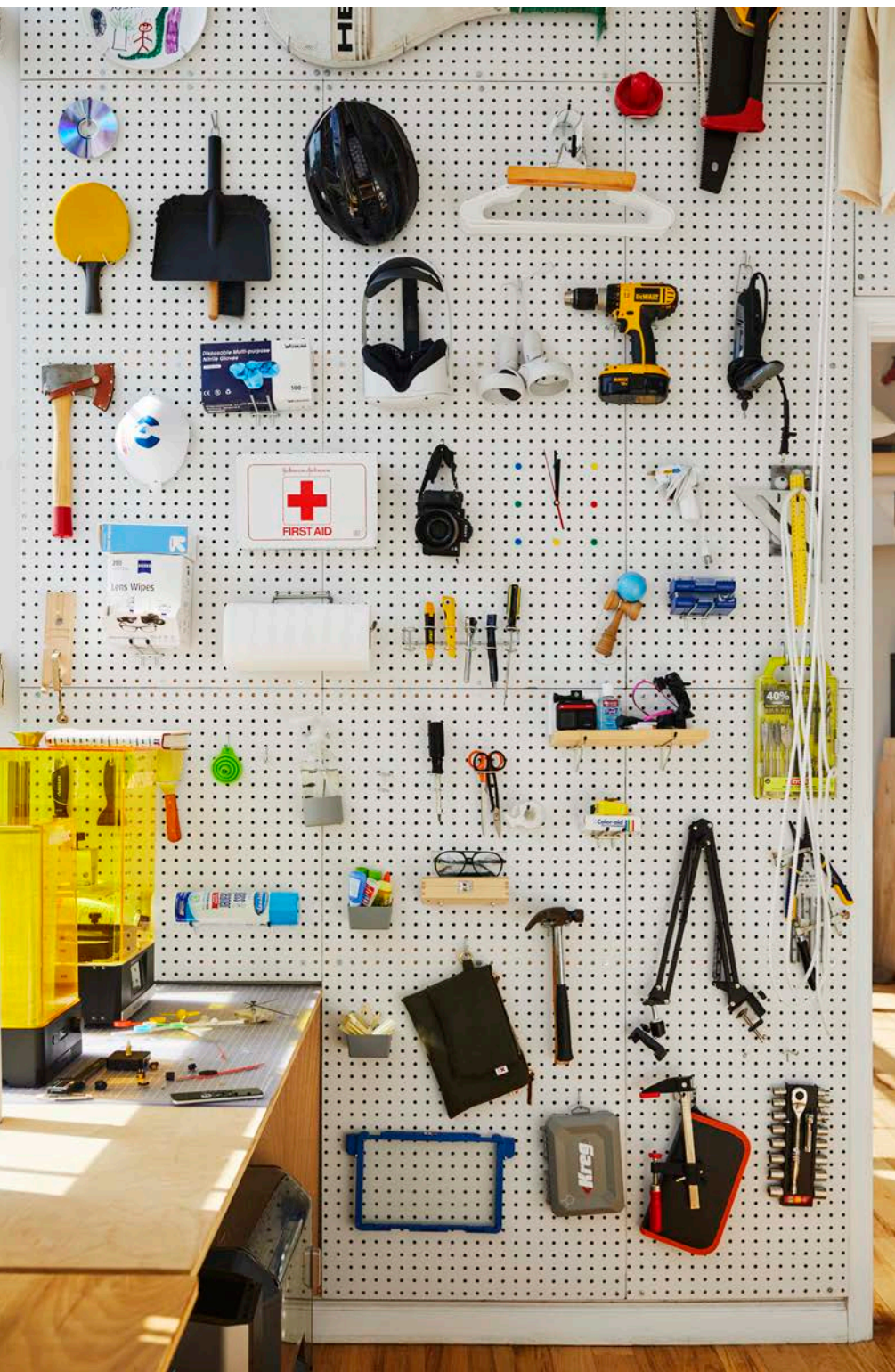


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# Clutter Control

**A Brooklyn designer proves that an 88-square-foot live/work space doesn't have to feel small.**



In the New York loft that he shares with two friends, industrial designer Joshua Skirtich covered one wall of his 8-by-11 bedroom/design studio with pegboard for organizing his tools. A plywood desk runs the length of the room, accommodating Joshua's 3D-printing equipment at one end and clothing drawers at the other.

**A year ago, when Covid-19 sent many apartment dwellers fleeing for bigger spaces and fewer people, Joshua Skirtich did the opposite.**

The industrial designer gave up his one-bedroom in Manhattan's SoHo neighborhood and moved into an 88-square-foot room in a Bushwick loft rented by two of his friends. "I didn't want to be sheltering in place alone," he says.

While the apartment has an airy living space that Joshua helped outfit with his extensive collection of vintage finds, the tiny room that functions as his sleeping quarters and the office of his eponymous design studio measures just 8 by 11 feet with 11-foot-high ceilings. It's the smallest bedroom in the loft, but it comes with an amenity coveted by all designers: tons of natural light from a wall of windows.

"It was really important to me to have sunlight," he says. "I thought I would have to live in a Philip Johnson house to ever get windows like this."

