

# Whitney

building via her radio show "The Long View."

Bauer's first experience with living small was as a 5-year-old child while living in an RV with her parents while her father finished school. Then as a 19-year old, Isa bought her first tiny home, a tiny Victorian Era wood cottage where she lived for eight years. She now lives in a normally-sized home, but occasionally "lives small" for a time in the "micro-building" on wheels that she constructed to replace a tent, a sturdily framed building that includes a reclaimed antique window, scrap ship-lap, and a painted metal roof. This "wooden tent" has no bathroom, but handles a twin bed, hanging clothes storage, small table and chairs, and shelves in a building whose interior dimensions measure 4 1/2' x 9'.

According to Isa, while there are a plethora of ways to envision a small living space, the physics of space set certain boundaries. "Fancy windows do magic. You can have diagonal lines, two-tone color, even break it up architecturally with different siding. But ultimately, you have to give up having a selection of things. You simplify – one pair of boots, one pair of dress shoes, one coat."

There are two categories of tiny houses based on specific dimension limitations. The Tiny House on Wheels ranges from 100-350 square feet – 8 1/2' wide by 13 1/2' high by up to 40' long. The Static Tiny House measures 500-600 square feet. The average Tiny House on Wheels measures 16-28' long and costs from \$35,000-\$65,000 to build.

Bauer spends a lot of time dispelling myths and preconceived notions about tiny houses. Bauer: "Most people who choose to live in a tiny house do not think only in terms of 'low-income housing' – they are very invested in wanting to build green, and reduce their carbon footprint."

What is involved in finding the right setting for a tiny house? According to Bauer, an urban setting is nearly impossible as land is at a premium, but there are too many building industry obstacles. So think small town or rural,

but every town differs in terms of their openness to tiny houses. Acceptance can also vary wildly depending on the individual building inspector. The very easiest way to get a tiny house built is to build it on land where there is already an existing structure so there is a "carrriage house" effect.

What is the psychology of a tiny house?

Bauer has developed an extensive series of criteria-building questions to help a client consider the many ways that tiny houses determine decision-making. Bauer: "Just the entrance-way – there will be one door. There will be hooks at the door, and you will trade your outdoor shoes for indoor shoes. You cannot put the groceries on the counter; you must put them away. What are your hobbies? How do you entertain? How important is a full kitchen?"

Katie is a mental health practitioner in her day job, but volunteers and also does paid contract work for Tiny House Northeast. She also has lived in a tiny house for three years.

According to this "tiny houser," people who choose a tiny house "tend to be people who are conscientious, think outside the box and live with great intention."

Despite facing many frustrating building issues – leaking of water around the wheels; freezing when the builder forgot to install heat; bathing without hot/running water when pipes froze; an ant invasion; and most recently, a mold problem – Katie still embraces living small.

Katie: "The thing is that logistical (physical) challenges have solutions. Having a tiny house was my response to having existential dilemmas with no easy-fix. Give me a dramatic crisis that has an eventual solution any day. The biggest adjustment I made is this shift in the kind of challenges I was facing. In truth, it was a very positive and welcome change. I learned so much from dealing with all of these challenges that I am really a different person now."

Living in a tiny house forced Katie to change her habits and transformed her decision-making. "Choosing to live more mindfully and with greater intention helped me begin to look at the world differently. Rather than responding or

acting automatically, I have gotten more in the habit of connecting with what feels genuine or logical to me rather than what is expected. This has helped me become more comfortable with being myself around others," Katie said.

The significance of growing interest in the tiny house movement addresses larger issues than small spaces. Katie: "My parents' generation (I am 33) could afford to own a house without becoming house-poor. Average house sizes have increased dramatically over the years and it seems that people struggle with having 'less.' If people would actually connect to one another and practice increasing their capacity to be vulnerable, I believe we would all feel less isolated with our struggles ... from my perspective, it is incredibly relevant to the tiny house movement."

Even though I do not plan to live in a tiny house, I find it helpful to think about certain tiny house lessons.

William Morris: "Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful."

It seems to me that we can all consider both these things – what is functional and necessary, and what is beautiful.

I recall the tiny Manhattan apartment my daughter lived in for five years. It consisted of a windowless box bedroom with no storage, a hallway kitchen, one room and a patio – a huge psychological bonus. The very first lesson that she and her boyfriend agreed on was that creating a consistent sense of order was crucially important. Everything had a place or it did not belong. It seems to me that such simplicity is something we can take to every space we live. It might help us rethink clutter, and the parallels between our physical surroundings and uncluttering our minds.

J.R.R. Tolkien said: "That house was 'a perfect house, whether you like food or sleep, or storytelling or singing or just sitting and thinking best, or a pleasant mixture of them all.' Merely to be there was a cure for weariness, fear and sadness."

Quincy Whitney is a career journalist, biographer and poet. Contact her at [quincysquill@nashuatelegraph.com](mailto:quincysquill@nashuatelegraph.com) or [quincy@quincywhitney.com](http://quincy@quincywhitney.com).

