

TO THE MANOR

**THE ASK**

This space was a project within a project. I was already working on the design for a house in downtown Toronto when the owners came to me with a request: they wanted a family room that felt like the lobby of New York's Bowery Hotel. Something that was a little bit bohemian, with a smattering of steampunk, which has an 1850s-miner-in-Brooklyn sort of flavour. I came up with a space that's an amalgamation of all three.

The house is a very rare thing: a Victorian-era backsplit. So this basement family room walks out to a terrace and is, in effect, a full-height space. This is how the kids enter the house when they come home from school, and they dump all their stuff down here. It's a very high-traffic area. That's why we went with materials that have a high-end reputation but are actually really hard-wearing, like marble, solid walnut and mohair. A family room that really hits it out of the park is a place where you just want to curl up and be cosy at all times of the year, so we wanted it to feel luxe but not precious. It turns out design choices that work in a hotel lobby work just as well in a space for a busy young family!



TOMMY SMYTHE TAKES DESIGN CUES FROM NEW YORK'S BOWERY HOTEL WHEN OVERHAULING A HIGH-TRAFFIC BASEMENT FAMILY ROOM.

As told to **STACY LEE KONG** | Photography by **ANGUS FERGUSON**



1 The panelling is probably the most important element of this room, and we had a lot of help to make it work. Architect William Dewson completely reimagined the space to give us the volume we needed down here, and Ross Munro from Treebone Design helped us come up with the plan. The homeowners really wanted solid walnut, which is not inexpensive, so we needed an expert to tackle the mathematical nightmare of figuring out what size each panel should be. A simple pattern without a lot of embellishment gives a contemporary vibe to a space that's firmly rooted in the style of a grand English country house — just like The Bowery Hotel.

2 This antique white marble fireplace has great paw feet, which appealed to the family because they love things that have a fun factor without being themey. Antique fireplaces were not built for raised hearths like this one, so we had to place it on a simple black box with a mitred edge and no overhang, which helps it blend in with the panelling and lets the marble shine.

3 A handsome pair of Art Deco club chairs adds to the sense of history in the room. The furniture configuration is another Bowery Hotel-inspired choice — the cosy setup evokes the hotel's inviting atmosphere.

4 I designed this coffee table based on one that belonged to my grandmother when I was growing up. It has a quirky, octagonal shape and four drawers for storage, and it's done in ebonized wood, which adds that little bit of steampunk edge. The marble top is inset with an antique brass tray, so you can pile stuff in the middle, but there's still space on the perimeter for snacks and drinks.

5 I like the narrow, rolled arms on the sofa and love seat. This sitting area is one zone in a much larger room, but it isn't a very large space itself, so I didn't want to take up a lot of real estate with bulky arms. The sofas have a traditional form — the legs have casters, and the backs are delicately scrolled — but leather piping is unexpected. They're upholstered in mohair, which has a luxurious reputation but is actually hard-wearing. There's a reason you see it on theatre seats!

6 The floor is French marble set in a square, flagstone pattern, which is still common in rural English dwellings — and since the space walks out to a terrace, the marble is suitable for an indoor-outdoor flow. And in a space like this, an antique Persian rug is really the only option for me.

A fun mix of fabrics keeps it youthful

Design, Thomas Smythe, Sarah Richardson Design; **architect,** William Dewson Architects; **contractor,** SCE Construction Management; **wall panelling,** Treebone Design; **marble mantel,** Stanley Wagman Antiques; **sofa and love seat fabrication,** Robert Custom Upholstery; **sofa and love seat fabric, drapery fabric, pillow tassels,** Designer Fabrics; **piping,** Perfect Leather Goods; **drapery sewing, drapery hardware,** Wesley Seto Design; **coffee table fabrication,** Eurocraft Restoration; **club chairs,** Kantelberg + Co.; **crewel pillow fabric, flamesitch pillow fabric,** Lee Jofa; **striped pillow fabric,** Bilbrough & Co.; **fur pillows,** Absolutely Inc.