

Aol. | MAIL | You might also like: Homes for Sale, Real Estate News and More ▾

**rentedspaces** Find a rental in city, state or zip **SEARCH >**

Main **Lifestyle** ▾ Advice ▾ About ▾ Rental Listings **Send Feedback**

Main Lifestyle Advice About Rental Listings

You are here: [Home](#) > [Lifestyle](#) > [Advice](#) > [Design](#) > [Inspiration](#) > [Renting 101](#) > Obama's Oval Office: Redecorating the World's Most Famous Rental



## Obama's Oval Office: Redecorating the World's Most Famous Rental

Posted **Sep 8th 2010 6:28PM** by [Sheree R. Curry](#)   
 Filed under: [Design](#) , [Inspiration](#) , [Renting 101](#)



AP Photo

What do you do when you move into a new [rental](#)? Redecorate, of course. The White House last week unveiled President Obama's [redesigned Oval Office](#).

The makeover, completed under the eye of California designer Michael Smith while the First Family was vacationing in Martha's Vineyard, showcases a sea of brown, camel, and tan. The earth tones are throughout, on the subtly striped wallpaper, on new, comfy, coffee-colored sofas, reupholstered leather chairs, new coffee table and lamps, and the [most-controversial](#) touch: new carpet with the presidential seal and quotes on its borders from four past presidents and Martin Luther King Jr.

"Barack Obama is urban, elegant, sophisticated, educated and contemporary, and now his workspace is, too," says interior designer [Elaine Griffin](#). "Your

personality should always shine through, no matter what decor style tickles your fancy. There's no such thing as non-partisan decorating."

Just how well Obama decorated his office depends on the designer you ask: "In a word, 'yawn,'" says interior designer Sam Jernigan of [Renaissance Design Consultations](#). "Where's the air of tradition? Where's the stately decor reflecting the stature of the office? Alas, the venerable desk looks like it's adrift on a sea of vanilla pudding."

Professional color consultant Amy Wax, of [Your Color Source Studios](#) in Montclair, N.J., disagrees: "The presidential seal is scaled for the people who will be in the room. They can sit for long periods and feel comfortable. Let the person make a statement, not the room. It is a very subtle, elegant design."



As for the air of tradition? It's there, continues Wax, from the Resolute desk to the reupholstered leather chairs and the quotes from past presidents on the rug: "Obama has elegantly blended classical elements from our past and architectural history, while looking to the future for what could be done: Not only is everything made from Americans, but he has ventured out into the green with the rug, which is made of [25 percent recycled fibers](#). This particular design seems very well thought out."

[rent](#) in your area on RentedSpaces

---

The designers do agree that there are some color tips that you can take from the Oval Office design team's choice of hues. Here are seven of them:

### 1. Don't overdo

If you're striving for an elegant look, "for the bulk of the room, use colors that are long-lasting; not the latest trends," says Wax, author of *Can't Fail Color Schemes*. "Bring contrasting colors in as accents, with accent pillows or accent chairs."

The Oval Office makeover is lacking in accent color, says Jernigan. "With no color contrast to engage one's eye, the desk and draperies are the star of the show (more like, understudy)," she says. "For our first president of color.... I have to ask, where's the color, Mr. President?"

### 2. Add a dash of citrus for zing

"If the yellow of the flowers on the side table permanently enlivened the room as throw pillows on the sofa, it would look better," says Griffin, author of *Design Rules: The Insider's Guide to Becoming Your Own Decorator*. "Raspberry would also do the trick, but is a little girly for the leader of the free world's lair."

"A good color story adds rhythm and life to a room," says Jernigan. "The trick, however, is to successfully integrate that key anchor color along with accent and neutral color(s) successfully throughout the room so as to keep your eye moving to create a feeling of balance throughout. No one element should overwhelm or dominate the room."

### 3. You can't beat Mother Nature

The coffee table in the Oval Office is adorned with a bowl of apples. "Using fruits and veggies for tabletop centerpieces is a favorite trick of decorators, who know that they're cheaper and longer-lasting than flowers," says Griffin. "Almost any fruit or veggie will do; the bowl should be a pretty one."

