



Artistic Endeavor

A SEATTLE FAMILY'S HOBBIES FLOURISH IN A ROOM TAILOR-MADE FOR SCRAPBOOKING, SHIPBUILDING, AND TOGETHERNESS.

WRITTEN BY SUSAN CABA PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN GRANEN PRODUCED BY LINDA HUMPHREY

Mark and NancyEllen Elster's dining table simply wasn't big enough for meals and her scrapbooking. And Mark's hobby, building model railroads and ships, was languishing for lack of space. "It was never possible to get the work out on the dining table and let it flow," he says.

An architect, Mark solved the problem when he decided to create a multifunctional room in the basement that would accommodate his family's hobbies and serve as a guest room when needed. An added benefit: With a comfortable couch and ample space to spread out, the family now spends more time together.

The heart of the room is the long, extra-wide counter Mark designed and built with the couple's two sons, Christopher and Gavin. Working in a one-bay garage, they constructed the frame and drawer fronts, then assembled the pieces in place.

The counter is deep enough for NancyEllen to spread out her supplies,

including big sheets of paper, and still have plenty of work space. It's also long enough that Mark can build models on one end while NancyEllen works on her scrapbooks at the other; or two people can work side by side on one project. "I like having virtually all my modeling tools right there," Mark says. "It's so nice to work on a hobby and have all the stuff you need be so accessible."

The room not only accommodates the family's hobbies, but also encourages them. "Now the hobbies are an attraction," Mark says. "Every time you focus in on the ship model or the scrapbooks, there's something else to see." But, he adds, that's not the best thing about the room. "My favorite thing about the room is how much my wife loves it," he says. "I get a kick out of it. She'll sometimes go down there and adjust the lights and just sit and soak up the space."

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LEFT: Architect Mark Elster designed the work space in his family's new hobby room to accommodate multiple activities, including his wife's scrapbooking and his model ship and railroad building.

BELOW: The sleeper sofa and an ottoman with storage convert to accommodate guests.





Extra-deep drawers on the left end of the work counter accommodate Mark's architectural drawings and NancyEllen's scrapbooking cutting board. That end of the base also holds the computer tower.

“It’s so nice to work on a hobby and have all the stuff you need be so accessible.” —homeowner Mark Elster



SMART STORAGE

Architect and homeowner Mark Elster prioritized storage in the multipurpose hobby room he designed for his family. The bases at either end of a long, deep work counter hold storage units tailored to the Elsters’ activities. Using stock drawers purchased from a cabinetmaker kept the construction simple. The left base includes several wide drawers big enough to hold architectural drawings and other large sheets of paper and cardboard. Using several shallow drawers instead of a few deep ones keeps the paper stacks manageable. The base also has lattice on one end for air circulation for a computer tower. The right base houses three storage elements. The front is open shelving, 8 inches deep, with baskets for supplies. Tucked behind it is a pullout cabinet with shelves for less-frequently used items; pulling out the cabinet activates a light under the table, making it easy to see materials. The final layer of space is divided into three deep nooks for wrapping paper and supplies.

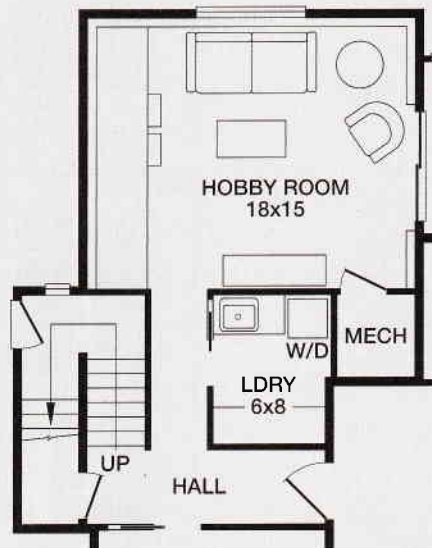


TOP LEFT: Supplies are within arm’s reach for Mark and his son, Gavin, working on building a new model.

TOP RIGHT: The table base is deep enough for three storage units—a set of open shelves with wicker baskets for

supplies; a pullout cabinet behind the shelves for seldom-used items; and deep pockets tucked in the back for storing wrapping paper.

ABOVE: The cupboard for the computer tower is latticed at the side for improved air circulation.



THE CHANGE:

A roughly finished room in a Seattle basement is transformed into a family hobby room, with plenty of storage and space for guests.

WHAT IT TOOK:

- * Constructing cabinets using stock drawers to save time while still gaining ample storage for supplies.
- * Painting the cabinets blue and finishing the walls with beaded-board paneling to create a relaxed, beach-house feel; a sleeper sofa converts to a guest bed when needed.
- * Building an extra-long counter to provide enough space for two people to work together.