

Sense of Occasion



RIGHT: To emphasize the graceful proportions of this Toronto condo's living room, designer Tommy Smythe (above) kept the design perfectly symmetrical. A bull's-eye mirror from Ribbehege & Azevedo draws the eye to the marble fireplace, which is flanked by candle sconces and a pair of custom-made cabinets with large-scale antique doorknobs. An authentic French chandelier from The Paisley Shop glows softly at night; by day, it reflects the room's abundant natural light. The horizontal-striped sofa invigorates the formal space, and warm gold accents tie the whole scheme together. **Sofas, stools**, Sarah Richardson Design; **sofa fabric**, Lee Jofa; **chairs**, Savoia Chair Frames; **rug**, Y&Co; **cabinets**, Treebone Design; **antique cabinet hardware**, The Door Store; **sconces**, Ribbehege & Azevedo; **prints**, D&E Lake; **lamps**, 507 Antiques; **wall colour**, Pointing (2003), **mantel colour**, Pavilion Gray (242), Farrow & Ball.

As told to **ALICE LAWLOR**

Photography by **MICHAEL GRAYDON**



HOW DO YOU MAKE A CONDO FEEL AS SPECIAL AS A GRAND HOUSE? DYNAMIC DECORATING AND A PARTY-FRIENDLY FLOOR PLAN, SAYS TOMMY SMYTHE.



P EOPLE OFTEN THINK that when you swap a house for a condo it's a downgrade, but in this case, it was very much an upgrade. These homeowners moved from a big family home in Toronto's Lawrence Park into this glamorous uptown space. One owner travels a lot for business, their daughter is away at university, and they felt they could live a much more efficient lifestyle here. They came to me and fellow Sarah Richardson Design colleagues Lindsey Levy and Lindsay Mens Craig to make their condo feel more like a home.

It can be very difficult to find a condo that offers the same kind of amenities as a house, but this place was a gift because you move from space to space through hallways. It has high ceilings and all of the things that aren't characteristic of condos, like solid wood panelled doors, really lovely baseboards and crown moulding. The condo had a great layout and stunning finishes. With the bones already in place, we were able to focus on decorating the space, populating it with beautiful furnishings, gorgeous fabrics and great character lighting.

The first thing the homeowners told me was that they love colour — just not in the living room! That was a big challenge, but I didn't take their direction and assume, "Okay then, everything just has to be white on white on white!" I translated it to beige, grey, white and bold metallic accents. The metals give it loads of warmth, and the same kind of dynamic energy as a room with colour. And if you can't have colour, you need variation in texture and pattern, or the room will be very spare. So we've got stripes and zigzags, dark and light, rich wood tones, gilded things, and soft velvets, linens and cottons. When you put it all together, you have a salad of different textures and tones that makes a very character-driven space.

Another thing I had in mind when I was designing is the notion of Canadian decorating as a *mélange* of influences: French, English, and what I call "frontier." It's true of the homeowners in this case, too: they're Canadian, the wife has French heritage, and the husband English. So there are very overt and intentional French references in some of the formal spaces, and the dining space is very English-looking. The copper tones are a reference to the casual "frontier" elements of Canadian living. Canadians aren't a terribly formal people, but

CONTINUED ON PAGE 154



Originally a formal dining room, the newly created family room is a serene space that echoes the look of the adjacent living room but with a more relaxed vibe. The space is designed with great flow, and the modular coffee table from Elte is perfect for cocktail party mingling: the side tables can be tucked underneath when space is at a premium, or moved around to become end tables. **Rug**, Elte; **lantern**, Of Things Past; **sideboard**, Angus & Company; **drapes**, Wesley Seto Design; **drape fabric**, Lee Jofa.