### 4. Use natural color combos in threes

Add depth to the room by using colors in groups of threes. "Choose a color combination that exists in nature, and your color triad can't go wrong," says Griffin. "The blue of the table lamps in the Oval Office ups the style ante and adds visual sophistication to the room's beige color story." Think Earth and sky.

### 5. Stripe it rich

"Stripes add an elegant element of visual texture to any room," says Griffin, who noted the new wall paper in the Oval Office. The closer in color they are, the more sophisticated and less circus-like they are, she says. "Stripes of four to seven inches in width look best. The larger your space, the larger the stripe can be."

### 6. Consider the architecture

Select furnishings in style and color that match the architecture of your home, says Jernigan. "It can, as seen [in the Oval Office], feel disjointed to decorate in a style totally dissimilar from the bones of your house. The odd Pottery Barn vibe to the sofas and woefully clunky modernity of the coffee table looks like they belong in a suburban media room, not the office of the ruler of free world. Are visiting heads of state supposed to kick off their shoes?"

### 7. Contrast your upholstery and rug

In the Oval Office, "the sofas' tobacco-y brown velvet calls for a paler-hued rug. Cream is just what the doctor ordered," says Griffin about the Oval Office rug. To get the lightness of a cream or ivory rug in your home and not drive yourself insane keeping it clean (unlike at the White House, where stains are lifted regularly), opt for nylon or a nylon/wool combo, she says.

The Oval Office now has a residential feel, which makes it feel more cozy, says Wax. "It shows a sense of confidence of the person who is in the room and reflects the understated person that Obama is. He is not flashy

with bright colors."

Still trying to decide which is right for you? Here are some AOL Real Estate guides to help you no matter whether you choose to buy or rent:

- [How to Shop for Your First Home](#)
- [Tips for Finding a Rental Apartment](#)

More on AOL Real Estate:

Find out how to [calculate mortgage](#) payments.

Find [homes for sale](#) in your area.

Find [foreclosures](#) in your area.

Get [property tax help](#) from our experts.

Tags: [american made](#), [architecture](#), [Barack Obama](#), [color](#), [decorating](#), [makeover](#), [obama](#), [oval office](#), [remodeling](#), [Resolute](#), [washington dc](#), [white house](#)

## Related Articles

### From Our Real Estate Sites

[Going Green in the Kitchen](#) AOL Real Estate - 31 days ago

[Home Remodeling Expected to Spur Early 2011 Housing Growth](#) HousingWatch - 31 days ago

[Washington, D.C. Interior Designer Learns to Think Small](#) RentedSpaces - 43 days ago

[Washington, D.C.'s Market to Return to Peak By 2015](#) HousingWatch - 80 days ago

### More On AOL

[Barack O'Clock: Meetings in the Oval Office](#) Politics Daily - 1 day ago

[New Oval Office Rug Gets Quote Wrong](#) Aol News - 5 days ago

[Obama's Oval Office Makeover Feels Like 'Den'; No Taxpayer...](#) Politics Daily - 9 days ago

[Esteemed Makeover: Oval Office Edition](#) Aol News - 10 days ago

## Reader Comments (Page 1 of 1)

1 [dsdkjfhsdkjf](#) 8:35PM September 09 2010  
 === <http://www.dearsales.com> =====

Handbags(Coach lv fendi d&g) \$35  
 Tshirts (Polo ,ed hardy,lacoste) \$16  
 Jean(True Religion,ed hardy,coogi) \$30  
 Sunglasses(Oakey,coach,gucci,Armaini) \$16  
 New era cap \$15  
 Bikini (Ed hardy,polo) \$25

==== <http://www.dearsales.com> =====

[\(show the rest of this comment\)](#)

[Reply](#) [Vote Up](#) [Vote Down](#) [Report](#)

Name:

E-mail:

Comments: