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Room to Improve

By STEPHEN MILIOTI
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Q. *What should I do with the tiny foyer in my studio apartment?*

A. The smaller your apartment is, the more important it is to make use of your foyer. It might seem like very little space, but with a bit of ingenuity, you can improve its functionality and appearance.

Ron Marvin, a New York-based interior designer, recommends that you start by painting the walls in a color that complements the colors in the main room. Mr. Marvin, who lives in a very small apartment himself, created the illusion of depth in his own foyer by painting it two Benjamin Moore shades: Davenport Tan on the walls and Classic Brown for the door, with white moldings.

John Loecke, an interior designer in Brooklyn, suggests defining the foyer by hanging wallpaper on one of the walls, “preferably something with a bold graphic print or interesting texture.” He recommends Janovic (janovic.com) as a source for a wide array of options.

You could also put up a fabric divider, “turning the foyer into its own mini-room,” said Andrew Suvalsky, a Manhattan designer. He recommends using a sheer fabric. Depending on your budget, you could find a fabric panel at a store like Target, which has a good selection, or have lightweight silk panels custom made. But even if you decide not to spend a lot on the fabric, Mr. Suvalsky advised hiring a handyman or a fabric-hanging professional, “to make sure the overhead bar is secure and seamless.”

Artwork will help make the foyer look finished. “Put up one oversize, bold or brightly colored graphic print,” Mr. Suvalsky said. “The idea is to create a visual moment as soon as you step into the apartment. If you ignore that, you miss an opportunity to make a great first impression.”

Lighting also makes an impact. Mr. Marvin suggests hanging a small chandelier and, if you’re feeling really ambitious, installing mirrors on the ceiling to reflect the light. (A professional should do this.)

To make your foyer functional, he recommends hanging a floating shelf near the door, just below eye level, “to hold everything you need to grab quickly on the way out.” Topdeq offers a simple option called Rezzo shelving (\$28 to \$117 at www.topdeq.com), in various sizes and shapes, and CB2 carries a wall-mounted storage shelf with frosted-glass doors (about \$100) as well as the more elaborate, four-shelf Helix Bookcase (about \$200 at www.cb2.com).

It’s best not to buy anything that protrudes more than a foot from the wall, or the piece will look too bulky for a tiny foyer. Even worse, you might have trouble opening the door.

A shallow console table is a good way to get around this problem. “It’s not as big as a conventional square or rectangular table,” Mr. Suvalsky noted, but it’s substantial enough “to redefine the foyer area as its own little room.” The Ditto Console Table from Eurway (\$139 at eurway.com) works



Photo: Jose Gutierrez

well in foyers because its curved shelves create a little extra space.

One finishing touch that no foyer should be without, Mr. Marvin said, is a mirror. Besides making the space look bigger, “it’s your final chance to check yourself out before leaving.”