

Interview: Turning a Vintage Trailer into Living Space with Matthew Hofmann

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Matthew Hofmann from Hofmann Architecture recently completed a contemporary renovation of a vintage 1970's Airstream trailer which currently serves as an efficient living and working space. Green thinking heavily influenced this project. This means that in the interview below you will be reading about quite a few ingenious sustainable ideas that stood at the basis of redesigning this trailer. Enjoy the amazing conversion below which we hope will trigger your need for renovating and improvising.

- **Freshome:** Where do you have this trailer from anyway?
- **Matthew Hofmann:** Purchased used on Craigslist
- **Freshome:** How did you come up with the idea to transform a trailer into a living space?
- **Matthew Hofmann:** I'm at a point in my life where I'm trying to live with less. Two years ago I moved from a large house. Moving has a way of making you consider the value of possessions. I wondered, while looking at the massive truckload of things, how would I feel if this truck ran off a cliff and all was lost? My stuff was beginning to feel like a burden, like luggage. Things that I needed to take around with me wherever I went; a truckload sized ball and chain.



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- **Freshome:** Is it... mobile?
- **Matthew Hofmann:** Very much so. I've taken it to several oceanfront RV resorts.
- **Freshome:** What were your first thoughts after purchasing the trailer?
- **Matthew Hofmann:** "Crap! I'd just written a sizeable check for what was a glorified dog house. The trailer was swaying back and forth along rain-soaked 101, like the pendulum of doubt pounding in my brain. The body was solid, but inside the trailer was a mess. There's no doubt the last resident was the junkyard dog."



- **Freshome:** Can you describe the transformation process in a few words? (How did it look before the renovation and what did you change?)
- **Matthew Hofmann:** Step #1: Demo – Remove everything – along with lots of scrubbing to eliminate the wet dog smell. Step #2: Design – The creative process isn't accomplished by adding more, but by taking away what's distracting. The design questions were simply: How much does one remove? How much does one keep? Perfection isn't when there is nothing more to be added, perfection is when nothing left can be taken away. The must-do list included the use of regional materials and reusable products, such as bamboo for flooring, countertops, the table, along with a sustainable management plan. 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.

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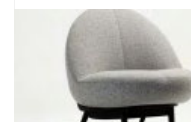
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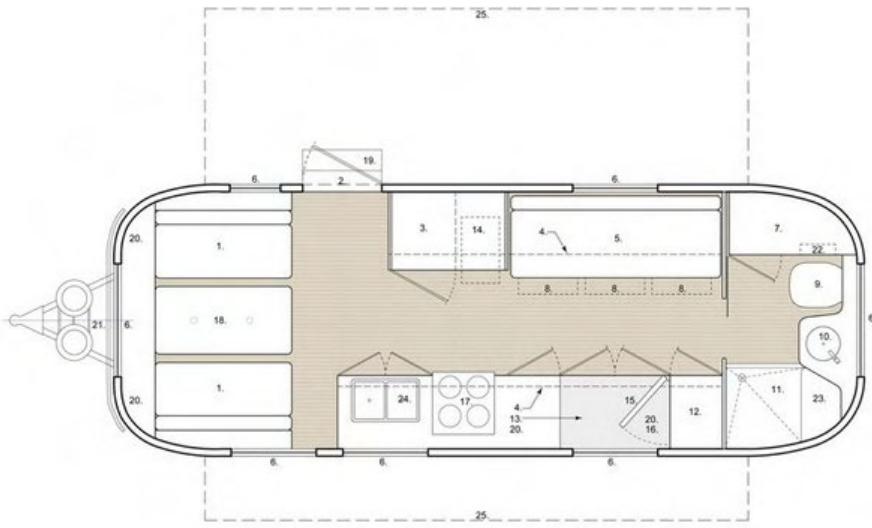




- **Freshome:** Tell us about the “green” side of your project.
- **Matthew Hofmann:** The Airstream uses an integrated propane heating system on colder nights. For cooling, the Airstream uses two large awnings on each side to shade windows from direct sunlight. Large open-able, screened windows promote ample cross-ventilation to take full advantage of Southern California’s ocean breeze. The Airstream utilizes a low voltage battery system with integrated charger. This system supplies 12 volt lighting and fans, or converted 110v power. Batteries are recharged from the automobile while in tow, and a solar panel battery charging system is currently being installed. Low voltage lighting, such as fluorescent and halogen, are utilized throughout the trailer. Water flow control devices are installed on every water fixture. Small hot water tank encourages short showers. Extremely low flow water closet is adaptable to the type of waste. (less water for liquid waste, more for solid waste) Two separate storage tanks: graywater and blackwater. Gray water is diverted from sewer and used for landscape irrigation. The Airstream is not hooked up to city sewer, so blackwater waste is biologically-treated on-site through a leach field/septic tank.



- **Freshome:** What were the costs for “redecorating” this 1970’s Airstream trailer ?
- **Matthew Hofmann:** Performing all the design and construction work myself, the renovation was under \$20k. It’s very time intensive work.
- **Freshome:** How was working on this renovation different from the rest of your architecture projects? (If it was any different that is).
- **Matthew Hofmann:** Very similar indeed. The minimal space availability required careful consideration for every space. Every design action required justification. A space that didn’t serve multiple purposes was a waste of space.



- **Freshome:** On a scale of 1 to 20, how comfortable is it to live in your trailer? Please justify your answer.
- **Matthew Hofmann:** 18. For me, a space that serves only one purpose is a waste of space. But for someone else it may not work.



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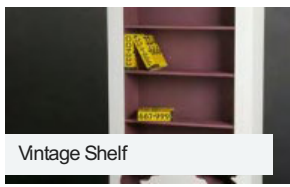
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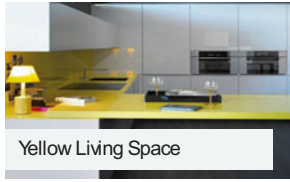
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Wonderful Project! I like it!



Chauce

Posted April 14, 2011 at 6:26 am | [Permalink](#)

I really adore this trailer. He did an incredible job. What a fantastic, simple, peaceful space to live in. Congratulations on becoming "dispossessed", Matthew. 😊



Ronda

Posted May 5, 2011 at 4:12 pm | [Permalink](#)

A-Ma-Zingggg!!!! Absolutely beautiful, Gr8 job!

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Incredibly creative design! Love seeing the concept drawings! Fantastic!

 **Philip**

What can one say but - wow!

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The primary focus of this design publication is to give you inspiration to make your home more beautiful, organized and healthy. We believe that a calm, healthy, beautiful home is a necessary foundation for happiness and success in the world.

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