValle claimed the home’s 140-square-foot attic, which had been retrofitted by a previous owner. With a little paint and new hardware,

THE DETAILS

> WORK OUT THE SEATING A structured settee-style sofa takes the place of the former dressing-room chaise. "That was more conducive to reading a book or taking a nap—not so good for working." *Leather loveseat, \$3,322; bdantiques.com. Metal side table, from \$295; firstpickdesign.com.*

> CHOOSE THE WRITE SURFACE An old farmhouse table was her dream, but because she needed a solid, even workstation, LaValle opted for the next best thing: a classic campaign desk redone in a warm wood. *Desk, \$229; worldmarket.com. Wishbone chair, \$314; atg stores.com.*



WHY NOT MATCH YOUR STATIONERY TO YOUR SHADES?



KEEP IT OLD-SCHOOL WITH AN INSPIRATION BOARD

> PLAY WITH PATTERN For one key wall, LaValle selected wallpaper that echoed the tree-top views from her attic perch. "I wanted something that had an indoor-outdoor feel," she says. *Makelike wallpaper in Lush Light Grey, \$200/roll; makelike.com.*

> THROW SOME SHADE "I knew I wanted pattern for the Roman shades, but it had to work with the bold wallpaper," LaValle explains. The solution: playful yet discreet polka dots that act as a classic complement to the maximalist accent wall. The cotton-linen fabric provides privacy while still allowing plenty of sunlight into the room. *Roman shades in Domino from the Kate Spade Collection at The Shade Store; theshade store.com. Leather campaign stool, \$798; serenaandlily.com.*



A WHITE DRESSER FITS PERFECTLY UNDER THE EAVES



"It's tucked away from the rest of the house, so I can close the door and not see laundry in the corner."

—CASSANDRA LaVALLE

CREATE AN ASYMMETRICAL GALLERY WALL WITH FRAMES AND MIRRORS



CUBBIES WITH TUBS ARE EASY FOR KIDS TO SORT

DESIGNER JENNA WILSON AND DAUGHTER ADAH



THIS NOOK DOUBLES AS A DRESS-UP STAGE!



THE CHALKBOARD WALL: A TRIED-AND-TRUE KID FAVORITE



PROP STYLING: MIKHAEL ROMAIN

THE DETAILS

> FAKE A RUG Wilson purchased a large canvas drop cloth for \$30 and let the kids loose with paint. "Textile paint is the best to use because it's permanent," she says. "You can throw the cloth in the washing machine and not have to worry about transfer."

> LET IT ALL HANG OUT Hardware-store hooks above the kids' beds display soft pom-poms and puppets, all made from scrap fabric from Wilson's company. "It's an easy way to rotate art."

> DRESS UP A WALL Adah's vintage dress-up clothes are too beautiful to hide behind closet doors. A row of hooks helps keep them out on display; below them, knitting baskets are an easy place for Adah to toss accessories.

> CORRAL THOSE TOYS Almost every parent knows that feeling: the pinch of stepping on a LEGO. "There's nothing worse," says Wilson, laughing. So when she scored a vintage black filing cabinet with 40-something little drawers, she knew it would make the ideal storage unit for organizing the tiny pieces categorically.

> ADD A CRASH PAD The attic is a popular destination for cousins and friends to sleep over. Rather than lug extra mattresses up the stairs, Wilson stacks a couple in the corner and disguises them under a patchwork quilt. Now they double as a daybed (and the components of a killer fort).

2 THE PLAY SPACE

Smart organization and imaginative decor make this kids' bedroom an all-ages wonderland.

JENNA WILSON was immediately captivated by the 500-square-foot attic in her family's 1920s Craftsman in artsy Southeast Portland. She envisioned canvassing the plaster walls with inspirational images for her textile-based clothing company, Ace&Jig (aceandjig.com). But her two children, James, 8, and Adah, 6, called it first. "My kids immediately assumed this magical fairy house would be theirs," said Wilson. "I had to give it up—there are two of them and only one of me." With its low, pitched roof and multiple nooks, the long, narrow room serves as the siblings' sleeping quarters, creative retreat, and performance space (a series of ceiling hooks allow brightly colored patchwork "curtains" to hang down for playacting). It also gives Wilson a leg up on bedtime: "The pitter-patter of small feet overhead is a giveaway they're up to no good."



3 THE MASTER BEDROOM

A San Francisco artist turns an iconic blanket design into a larger-than-life motif.

FOR YEARS, Windy Chien awoke every morning to her light-filled Mission District attic bedroom, staring up at the ceiling and deliberating over her vision for the blank walls.

Chien, a wood and fiber artist and product designer (*windychien.com*), has an intriguing work history: Formerly the owner of San Francisco's Aquarius Records, she transitioned into an eight-year career as a playlist curator, then app-store editor, at Apple. "I was tired of being a poor punk rocker. I'd never had a boss; I wanted to see how other people lived," she says. In 2010, she purchased a character-laden two-unit building with a friend, gutting and remodeling her attic for an additional 800 square feet of living space.

The design for the attic started to fall into place two years ago when boyfriend Gary L. Baker II moved in. He suggested moving the bed closer to the wrought-iron staircase, freeing up the far side of the room for built-in bookshelves (made from redwood and birch)

and a listening nook for Chien's vinyl collection, which spans Norwegian black metal, Brazilian tropicalia, and Jamaican rock steady.

Now Chien was free to scheme up the right stripe for the space. Inspired by Baker, whom she affectionately describes as a "preppy, neat millennial" in contrast to her thrift-store, grunge-leaning, Gen X self, she chose Pendleton's precise, multicolored Glacier National Park blanket as inspiration. The timeless design bridges the couple's sensibilities and is the furthest thing from trendy in Chien's eyes. "Think about the patterns and prints you've loved since you were a kid," she advises those searching for a design motif of their own. "Do what resonates with you." *Pendleton Glacier National Park blanket, from \$199; pendleton-usa.com. Queen Bed Makeover bedding set in indigo and natural, \$831; roughlinen.com. Nicole Myer pillows, \$95 each; theperishtrust.com. Helix light by Windy Chien, \$225; windychien.com. Eye art by Gary L. Baker II; andthenithought.com.*

PROP STYLING: ROD HIPSKIND



DRAWING THE LINE

Dario Garcia, owner of SF Paint Works (*facebook.com/sfpaintworks*) and Chien's go-to painter, explains what it takes to bring a big stripe to life on your wall.

- **STEP 1** Start with a flat, clean, painted wall. A surface with texture will result in uneven lines.
- **STEP 2** Using a laser level, measure and tape the top and bottom borders 1 foot at a time. (A yardstick works best when working on sloped walls.) Use a framing square to check for uniformity.
- **STEP 3** Start by painting the darkest color, which will need the most coats. Allow paint to dry between coats.
- **STEP 4** Remove tape when paint is completely dry. Touch up with the wall's original base color.

S DIGITAL BONUS Amazing transformations for your home and garden: sunset.com/makeovers.