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MAGAZINE

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### DESIGNER JOHN STEFANON REDEFINES ONE-ROOM LIVING IN FORT POINT CHANNEL

When the developers behind FP3, a sleek 92-unit loft project in Fort Point Channel, asked John Stefanon of SoWa-based JFS Design Studio to work his magic on a 671-square-foot model apartment, he was happy to oblige. After all, the first space he designed there was fabulous. But this time, instead of a loft with oversized windows and lots of light, Stefanon was assigned the most challenging unit in the building — a second-floor studio with no real view.

Stefanon, a designer with an almost Zen aesthetic, was undaunted. He embraced the directive, which was to help would-be buyers conceptualize how to make the most of a studio. In other words, Stefanon needed to show, loudly and clearly, how one can fashion a single room into a living space that functions well for both entertaining *and* private time, while remaining organized and, of course, stylish.

He started with the vestibule. "In an unfinished unit, people go right to the window," Stefanon says. "So we created an interesting entry in hopes they would stop, think, and take it all in." Stepping onto

the Tibetan wool "Swirl" Paul Smith rug, with its mesmerizing ribbons of color, is enough to make anyone pause. Then there's the funky wall clad in Braille Wall Flats by Inhabit Living. The textured panels are both eco-friendly (they're made from 100% molded bamboo paper pulp) and inexpensive. To evoke a sense of outdoors, Stefanon painted the ceiling a moody, neutral blue. Above a clean-lined console table that's perfect for mail and keys, he hung a convex mirror that reflects the space beyond. But who's rushing to get there now?

Stefanon further differentiates the vestibule from the main living area by lining the interior frame of the portal with walnut panels stained to match the finish of the unit's door. The detail is a nice touch — "It makes people feel like they're about to walk into somewhere special," he says. Formalizing the entry not only ensures that guests savor their first moments here, but defines the entry as its very own space.

The neutral color scheme Stefanon chose for the main living area unifies it, the accessories add color, and the details and finishes

add texture. He asserts, "It's important to balance neutrals with textures so the room doesn't feel cold."

The space is divided into three areas — dining, living, and sleeping — proving one needn't sacrifice function if short on space. "The kitchen," Stefanon says, "is not just about the kitchen. It's also a place for entertaining." The long, rectangular table is on wheels, so it can function as a dining table, an island, or a buffet, or be pushed out of the way altogether. The rattan-backed bench adds a tailored touch to the utilitarian table, while the chain-mail chairs infuse an industrial edge reminiscent of the building's warehouse origins.

Instead of a sofa, Stefanon outfitted the living area with four chairs. He points out, "A sofa seats three, but nobody wants to be in the middle. This way is more user-friendly." The French Provincial-style chairs, which are upholstered in natural muslin, are sophisticated, yet casual and comfy. And the table is rustic enough to put your feet on. For additional seating, the bench from the dining table can be pulled over.

The development company had initially requested that Stefanon incorporate a Murphy bed into the design, but he felt the look was too typical. Instead he opted for a more artistic approach. Drawing on the neighborhood's artsy identity, Stefanon designed an oversized headboard constructed with art frames around the perimeter of an upholstered inset of tufted outdoor chenille. Stefanon considers the headboard an art piece, since there isn't much room for actual artwork on the walls. On the bed he used a single large pillow for maximum impact and minimum fuss.

"The goal," he tells us, "is to make every living area special, without overdoing it." The key to achieving this balance? A lot of editing. Good advice for those considering one-room living. And we're not the only ones who think so. Stefanon tells us, "Somebody saw this the day after I finished it and bought the studio directly above."

— Marni Elyse Katz

Marni Elyse Katz is a freelance writer in Boston who blogs about style at [stylecarrot.com](http://stylecarrot.com).

