

TRENDS  
2012

VICTORIAN *with a TWIST*

# FINE & DANDY

THOMAS SMYTHE  
REVIVES A HISTORIC  
FAMILY HOME WITH  
A GENTLEMANLY BOW  
TO THE PAST AND  
A NOD TO THE NOW.

Text by **SUZANNE DIMMA**

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**We're used to seeing** designer Thomas Smythe by Sarah Richardson's side on HGTV, as ready with a quip as he is an opinion on paints and fabrics. For our Trends issue, the talented designer steps into the spotlight with a stunning Toronto family home he designed, a room-by-room process that took three years to complete. Here, *H&H*'s editor-in-chief, Suzanne Dimma, speaks with her friend about his inspiration sources and bold choices — not to mention how he convinced the homeowners to let him paint zigzags on the wall.

**SUZANNE DIMMA:** Can I just start by saying, Wow! Places like this don't come across my desk every day. When you saw the house for the first time, did you have a strong vision of what you'd do?

**THOMAS SMYTHE:** One hundred per cent. I walked in and knew what it needed, room by room. What I loved most is that it still had all its quirks and that the homeowners hadn't knocked out a million walls — they'd maintained the integrity of the original four-bedroom house.

**SD:** So, was this a renovating or decorating job?

**TS:** It started as decorating, one room at a time, but evolved into renovating, as well. The homeowners, a young couple with two children, bought it as their forever house and they've invested in renovating intelligently and over time.

**SD:** You've appeared in *House & Home* many times, Tommy, but is this the first client project you've really put your own stamp on?

**TS:** This is the first one I've ever had published. Because of my TV responsibilities, I don't have a lot of extra time. But this house worked out because the owners were not in a hurry; they just wanted it done right. They also had a very strong point of view: they wanted a house that was modern, youthful and colourful but classic enough that they wouldn't have to redo it — maybe ever. The permanent installations are all based on timeless influences.

**SD:** I see a lot of Deco influences, especially in the light fixtures — am I crazy?

**TS:** No, you're spot-on. I believe you can put Deco pieces in a Victorian home and not have them feel out of place.

OPPOSITE: The kitchen cabinets are a mix of colours, while the counters pair marble and honed granite. An oversized lantern (one of Smythe's trademarks) gets a new interpretation with red paint. **Design,** Thomas Smythe, **project manager,** Jenny Dames, Sarah Richardson Design; **cabinets,** Bellini Custom Cabinetry.

TOP RIGHT: Thomas Smythe and project manager Jenny Dames. RIGHT: Solid upholstery, including on-trend orange pillows, makes the living room's graphic rug stand out. **Rug,** Y&Co; **chandelier,** Navarro Gallery; **lamps,** Patina Antiques; **side tables,** ChairTableLamp.





Full-height subway tile makes a statement in the kitchen's sitting area, used by the homeowners for casual time with their two children. The inside of the Victorian armoire was wallpapered in a delicate print to make it appear less heavy and more youthful. **Sofa**, Barrymore Furniture; **sofa fabric**, Kravet; throw pillow **fabric**, Lee Jofa; **rug**, Elte; **chandelier**, Decorum; white **chair**, Absolutely Inc.; wing chair **fabric**, Designer Fabrics; **lamps**, L'Atelier; **coffee table**, ChairTableLamp; **side tables**, Ribbehege & Azevedo; **trim colour**, Cloud White (CC-40), Benjamin Moore.



WEB

Watch Thomas Smythe tour this house on  
Online TV. [houseandhome.com/jan12](http://houseandhome.com/jan12)









**“GIVEN FREE  
REIN, THIS IS  
WHAT YOU’LL  
GET FROM ME:  
STRONG  
COLOURS, BOLD  
GESTURES AND  
TRADITIONAL  
REFERENCES”**

— Thomas Smythe



TOP LEFT: A Chippendale mirror anchors a vignette in the living room. Smythe filled a vase with peacock feathers for their scale and sense of occasion. **Mirror**, Ribbehege & Azevedo; **console**, South Hill Home; **accessories**, Cynthia Findlay Antiques; **chair**, Absolutely Inc.; **leather upholstery** (for chair), Klaus. ABOVE: The Victorian settee, which belonged to the homeowners, was reupholstered to give it new life; pillows in solid jewel tones create an eye-pleasing clash. **Settee fabric**, Designer Fabrics; **tub chair**, South Hill Home.

TOP RIGHT: In the children’s dining area, Smythe painted just one bentwood chair red for a bit of fun. **Chairs**, Design Within Reach.

