

BEFORE & AFTER

Personal Space

Interior designer Caroline deVlaming refreshes her petite downtown condo with a warm color palette and clever space solutions



“You don’t have to rip everything out to make a space look completely refreshed,” says interior designer Caroline deVlaming. For years she applied this rule of thumb to her clients’ homes, but when the time came to rehabilitate her own condominium in a circa-1842 house in Harleston Village, she had no choice but to follow the same

creative code.

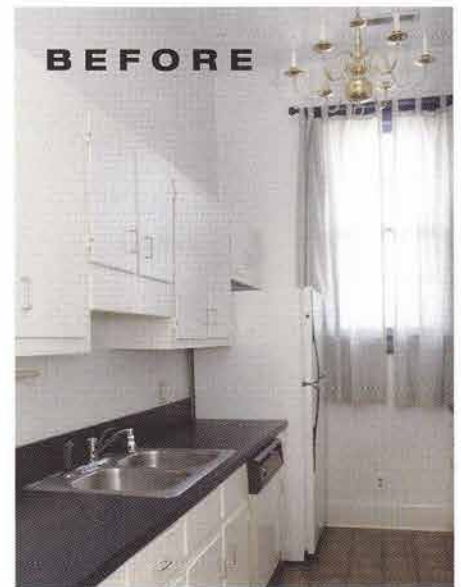
“I had to work under considerable constraints—many of my changes needed to be completely aesthetic,” deVlaming says, adding that the building is considered historically significant.

The three-story house at the corner of Rutledge Avenue and Bull Street was purchased in 1857 by Eugene Joseph Huchet, a cotton trader and French immigrant purportedly descended from



Blending comfortable furnishings and interesting wall art, Caroline deVlaming made the most of her small living room overlooking Bull Street.

"WHEN I LIVED HERE ALONE, I DIDN'T WANT TO SIT AT THE DINING ROOM TABLE EVERY DAY. CREATING THIS KITCHEN NOOK MADE A DRAMATIC DIFFERENCE."



DeVlaming, in her smartly designed breakfast nook, carved out of a space formerly occupied by a guest closet

Working within the narrow parameters of her galley kitchen, DeVlaming traded in underutilized wall space for additional storage. Formica countertops and white plywood cabinetry were replaced with pale marble surfaces and Kraftmaid cupboards.

European nobility. It remained the family's home until the 1931 death of Huchet's daughter, Noemi Elizabeth Huchet, who claimed to be "the only countess living in

South Carolina." The Huchet home changed hands during the ensuing half-century before being divided into six private units in the early 1980s. Each boasts

high ceilings, generous natural light, and original hardwood floors.

Wary of doing too much too soon, DeVlaming opted to live in the unit for a year before making any changes. Just three months later, though, she moved out and called in contractor Christopher Gadsden.

"I think it was a water leak that started



Relying on a rich palette of golden yellow, deep reds, and a soft green, deVlaming created a well-balanced backdrop for her living room (top) and master bedroom (above).

the whole thing," recalls Gadsden, who was faced with the challenge of making over the condo's single bathroom without exacerbating a leftover plumbing glitch. "The room had a four-by-two-foot hole in the tile, through the concrete, and down to the original pipes," says deVlaming. "It was a head-to-toe job, literally down to the studs."

Because of the plumbing constraints, explains Gadsden, "the shape of the room stayed pretty much the same." This prohibited the removal of the cast-iron tub, but the remaining fixtures were replaced and the floor sealed and retiled in marble. Though deVlaming had originally planned to leave the plaster ceiling as it was, Gadsden had to replace it with Sheetrock when the plaster caved in. Cracked subway tiles were traded for white beadboard along the bottom half of the walls, the upper portions hung with Sheetrock and painted. The linen closet opened into the hallway, perhaps originally to house a dumbwaiter, so Gadsden moved the door

inside the bathroom.

Once this phase was complete, deVlaming turned her attention to the galley kitchen, made even smaller by the guest-room closet that jutted into it. Removing the closet freed up enough space to create a cozy, two-person dining nook. A tabletop, crafted by the designer's father, is bolted into the wall and pairs with bench seats crafted from an old church pew. "When I lived here alone for three years, I didn't want to sit at the dining room table everyday," she says. "This one little change made the most dramatic difference."

She went on to replace the gray Formica countertops with pale marble and swapped plain white plywood cabinets for spacious, vanilla- and moss-colored wooden cupboards with seeded glass. By extending the new cabinets up along the full height of the walls, she created much-needed storage space.

Smaller-scale changes involved covering



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AT A GLANCE

What the Contractor Did:

- **Expanded the kitchen:** General contractor Christopher Gadsden removed a guest room closet that backed into the kitchen to open up enough space for a two-person dining nook.
- **Rehabilitated a troubled bathroom:** Earlier plumbing mishaps left the homeowner with pipes ensnared with her neighbors'. Unable to alter the shape of the room due to the plumbing, Gadsden stripped it to the studs; replaced the floor, ceiling, and fixtures; and reoriented the linen closet.
- **Extended vertical storage:** Installing larger kitchen cabinets and redesigning the master bedroom closet utilized room height to add valuable storage space.

What the Designer Did:

- **Established a new color palette:** Interior designer and homeowner Caroline deVlaming chose to paint the plain white walls in warm, rich colors. "To me, yellow is the perfect neutral that truly is a color. There's nothing that yellow doesn't go with," she says. The dark red dining-room walls "grounded the room. I wanted it to be really warm."
- **Honored the building's historic architectural details:** "It's basic and beautiful on its own. It has the original floors, and I wanted to maximize the tremendous natural light and the ceiling height." She left several of the plaster walls uncovered by Sheetrock to preserve the deep-reveal of the molding around the doors and windows.
- **Emphasized vertical space:** In a condo measuring "just shy of 1,000 square feet," deVlaming used window treatments, added molding, painted ceilings, hung vertically patterned wallpaper, and extended the new kitchen cabinets, all to draw attention to the height of the rooms.
- **Maximized overall space:** Custom-built French doors on the master bedroom closet double as a dressing mirror. In the pantry, antique wooden shutters from Holland conceal the washer and dryer in the pantry.



The bathroom underwent considerable alterations, among them replacement of aged subway tiles with white beadboard along the lower half of the walls.

cracking plaster with Sheetrock, adding molding, and installing new light fixtures. A new palette of warm, rich colors, including golden yellow, deep red, and soft green, mix with strategically placed mirrors to create a cozy yet light-filled atmosphere. Cascading curtains and colorful ceilings emphasize the tall windows and the airy feel of the otherwise compact rooms.

“My goal was to make this perfectly personalized for me. I had to work within a lot of constraints that I wouldn’t normally have to, but I think that’s what made it the most interesting design challenge I’ve had yet.”

