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Trading Spaces alum **Laura Day's**
quick-fix ideas from her own home



hesitant. Reluctant to make a “design statement,” Heather lived for a year in the raw, modern space of a newly constructed building in the city’s South End. She had bought the basic-box apartment after realizing the Boston brownstones of her dreams were too pricey.

“I didn’t like the box thing; it didn’t seem Bostonian to me, but a classic Boston apartment was outside my means,” she explains. However, she realized that she could do here “what I do for clients,” she says. For Heather, that meant combining her architectural education—Smith and Harvard—with decorative skills she learned working as an interior designer for firms in San Francisco and Chicago.

“I really had to ask myself, ‘Who am I?’—because this would be my statement for now,” she recalls. Her approach was to warm up the loft space with traditional design. “I wanted to have a New England-modern aesthetic,” says Heather.

“I like contemporary spaces—how they live—and simple, modern details. I didn’t want to do crown molding because ▶

Top: Windows running the length of the apartment offer views of the Boston skyline. Heather designed the windowseat bookshelves and topped them with a soft leather cushion. **Left:** Sheer fabric hanging from a ceiling-mounted track separates the bedroom from the living area.

A small guest room is tucked behind a bank of cream-colored cabinets. **Below:** Despite limited wall space, architect Heather Wells found ways of displaying art, such as this favorite piece by Lloyd Martin.




rising to the occasion

A big-city apartment with high-rise views is warmed with classic comforts.

WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY STACY KUNSTEL PHOTOGRAPHY BY HELEN NORMAN



On the job, architect Heather Wells exudes confidence, tapping out rapid-fire responses on her ever-present Blackberry. Barely in her 40s, Heather heads full-service architectural and design offices in Boston and Chicago, which bear her name, Heather G. Wells Ltd. When designing her own 1,150-square-foot Boston apartment, however, Heather was uncharacteristically ▶



Upholstered ottomans tuck under the farm table when not in use. Heather's gift for mixing old and new creates a tablescape of traditional and modern forms.

I'm not a big fan of putting crown molding in an apartment that has modern windows."

Although trim is minimal, Heather used wood in other ways in the apartment. Built-in bench-style bookcases skirt the expansive windows. Banks of floor-to-ceiling cabinets with simple Shaker-style doors act as walls, separating the hall from the bedroom and the kitchen from the guest area. (The apartment's only bathroom does have standard walls and a

door.) The cabinets also provide ample closet, pantry, and other storage space. Some cabinets are stained a dark mahogany, while others are a neutral cream.

Sheer fabric curtains partition the bedroom from the living area and the wall of windows that runs the length of the space. "The curtain divider was the only thing I was unsure about," says Heather. "But it's the best use of the space. I like that I can wake up in the morning and see the skyline." ➤



I can wake up in the morning and see the skyline. —HEATHER WELLS



Although the original apartment lacked architectural features, the use of furnishings to divide the space into intimate rooms introduces traditional styling. "I think there is something about the lines and feel of traditional architecture that is very soothing and warm and comfortable. It speaks of 'home' to almost everyone," the designer says.

"Classic architecture uses symmetry and proportions that directly quote from the human form, so it inherently feels good," Heather explains. "I think that traditional design uses color and pattern in a similar way—one that makes the human psyche respond very positively, with hues that tend to be rich and saturated."

When decorating, Heather gave the space a pure New England essence. Shades of beige and blue are soothing and compatible. A four-poster Shaker bed, painted pieces, and multiple antique Oriental rugs add character to every corner of the formerly spare box. "It all harks back to traditional aesthetics that read friendly and cozy but in a modern space," she says.

Layers of what Heather calls "New England stuff" finish the look. Carved pieces of tramp art, regional art, books, found ▶

Top: A cabinet partition between Heather's bedroom and the entry hall has storage access on both sides. Another wall of cabinets, stained dark mahogany, holds coats and linens. **Left:** A guest room multi-tasks as Heather's workout area and a cozy place to read.



objects, and the roughness of old painted furniture give the apartment its character. Glass cabinetry in the kitchen shows off teacups and French pottery.

"For my lifestyle it works perfectly," says Heather. "I can see my whole space. I can live with everything behind a cabinet wall. I'm tidy, and it creates a sense of organization. It's great for a single person."

The area isn't conducive to formal entertaining, so Heather keeps it casual: "I use the table to lay out a buffet, or I have big brunches. People love hanging out around the table.

"It's like a Chicago apartment in Boston," she says, noting the parking and other amenities typically available in Chicago. "You have the views and the doorman, but the history of Boston can be seen from the window." ❧

For more information, see sources on page 198.

Top: A well-worn painted planting bench was put to work as a dining table and kitchen island. Serene blue subway-style tiles accent the kitchen's cooking wall. Heather chose a wall-mounted pot filler for the sink faucet. "It just gives me more flexibility," she says.