“WHEN YOU PUT IT ALL TOGETHER, A SALAD OF DIFFERENT TEXTURES AND TONES MAKES A VERY CHARACTER-DRIVEN SPACE”



With walls upholstered in paper-backed linen, silk drapes and a luxe wool and velvet sofa, the den is a cosy retreat that contrasts completely with the big, open living room. **Chandelier**, Ribbehege & Azevedo; **wallpaper**, Threadcount; **sofa bed**, Sarah Richardson Design; **coffee table**, Vintage Fine Objects; **chair**, Savoia Chair Frames; **chair fabric**, Primavera; **mirror**, Kantelberg + Co; **rug**, Elte.

RIGHT: Designers Smythe, Lindsay Mens Craig (left) and Lindsey Levy of Sarah Richardson Design made a conscious decision to decorate with richer tones in rooms used after dark.



Tommy's Tips for Holiday Hosting

- 1. Think about flow.** If you're planning a large gathering, always tweak your furniture. Move a couple of small items and lose the ottoman. Focus on enhancing circulation.
- 2. Add sparkle sparingly.** You don't need a Christmas tree to have a Christmas party. Floral arrangements with greenery (always natural, *never* fake) are just as festive.
- 3. Be present at your own party.** Prepping endless platters of food is not really "present." Don't spend the whole evening in the kitchen. Let things happen naturally.
- 4. Keep shoes on!** Don't deconstruct everyone's outfits by asking them to remove their shoes. In wintry weather, tie a pretty ribbon around a basket of towels, put it by the front door and ask guests to wipe their shoes.
- 5. Always consider lighting.** You usually need less than you think. If you have dimmers, use them; if not, turn off overhead lights and rely on lamps and candlelight.



ABOVE: Bold vertical stripes and a rough-hewn table give the dining area lots of character. Formerly the eat-in part of the kitchen, it's now a distinct space with custom cabinetry and built-in wine fridges that make entertaining easy. The copper lantern from Sharon O'Dowd is a Smythe signature. Plush chairs by Thibaut upholstered in striped blush fabric encourage lingering over dessert. **Table, rug, Elte; wallpaper, Farrow & Ball; chair fabric, Primavera; cabinets, Treebone Design; wine fridges, Cavavin; blinds, Wesley Seto Design.**

add character to the simple, all-white space. **Subway tile, Saltillo; runner, Turco Persian Rug; faucet, Rubinet Faucet; hardware, Lee Valley; copper plating (on knobs), Mayfair Plating.** OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: In the front hallway — entered directly from the elevator — a beautiful gilt mirror and chandelier create a dramatic display. The purple walls contrast the brighter tones of the main living space down the hall, creating a sequential flow that moves from dark to light. **Dresser, Elte; mirror, chandelier, Angus & Company; rug, Turco Persian Rug; wall colour, Brinjal (222), Farrow & Ball; ribbon, Masterstroke.**

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A signature Smythe accent, this cluster of tarnished brass candlesticks from Cynthia Findlay Antiques is an easy yet impactful way to strike a festive note.





“THERE ARE VERY OVERT AND INTENTIONAL FRENCH REFERENCES IN SOME OF THE FORMAL SPACES”

The principal bedroom is reminiscent of a formal Parisian salon. Smythe and the team conceived it as a deliberately “matchy-matchy” space, with a range of different textures and fabrics in soft blues. The custom-made headboard has the same classic lines as the alabaster lamps — their shades were designed to tie in with the room — and a sunburst mirror completes the luxe, European look. **Headboard design**, Tommy Smythe; **bench**, Sarah Richardson Design; **wallpaper**, Thibaut; **rug**, Elte; **chandelier, lamp**, Ribbehege & Azevedo; **side table**, Decorum; **mirror**, ChairTableLamp.





During the initial planning phase, the homeowner was adamant that he wanted a television mounted on the bedroom wall. Smythe balked at the suggestion — which goes against his idea of a restful bedroom — and suggested housing it in an antique armoire (from Angus & Company). Today, it's one of the things they're really happy they did. It's the perfect complement to a serene yet comfy seating area. **Armchairs, ottoman, side chairs,** Sarah Richardson Design; **tray,** Around the Block; **framed blueprints,** Ribbehege & Azevedo.