RIGHT: The powder room’s fixtures, sconces and art are ultratraditional to offset the bold zigzag pattern painted on the walls. **Mirror**, Braem & Minnetti; **sconces**, Decorum; **faucet**, Addison’s; **pot**, Cynthia Findlay Antiques; **prints**, D&E Lake Fine Arts; **frames**, Elgin Picture & Frame; **wall colours**, Farrow & Ball.







TOP LEFT: Chevron drapes pop against grasscloth wallpaper in the office. **Sideboard**, 507 Antiques; **lanterns**, Residential Lighting; **antlers**, Absolutely Inc.; **grasscloth**, Primetime Paint & Paper. TOP CENTRE: Even the range's red knobs tie in with the kitchen's scheme. TOP RIGHT: A collection of convex mirrors act as an art installation in the stairwell. **Mirrors**, ChairTableLamp, Decorum, St. Lawrence Antique Market. LEFT: A malachite-patterned vase adds richness on the principal bedroom mantel. **Vase**, Decorum. RIGHT: The striking sight line from the principal bedroom into the bathroom. **Drape fabric**, Designer Fabrics. BOTTOM LEFT: One of the office's two desks is paired with a stately chair in cognac leather. **Chair**, Savoia Chair; **drape fabric**, Bilbrough & Co.; **drape hardware**, Wesley Seto Design; **desk hardware**, South Hill Home. BOTTOM CENTRE: An iron European-style awning adds drama to the home's façade. BOTTOM RIGHT: The living room's coffee table features an unusual piece of marble with fluid-looking veining. **Marble**, Crystal Tile & Marble.







A dramatic black glazed finish makes the library's walls appear to glow. Placing furniture in front of a bookcase creates a cosy, layered effect. **Armchair**, Ribbehege & Azevedo; **side table**, Elte; **rug**, Absolutely Inc.; **stools**, 507 Antiques; **chandelier**, Residential Lighting; **drape fabric**, Billbrough & Co.; **wall colour**, Jet Black (2120-10), Benjamin Moore.





## SPOT the TRENDS

### 1. Full-Height Subway Tile

Taking tile to the ceiling in unexpected places makes a bold statement.

### 2. Oversized Light Fixtures

"You must address the top half of the room or it will feel unfinished," says Smythe.

**3. Zigzag Prints** The on-trend pattern appears on walls, drapes and furniture.

**4. Warm Metals** A custom-made stainless steel range hood with brass strapping was the jumping-off point for a kitchen with both warm and cool metal fixtures.

**5. Glazed Walls** High gloss is back, creating a polished and refined look.



**SD:** If you had to give this look a name, what would it be?

**TS:** New Victorian because that's the era of the home's architecture.

**SD:** But it's a little rebellious, too.

**TS:** Totally! Without the rebellion it would be too regimented, so it's definitely intentional — from the giant black armoire in the kitchen to the scale of the pattern on the kitchen floor, where every tile was custom-cut and custom-set.



**"YOU PUT A RED TUFTED SOFA IN THE KITCHEN — WHY?"**

— Suzanne Dimma

**SD:** I'm dying to talk to you about this kitchen. I've been calling the floors the Escher floors because of the optical illusion they create. Was it tough to talk the clients into something that bold?

**TS:** No, there wasn't a bold gesture in the house that was hard to convince them to do. Actually, the pattern is a reference to a basilica floor that's part of the Vatican, so that style has been around for a long, long time.

**SD:** This isn't the first time you've used a big lantern — people still write to us about the one you put in your own kitchen back in 2004.

**TS:** It's become a bit of a Tommy Trademark, yes, and was a special request from the homeowners. It was originally copper but we decided to go with red. I just love a black, white and grey scheme with a bit of red thrown in.

**SD:** Speaking of red, you put a red tufted sofa in the kitchen, where most people would put a dining table — why?

**TS:** I think it's just about the truth. The kitchen is where everyone wants to be in any house, and in this one, the family can cook, eat, watch TV and talk to each other.

**SD:** Another gutsy move from

CONTINUED ON PAGE 111

TOP LEFT: The principal bedroom is awash in calming greys. Smythe chose the vintage glass light fixture for its strong shape, which reminded him of a First Nations headdress. **Chandelier**, Stanley Wagman Antiques; **bed frame**, Thomas Smythe; **bench**, Sarah Richardson Design; **floral**

**fabric**, Bilbrough & Co.; **wall colour**, Sweatshirt Gray (TH04), Ralph Lauren Home. LEFT: Brass accents warm up the moody library, while pompom trim and leather piping are unexpected upholstery accents. **Chandelier**, Residential Lighting; **sofa**, Thomas Smythe.