

Home Stretch





LEFT: A 13' x 18' addition at the back of the house created an open-concept living, dining and kitchen space. Alison stained the door frames to look like oak and to match the floors and dining table. Corian counters, Dupont; table, benches, Nienkämper; vases, red bowl, white pillow, Hollace Cluny; red pillow, Fluf.

OPPOSITE: To give the family room a cosier feel, Alison (below) stained her great-grandfather's armchairs and had them reupholstered in a cherry-blossom weave. The Persian rug adds another traditional note. Chair fabric, Primavera; wall colour, Architectural White, C2.

A TORONTO TASTEMAKER BREAKS THROUGH WALLS, WALLS AND MORE WALLS TO CREATE A SERENE, OPEN SPACE.

*Text by Alison Ganwood-Jones
Photography by Virginia Macdonald*

Inspiration usually strikes Alison Booth in the morning. That's when her best ideas drop like coins from a winning slot machine. Take the morning she woke up her husband, Jeff Campbell, exclaiming, "Flocked chartreuse wallpaper! That's what our bedroom needs." A few mornings later, she had another epiphany: "My mother was right: we should have a range hood in the kitchen. But let's hide the fan in the ceiling and...." By this point, Alison — a design consultant and stylist with her own company, Booth Supply (clients include style brands Fluf, Smythe and Virginia Johnson) — was on a roll. "And we can tuck the microwave and toaster oven inside invisible drawers that





The kitchen's dramatic black feature wall, chunky Corian countertops and industrial wire pendant lights make the look modern, while rattan bar stools, off-cut oak floors and a rough-hewn bowl keep it soft. Bar stools, cabinets, Ikea; art by Kathleen Weich, Lipman Contemporary Art; bowl, ChairTableLamp; pendant lights, Commute Home.

“I FRETTED FOR MONTHS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT THOSE HIDDEN STORAGE SPACES”

pull out from the wall. And...” Today, she admits, “I fretted for months trying to figure out those hidden storage spaces.”

After living in a 400-square-foot New York bachelor for three years while Alison attended the Parsons School of Design and then worked as a design assistant at handbag purveyor Coach, the couple moved into a Toronto semi “the width of a streetcar.” Three years later, the pair — by then parents to 1-1/2-year-old Lyla and expecting son Max — were ready for a home that allowed more freedom of movement and had less clutter. “I’m not as neat as I’d like to be, so the more I can design into a space using hidden storage the happier we all are,” Alison admits. Like the handbags she used to help design, the hidden compartments in her new home incorporate enough flaps, touch latches and moveable parts to rival a children’s pop-up book. But it took nearly a year of renovations to get everything just so.

With its vast stretches of honey-coloured hardwood flooring and minimalist white walls, it’s hard to imagine the spacious, light-filled house in its former state. “It was a rabbit warren of narrow halls and tight turns,” insists Alison. Alison and Jeff, who works in finance, initially fell for the three-storey Tudor simply because it was detached. Thinking ahead, however, they realized its generous 2,800-square-foot layout could also accommodate their circle of friends and, one day, two teenagers. So with the help of Toronto architect Michael Preston and contractor Nick Upton, they began transforming the main floor into an understated and free-flowing modern space by tearing down some walls and stripping the rest of their ornate mouldings. A two-storey 13-by-18-foot addition at the back of the house gave them the family room they wanted: one banked by tall sliding glass doors that open onto a leafy backyard. Above it is the equally airy new principal bedroom.

But it wasn’t until the couple installed recessed lights, dressed the floors in off-cut oak and unpacked their mid-century-modern lamps that the house started to approximate their vision of a stylish abode. On vacation in Iceland last year, Alison wandered into a café with an entire wall of recessed shelves, all different-sized and arranged like a Mondrian painting. She snapped a photo of it, and, once home, adapted the concept for the family room’s feature wall, which houses the fireplace and hides the

TOP RIGHT:

A separate entrance leading to the basement mudroom keeps dirt from getting tracked upstairs. Boots and

coats are stored in closets designed to look like lockers. The springy cork flooring makes the room a safe spot for the kids to play. Closets, Ikea.