Joshua moved into the room in April 2020 but didn't start making changes until September, when he could sign an official lease. The forced waiting period turned out to be a blessing, he says: "Because I had so much time to stew, I was naturally >

## rental revamp

Joshua hung an abstract painting by a friend on the ceiling so that he can look at it while lying in bed (right). A pair of vintage Soviet spy binoculars allows him a closer view. His collection of midcentury modern furniture—including an Eames Contract Table, molded Eames chairs, and chairs by Arne Jacobsen and Jørgen Rasmussen—found a home in the loft’s shared living/dining space (below).



designing rather than buying stuff. I treated this as a design prompt.”

He spent a few months moving his bed around and testing every conceivable spot before deciding that he wanted his workspace to face the windows. Using  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch oak plywood, he fashioned a two-foot-deep desk that runs the length of the room, supported by the eight-inch-deep windowsill. A set of Muji drawers is nested underneath.

Putting in shelves was simply a matter of practicality, as he needed storage for his many books and dozens of prototypes. He hung them opposite the windows, parallel to the desk, creating elongating lines on each side of the room.

As a modern design lover, Joshua had really wanted to splurge on Vitsœ shelving, but ultimately the 25-year-old decided, “I am not in a position in my life where I can buy them.” Then he visited the Gropius House outside Boston last November and noticed that the famed architect had opted for simple track shelving in his living room.

“I thought, ‘If it’s good enough for Gropius, it’s good enough for me,’” Joshua says. He paid \$292.50 for brackets, tracks, and four eight-foot-long white shelves from Home Depot.

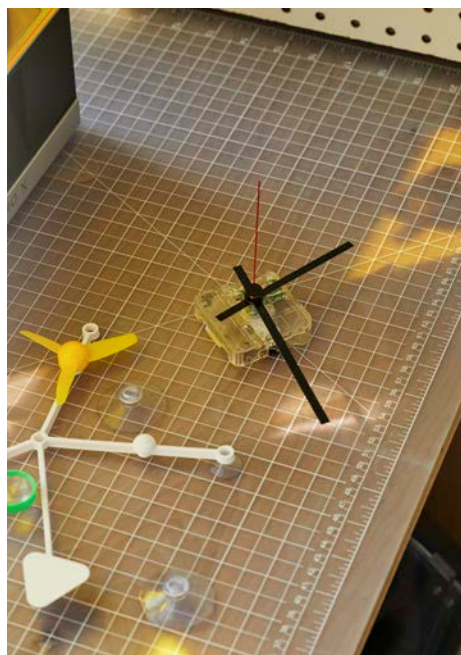
While he loves how they look, he was “terrified” about the weight. “I had to have a lot of people tell me it would be fine,” Joshua says, laughing. But he secured the tracks to every stud in the wall, and six months in, they haven’t budged. Still, for the first few weeks, he moved his bed to the other side of the room. “My girlfriend still won’t sleep under them,” he says. >



**“Deciding to take on this type of design challenge might seem like self-induced torture, but I was excited to do it.”**

**JOSHUA SKIRTICH, DESIGNER AND RESIDENT**

A wall of shelves (above) holds color-blocked books, 3D-printed prototypes (including several versions of Joshua’s soy sauce cruet), and objets the designer has collected over the years, like a 1937 Top-O-Stove Potato Baker by Raymond Barton and salt and pepper shakers by William Lescaze. A clock engine sits next to Joshua’s Do-Nothing Machine in his workspace (right). A riff on the Eames Solar Do-Nothing Machine, the item attaches to a window “to make the world seem less boring,” Joshua says. Formerly a product designer for the Museum of Ice Cream, Joshua launched his own studio when the museum’s social-media-ready immersive experience temporarily closed because of Covid.



Arguably the most ingenious solution in the room is the closet: a clothes bar rigged to a pulley system. Previously, the room had a “terrible” stand-alone wardrobe that Joshua dispatched almost immediately. After he decided on a room-length desk, he realized he “simply had to put the closet on the ceiling.”

The placement was obvious—he put it over the door to avoid obstructing usable wall space when he lowers it—but the mechanics took a bit of trial and error.

He first bought a bike pulley system with the intention of 3D-printing brackets and swapping out the hooks for a rod to hold hangers. But it wasn’t strong enough, so he upgraded to a kayak holder that he outfitted with a PVC pipe.

“It’s a beast,” says Joshua. “I could probably pull up two people.” (He was never concerned about the ceiling studs not holding, since the building is an old factory and the beams originally were used to hold >



Joshua rigged a hanging closet for \$45, using a kayak holder and PVC pipe. The system went through a couple of iterations, and there is a “hole graveyard” on the ceiling, he says, along with a stray pulley left over from an earlier version. “I like seeing the progress,” says Joshua, who streamlined his wardrobe so it would fit in his new closet.

The bed is by Floyd, and an Alvar Aalto stool that Joshua scored for \$100 at a Barneys closing sale functions as a nightstand.



machinery.) The whole thing cost less than \$45.

Even with all his clever efficiencies, Joshua’s room is far from simply utilitarian; it’s designed for introspection and fun as much as it is for work. He left one wall entirely blank to allow a visual respite, and then there are the playful moments: the doorknob he fashioned from a Bop It toy, the vintage Tizio lamp he can pull from his desk to his bed, and the abstract painting he hung on the ceiling so he can look at it when he’s lying down.

“I think most people are discouraged when they have a small room like I do—they may see highly designed tiny homes in magazines, but they never really see other people’s bedrooms and roommate scenarios as inspiring,” says Joshua. “They may see these types of spaces as temporary. For me, I decided I was going to live here forever. Of course, that probably isn’t true, but when you’ve made that claim to yourself, you can really start to paint your space with personality.” ■