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# STELLAR STORAGE

At work or at home, these design tips will help you create stylish and functional storage solutions in your work space

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHANI BUCHMAN

Striking the perfect balance between practical use, function and clever storage solutions is tricky. I've recently relocated my design studio and it was perhaps my greatest challenge yet. I tend towards a minimalist esthetic in my personal spaces and opt for clear surfaces devoid of clutter. This new studio is a bit of a unique animal. In the spirit of creative collaboration, my friend and owner of Analogue Gallery, Lucia Graca Remedios and I decided to join forces, creating a hub of art and design. Canada's foremost source for Rock photography, it seemed like a natural marriage; I create the space, they adorn the walls, and we work and exist in a sort of creative synergy. We both possess our own inherent stock of 'stuff' to run our respective businesses so we needed to create solutions that would house everything without that function being too prominent. The exercise offered a case study of sorts with a few fun ideas you can incorporate in your own home or office. Here are my top five tips for unconventional form-meets-function storage.

## GO VINTAGE

The design studio tends to keep samples of our go-to products on-hand, making our initial design scheme creation more efficient. With that there are lots of tiny samples, everything from tiles, fabrics, paint chips to countertops and flooring. It's nearly impossible to make piles of small items look tidy with any day-to-day use. I sourced a vintage teak dresser, giving me nine equal drawers perfectly suited to sorting products by category, colour and use. These pieces come up often on Kijiji for as little as a few hundred dollars. Consider this idea for craft rooms, kids' play areas to sort LEGO, puzzles and toys into categories, making playtime—and more importantly—cleanup time a breeze.

## WALL-TO-WALL

Next to keeping things out of view, there are the practicalities of the office like: files, staplers, paper and the necessary stock of coffee. Rather than doing a series of individual storage pieces, purposely built for each need, we opted for wall-to-wall built-in cabinetry, topped with a counter for an über functional work surface. By using Ikea's SEKTION kitchen cabinets, and white SALJAN counters, we have a slick outer look, with a very clean overall design. A series of small items create more visual clutter, whereas larger but consistent units make a space look bigger and tidier. This is a great affordable solution for a home office, dining room side credenza or basement rec room.

## CURATE AND DISPLAY

Some things simply need to be accessible and hiding them away doesn't make sense for how you use them. For us that's the beverage station, and extra books that the gallery sells. By creating specific spots and bases to house them, there's more of a purpose to the placement and they become part of the overall esthetic in the process. For kitchen items, consider putting them on an oversized tray like this SVARTAN tray table from Ikea. Books, tools and utensils fit perfectly in vessels and crates like these wooden ones. Group several together and create a functional vignette.



## FLOATING WALL

There simply isn't any way around the need to store extra boxes, brooms and supplies and small storage units won't cut it. We opted to pull a wall surface 3 feet from the rear wall smack in the middle of our main reception room. Seemingly the last place you'd think to hide the unsightly stuff, but this is an approach that I often use in my residential designs. It was an opportunity to create a feature wall front and centre, which serves form as much as function. When guests visit the space, they are greeted with a statement piece from the gallery, and tucked away out of view are our functional supplies.



## FILL THE WALLS

Traditional galleries select a few key works to display, storing the balance away out of sight. With space at a premium, we hatched the idea to display it all. We filled the walls with photography. The result is an unconventional but seemingly more fitting way to view the collection. Seeing the pieces in groupings better lends the impression to how we might hang them in our homes. There are wonderful hanging systems on the market that allow you to install a simple rail, and have the flexibility to change the work, as often as the mood strikes. This is a terrific approach for gallery walls in your family room, or better yet, a place to display your child's artwork.

Sometimes the best solutions are born of the biggest challenges. We designers tend to look to the odd and often unrelated for ideas, leading to the most innovative results. ♦

*Toronto-based designer and contractor Melissa Davis is known for her appearances, creative design and reno work produced for various HGTV shows. Her work has also been profiled nationally in print publications. With almost two decades of reno and design experience her firm continues to service clientele throughout Ontario & GTA, specializing in value-adding ROI and resale consultations. [melissadavis.com](http://melissadavis.com) @melissadavis*

