

UNDER
1,000
SQUARE
FEET

THE TINY HOUSE MOVEMENT

As houses grow bigger and bigger, people feel less and less at home. So a new breed of homeowner is deliberately downsizing—way down. Here, an inspiring portfolio of smaller-than-small designs, some from the past, and some you can order today. *by SHAX RIEGLER*

ENGLISH BANQUETING HOUSES →

During the reign of Elizabeth I in the second half of the 16th century, the so-called banquet—a playful, sweet-laden repast that was the forerunner of our modern dessert—became a popular form of entertainment among the nobility in England. It was the fashion to serve it in a special room, sometimes perched atop a roof, or a separate pavilion out in the garden. Imagine the delight of guests climbing a spiraling staircase or trekking to a torch-lit garden to find themselves in a tiny, whimsically decorated bower filled with extravagant displays of sweets, fruits, and spiced wine. Only a few original banqueting houses survive. Here, the octagonal one in the garden at Melford Hall, Suffolk, which hosted Queen Elizabeth herself in 1578.



G. B. SHAW'S WRITING HUT ↑

Down at the foot of his garden at his home north of London, situated to avoid interruptions and noise, the Nobel Prize-winning playwright George Bernard Shaw placed his deceptively simple retreat. What appears to be nothing more than a plain box with a door and a few windows actually sits atop a circular track—essentially a giant lazy Susan—so that Shaw could rotate the hut to catch sunlight or shade. Ingenious!

“SMALL ROOMS OR DWELLINGS DISCIPLINE THE MIND, LARGE ONES WEAKEN IT.”

LEONARDO DA VINCI



• A STILL SHOWING THE SOUTH PAVILION FROM THE ANIMATED VIDEO PUTTING UP AND PULLING DOWN AT THE MONTICELLO VISITOR CENTER

← “I HAVE HERE BUT ONE ROOM, WHICH LIKE THE COBBLER'S, SERVES ME FOR PARLOR AND FOR KITCHEN AND HALL. I MAY ADD, FOR BED CHAMBER AND STUDY, TOO.”

THOMAS JEFFERSON, IN A 1770 LETTER

At Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's estate near Charlottesville, Virginia, the 17-by-17-foot, two-story structure now known as the South Pavilion (left) served as the original dwelling for the future president—and his wife and their six children—while the main house was under construction.



AN ENGRAVING OF WALDEN COTTAGE AFTER A DRAWING BY THOREAU'S SISTER SOPHIA, FROM THE FRONTISPIECE TO THE FIRST EDITION OF WALDEN.

← **WALDEN COTTAGE** “I had three chairs in my house; one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society... Many of our houses, both public and private, with their almost innumerable apartments, their huge halls, and their cellars for the storage of wines and other munitions of peace, appear to me extravagantly large for their inhabitants. They are so vast and magnificent that the latter seem to be only vermin which infest them.” HENRY DAVID THOREAU, *WALDEN*, 1854.



CAPE COD DUNE SHACKS ↑

The dune shacks of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, have long been summer retreats for writers, artists, and others seeking seclusion. Dramatically sited in the dunes miles from any town and without electricity or running water, the tiny shacks represent the ultimate in communing with nature. Edward Hopper's 1930 painting *Corn Hill* (above) captures their dreamy isolation.



SAUSALITO BOATHOUSES ↑

For more than a century, the community of floating homes in Sausalito, California, in the shadow of the Golden Gate Bridge, has attracted bohemian residents who have improvised diminutive dwellings out of salvaged wood, retired tugboats, even an old Pullman railroad car, and christened them with evocative names. Above, *Spicebox*, a converted military boat.



LES MAISONS TROPICALES ↑

Designed by Jean Prouvé, the metal *Maisons Tropicales* were originally conceived as cheap, heat-tolerant housing for French diplomats posted to Africa. Only three were ever produced, and they are now considered masterpieces of modern design. In June 2007, one wound up at auction in New York (above) and was snapped up by hotelier André Balazs—for nearly \$5 million.

“MAY YOUR HOME ALWAYS BE TOO SMALL TO HOLD ALL OF YOUR FRIENDS.”

