

# Seeking design help to downsize, fix up a fixer

Before COVID-19 hit, Howard Bragman had two houses and a spouse.

Today, the celebrity crisis manager, known for cleaning up some of Hollywood's biggest messes, is single and living large in half the space he once had.

For a sense of what he's dealt with, past clients include Sharon Osbourne, Nick Cannon, Wendy Williams, Chris Brown, and Monica Lewinsky, which just makes me feel grateful I'm not calling him for representation.

"After I got divorced, I didn't have to downsize. I chose to," Bragman told me, when I called him to talk about his downsizing process and how he arrived at his gorgeous result.

Going into the pandemic, Bragman occupied a 1,000-square-foot apartment in New York City and a 4,200-square-foot, five-bedroom, five-bath modern farmhouse in Valley Village, a Los Angeles suburb. Once COVID took hold, giving up the apartment made sense, since any TV work he did there he could now do remotely.

As for the California house, once he and his husband parted ways, "the place seemed too big," said Bragman, 66. "I didn't want the upkeep. I wanted to live differently and travel more."

He found a two-story, 2,700-square-foot townhome in nearby Toluca Lake. Besides needing a total makeover, it had what he wanted: two bedrooms, a place for an office, room for a gym, a generous great room, a spacious outdoor terrace for entertaining, and access to a pool and jacuzzi. The bones were good, but the place hadn't been updated since it was built in 1977.

"That was a plus," he added. "I hate paying for a bad renovation. I'd rather pay for no renovation."

The place also didn't have room for his extensive art and photography collection and his combined 5,200-square-feet worth of furniture.

Because a true professional knows when to call for help, the



AT HOME WITH  
**Marni Jameson**

Hollywood fixer called on his long-time friend, Beverly Hills interior designer Christopher Grubb, to help him fix the fixer.

Grubb, who joined our call, met Bragman in the late 1990s, and has worked on several of the PR maven's homes. "We've been on quite a design journey," Grubb said. "This house is 180 degrees different from his last one."

"When you're going through a crisis, you find out who your friends are," Bragman joked.

Bragman bought the townhome in May 2020. He sold his farmhouse that summer and moved into an apartment while he, Grubb, and architect Kenneth David Lee of KDL Architects went to work on the remodel.

Apart from the structure's clean lines and high ceilings, all that remained were a few walls, the stair railing, a built-in bookcase, an office cabinet which they repainted, and the garage door.

Using a palette of blues (Dunn Edwards Luna Pier), grays, creams, and taupes, they installed new cabinetry, flooring, fixtures, and built-ins, including a ladder-clad library wall in the primary bedroom.

Then they grappled with the art and furniture. "What do you love and what will fit?" Grubb said were the defining questions. They started by selecting which big art pieces would stay and decorated around them.

Among the keepers were an oil pastel by American artist Rockwell Kent and an iconic color photo An-

**Start with art —** When Hollywood PR maven Howard Bragman downsized, he hired interior designer Christopher Grubb to help him pare down a vast art collection and repurpose key pieces into a curated gallery wall.

Photos courtesy of Arch-Interiors Design Group Inc.

nie Leibovitz took of the late film director Billy Wilder on Sunset Boulevard. Wilder and Bragman were friends.

"Art has a funny way of speaking to you and telling you where it belongs," said Bragman, who estimates he sold or gifted about 35 pieces of significant art. Some he sold at auction or through private sales; some went to museums, and several pieces he gave to friends and relatives. "After I picked out what I wanted to keep, Christopher created a stunning gallery wall."

Because going from 5,200 square feet to 2,700 can feel like an amputation, I asked Bragman and Grubb if they could translate their process into encouraging pointers for others facing similar life and housing transitions:

#### Get out your happiness meter.

"When clients are downsizing, and we are working together to edit what goes and what stays, I start by asking what makes them happiest. Then we look at what fits," Grubb said.

#### Consider your art on loan

"I look at it this way," Bragman said, "I may have paid for the art, but I don't own it. I am only the caretaker so long as I have it. I appreciate that now someone else will enjoy it."

#### Plan to subtract then add

Though more than half of Bragman's old furniture made the cut, many of the largest pieces did not. "When moving to a smaller space, you actually need to get rid of more furniture than you think," Grubb said, "to make room for some new items you'll need to pull the place together."

SEE **MARNI, 3H**



Charleston Gazette-Mail  
Real Estate

## SELLING OR RENTING PROPERTY?



We can get your property in front of the largest number of people for the lowest price. With options for every budget and a variety of print & digital solutions, maximizing your reach has never been easier.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT OUR  
REAL ESTATE ADVERTISING EXECUTIVE  
ASHLEY MANN AT 304-348-4852

[www.WannaGoHome.com](http://www.WannaGoHome.com) | [Ashley.Mann@HDMediaLLC.com](mailto:Ashley.Mann@HDMediaLLC.com)