

# Los Angeles Times | HOME & GARDEN

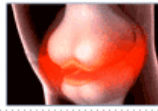
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## L.A. at Home

DESIGN, ARCHITECTURE, GARDENS, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA LIVING

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### Pro Portfolio: Architect Matthew Hofmann remodels Airstream into live-work space

March 7, 2011 | 7:52 am [Twitter](#) (45) [Facebook](#) (234) [Comments](#) (5)



Every Monday, we post a new home whose design is presented in the designer's or the builder's own words. This week:

**Design:** [Matthew Hofmann, Hofmann Architecture](#)

**Location:** Roaming, currently Santa Barbara

**Project goal:** To live in a small space. I like the idea of reducing my costs, but I also wanted a quiet, comfortable place to work -- a space that was mobile and easily converted from residence to workspace.

**Designer's description:** Often, the creative process succeeds not by adding more, but by taking away what is distracting. The design questions were: "How much does one remove? How much does one keep?"

To me, sustainable practices are a mere starting point for design. This included the



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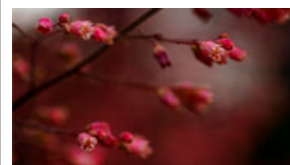
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use of regional materials and reusable products, such as bamboo for flooring, counter tops, dining room/worktable, along with a recycling management plan throughout construction. Weight was also a huge issue. Less was more. Lighter was better. And like luggage packed on an airplane, the load needed to be properly balanced.



I wanted to create open space in a small space, using honest materials. In Southern California, blurring the distinction

between interior and exterior space can be a very successful strategy. The design needed to be bright and airy by nature, yet warm and multifunctional.

Many of my clients are in Santa Barbara, so after looking at some tiny yet still expensive condos and lofts, I purchased and remodeled a 1978, 25-foot [Airstream trailer](#) on a whim on [Craigslist](#).

I needed a place to park it -- and not in a trailer park -- so I went back to the most logical place: Craigslist. I arranged to park it on an ocean-view Montecito lot where a home had burned down recently. The city of Santa Barbara had issued temporary trailer permits for homeowners whose homes were destroyed.

Some friends and family don't understand why I've chosen this lifestyle, while others say I'm living their dream. Before the remodel, most expressed some form of "good luck ..." with doubt-filled grins. It's pleasant to bring the same folks inside to see the finished product. I enjoy working with clients with gutsy audacity -- like me. Life-changing events, such as a fire, remind people that they can do with much less and be content.

For a look inside, keep reading ...



Material scraps from the Airstream, pictured above before the remodel, were sent to a recycling yard. That included hardware, braces, tracks, rods and plastic paneling. All of the old appliances and fixtures -- refrigerator, oven, sink, toilet -- were sold on Craigslist or donated. That extended the life of old materials and prevented them from heading to the landfill.



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The bed that has readers losing sleep | [March 10, 2011, 6:00 am](#) »

At Venice Community Garden, digging up solutions to toxic soil | [March 9, 2011, 7:42 am](#) »

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## Recent Comments

On: *Pro Portfolio: Architect Matthew Hofmann remodels Airstream into live-work space*

“ Matthew: What a clean sleek man-cave! Thanks for posting your design. How is it heated? Is the toilet vented and how do you dispose of the brown wat ... ”

-- Flutedoc

On: *Can I recycle? We ate the pizza; now what to do with the box?*

“ Just stumbled across this feature. Wow, what a great resource! Idea: maybe you could put all the information in some kind of easy to read chart fo ... ”

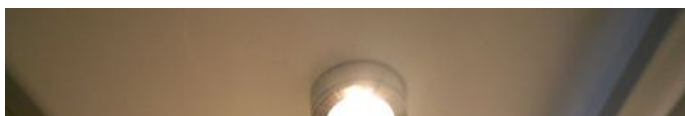
-- eric



For the new dining area, I replaced the existing tabletop with [Cali Bamboo natural strand bamboo](#) while reusing the table posts. The old tabletop was reconditioned and used as shelving in the cabinetry. The dinette doubles as a guest bed. By removing the table posts and lowering the top to seat level, it also converts to what I call a media lounge where I can play movies on my 27-inch iMac.



Another view of the workspace and lounge. The office printer is tucked into a custom-built pullout drawer under the bench. I sold my plasma TV, DVD player, audio receiver, seven-speaker surround sound, desktop PC, laptop computer, wireless home speaker system and portable radio.



On: *At Venice Community Garden, digging up solutions to toxic soil*

“ Congrats! Its was a lot of work but well worth it!! ... ”

-- arthur

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The kitchen has a [Moen](#) stainless-steel sink with a Euro-modern 23-inch pull-out spray chrome faucet. New appliances include an [Atwood Wedgewood](#) three-burner propane stainless gas cooktop, [Target](#) countertop stainless-steel toaster oven and [Norcold](#) refrigerator.