ANONYMOUS



LES PAVILLONS (1962), A COLLECTIBLE BOOK ON 18TH-CENTURY FRENCH PAVILLIONS BY CYRIL CONNOLLY & JEROME ZERBE



BORIES AND SHEARRON'S RECENT DESIGN FOR A SEE-THROUGH “FRENCH ‘LANTERNE’ HOUSE.” FOR MORE DRAWINGS AND FLOOR PLANS: BORIESANDSHEARRON.COM.

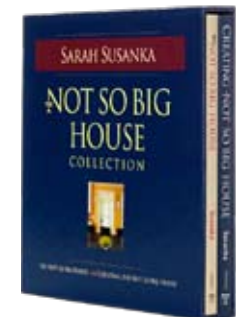
↑ **FRENCH PLEASURE PAVILLIONS** Often built as retreats to escape the stifling atmosphere of court life at Versailles, these petits châteaux of the 18th century were where French aristocrats would escape to play cards, pursue love affairs, and let their hair down (or, rather, air out their wigs). While not exactly tiny by today's standards, these pavilions signify the height of domestic refinement. So much so that two American grandes dames of interior design each acquired one: novelist Edith Wharton brought her rigorous aesthetic sensibility to the *Pavillon Colombe* after World War I, at the same time that decorator Elsie de Wolfe made the *Villa Trianon* a chic gathering spot. And the influence continues today. The intimate “French ‘Lanterne’ House” (above), by architect Richard Bories and designer James Shearron, was inspired by a type of pavilion that's just one room deep, with windows aligned so that you can see straight through the structure. >>

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DIANA & MICHAEL LORENCE'S INNERMOST HOUSE ↑

Six years ago, this couple built and took up full-time residence in a 12-foot cube with a sleeping loft, porch, and beautiful Shaker-like detailing—but no electricity—in the mountains of northern California. What were they thinking? Diana Lorence explains: “In every house we lived in before building this one—no matter the size—we always found ourselves gravitating to one room. A very small domestic space conceived for the purpose of what Wordsworth called ‘plain living and high thinking’ is like a hand held up to the ear or a lens to the eye: It enlarges and amplifies and intensifies everything. While we’ve always lived in small houses, this one is the smallest and the best. Here I feel all my loose and wandering thoughts are gathered up and made whole. It’s an antidote to a world of distractions.” For more information: innermosthouse.com.



← GIVING VOICE TO THE MOVEMENT

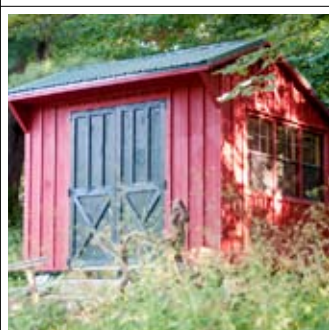
When it appeared in 1998, architect Sarah Susanka's *Not So Big House* (Taunton Press) immediately struck a chord. Her manifesto: “Rather than spend our budget on square footage we wouldn’t use, we decided to put the money toward making the house an expression of our personalities.” By thinking smaller (spatially), she showed that you can afford details like custom cabinetry, antique lighting fixtures, and wood floors. Taking small-space thinking one step further, Shay Salomon’s 2006 *Little House on a Small Planet* (Lyons Press) emphasizes the economic and environmental benefits of scaling down. For other perspectives, visit tinyhouseblog.com, tinyhousedesign.com, and tinyhousetalk.com.

GARDEN SHEDS REIMAGINED ↓

Grown-ups longing for playhouses of their own have started transforming utilitarian garden sheds into delightful hideaways that serve as offices, craft rooms, dining spaces, guesthouses, and even reading retreats. We loved the designer sheds built for last spring’s exhibition at the Berkshire Botanical Garden in Stockbridge, Massachusetts (below). For more ideas, check out Debra Prinzing’s *Stylish Sheds and Elegant Hideaways* (Clarkson Potter, 2008) and Sally Coulthard’s *Shed Chic* (Universe, 2009).

“I KNOW 100 SQUARE FEET IS TOO SMALL FOR MOST PEOPLE.”

JAY SHAFER, FOUNDER, THE TUMBLEWEED TINY HOUSE COMPANY



15 TINY HOUSES ↓ What do you want yours to look like? From vernacular cottages to modernist cubes, a selection of dreamy little prefabs that can be shipped right to you.



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