The cabinets are [Hafele](#), with halogen puck lights overhead to provide more than ample meal-prep illumination. The original overhead cabinetry was removed, redesigned and reinstalled to simplify

and clean up the lines. The seating, a custom piece that converts to a full size bed, has Sunbrella indoor-outdoor fabric cushions.



One of my favorite purchases was a [Hafele Kessebohmer](#) integrated pullout pantry system. Hafele also makes a very cool Moovit drawer box system and cutlery tray inserts. Those German designers know their driving machines and storage devices.

I'm 6-foot-4, so I designed a generous convertible bed using locally supplied, lightweight materials. I hired a seamstress to hand-sew [Sunbrella](#) indoor-outdoor fabric cushions from [CushionsXpress](#). Underneath the bed is the original roll-up cabinets from Airstream. ArchiTech in-wall speakers sound like a high-fidelity surround-sound system.

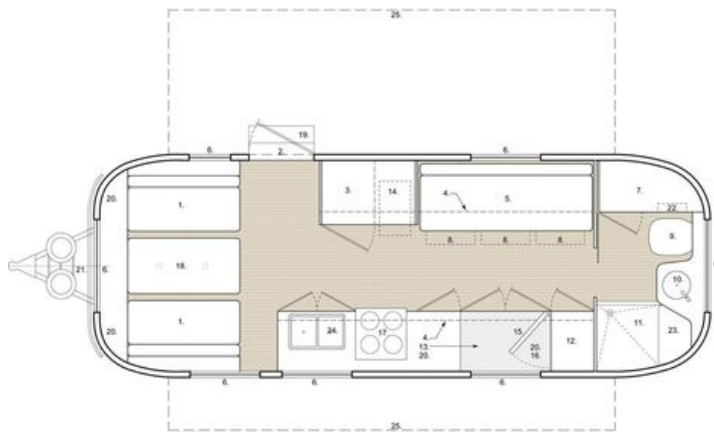


The bathroom was easily my greatest indulgence. Attractive, durable and sustainable custom-cut counter tops are by Custom Cali Natural Strand Bamboo. The shower was handcrafted with practical and pleasing curves using tiny glass tiles and a custom-built redwood shower pan. Water temperature and power are controlled through a [Grohe Euphoria](#) chrome fixture.





A 14-inch glass vessel sink sits under a single-handle faucet. The room's custom LED light has two-stage brightness, from ultra-low to high voltage. The towel bars, TP holder and other accessories were from the Grohe Essentials line.



1. Four person convertible dinette to double bed. Storage under seat area.
2. Entry
3. Refrigerator (Gas + Electric)
4. Line of built in storage cabinetry above
5. Convertible lounge sofa to double bed
6. Window
7. Closet
8. Pull out storage drawers under.
9. Toilet
10. Raised bowl vessel sink.
11. Shower
12. Wardrobe closet
13. Dresser - Built in pull out drawers.
14. Pantry / Pull out shelves.
15. Wall mounted, swing out flat screen television.
16. Media Equipment.
17. 4 Burner Gas cooktop + oven combo.
18. Tabletop
19. Fold down seat.
20. In wall surround sound speaker system.
21. High strength, limo tint, rock guard surround.
22. Medicine Cabinet.
23. Shower bench.
24. Stainless Steel kitchen sink.
25. Integrated Zip-Dee seating.

-- Compiled by Lisa Boone

Photos: Matthew Hofmann

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Live Large by Living Small! So inspired by your trailer. Ready for an adventure!

**Posted by: LA HOMEWORKS | 03/07/2011 at 11:51 AM**

books? where's the library?

**Posted by: John McVey | 03/07/2011 at 03:32 PM**

Very nicely done. Yet, I wonder more about water supply and the gray/black water storage and disposal issues. Surely the trailer originally included the needed tanks, but use does raise the issue of frequent requirements to move the trailer to dump waste. Then again, maybe being located on an established property allows for the use of existing water and sewage lines in some way.

**Posted by: steve chandler | 03/09/2011 at 11:18 AM**

Very cool trailer and very inspiring project! I would love an airstream, but new ones are so expensive. I'd be curious how much the renovation project cost and if it was less expensive than purchasing a new airstream - or was it comparable in cost, but you got a nicer unit that was custom tailored to your needs.

Either way, very cool project and a very nice home & work space!

**Posted by: Rich | 03/09/2011 at 05:30 PM**

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Matthew: What a clean sleek man-cave! Thanks for posting your design. How is it heated? Is the toilet vented and how do you dispose of the brown water and waste? The halogen lights and appliances lean toward using a lot of power and water. and How much does it weigh (roughly)? I follow the tiny house movement and dream of living like this. Some day. . .

**Posted by: Flutedoc | 03/10/2011 at 07:42 AM**

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