RIGHT: The cowhide-print wallpaper in the tiny 6’ x 2’ powder room is an unexpected touch. Sink, Ginger’s; wallpaper, Primavera.





Alison went bold in the principal bedroom with a flocked chartreuse wallpaper on the headboard wall. She reupholstered a chair from her grandmother in a bright polka-dot print and swapped

white lampshades for matching blue ones. *Manuel Canovas wallpaper, Primavera; bed, Stylegarage; night tables, Absolutely Inc.; Sunshades blinds, Hunter Douglas; chair fabric, Y&Co; pillows, Fluf.*



SPACE RACE

TIPS FOR CREATING CLUTTER-FREE SPACES WITH BIG PERSONALITY.

UNDRESS WINDOWS Maintain a bright, airy feeling with hidden blinds that rise from the bottom or lower from the top of the window — they control sunlight or increase privacy when needed, then retract out of sight.

COLLECT TREASURES Don't rush to fill an empty space with pricey pieces that don't feel personal. Objects have meaning when they have a history (a chair from your grandmother), heart (an anniversary gift) or a good memory attached (a vacation memento). Build a life and let the objects follow.

LIGHTEN UP Shine a spotlight on treasured objects. Accent lights give every *objet* stage presence.

DECORATE IN THREES The asymmetry of trios is effective when crafting displays. Alison has three potted plants on the coffee table, three recessed kitchen shelves, three pendant lights over the kitchen island and three vases on the dining table.

DON'T SHY AWAY FROM PATTERN OR COLOUR Instead, use strong colours and graphic patterns to balance each other and add interest. In the powder room, Alison painted the ceiling pink to complement the cowhide-patterned wallpaper; in the principal bedroom, she balanced the flocked wallpaper with a vibrant upholstered chair; wide pink and white striped wallpaper enlivens the laundry room.



TOP LEFT: A sofa in one corner of the principal bedroom is a quiet place for reading books, which are tucked into a recessed shelf. Built-in accent lights make a collection of coloured vases sparkle like gems. *Sarah Richardson sofa, vases, Hollace Cluny; throw, Elte; pillows, Fluf; carpet, Floorworks.*

LEFT: A 6' x 15' walk-in closet was factored into the space planning for the principal bedroom, in the addition at the back of the house. For clutter control, Alison had hanging rods, open shelving and dozens of drawers installed. *Drawers, Simply Closets.*



TV, a DVD player and the stereo equipment in variously shaped hidden nooks. She had also picked up a book on Icelandic interiors at the airport. “Alison carried that book around during the renovation as inspiration for all of us,” says Upton. Designs with a clear, functional purpose and an emphasis on simple structures and rhythms — which appeal to Alison’s desire for order and openness — informed other elements of the main floor’s aesthetic: a sleek granite banquette that runs below the fireplace offers seating and keeps toys and DVDs off the floor; a husky oak dining table and bench, over which Alison draped a soft flokati rug, reiterates the simple vibe.

Despite the precision and planning, Alison and Jeff aren’t precious about their home. “The point of the house was to not be worried about anything,” says Alison. Visitors keep their shoes on and the big serene spaces on the main floor are *CONTINUED ON PAGE 154*

ABOVE, LEFT AND RIGHT: In the ensuite bath, sauna-like cedar-slat panels have integrated towel bars. The vanity and bath are topped with the same Corian used in the kitchen. *Tub, towels, bowl on vanity, Ginger’s; sconce, Restoration Hardware;*

marble floor tiles, tub facing tiles, Ciot; stool, Hollace Cluny; wood bowls on tub, ChairTableLamp. TOP RIGHT: The cheerful laundry room is conveniently located on the second floor. *Wallpaper, Color Your World; patterned hamper, bin, Lovell Designs.*

HOME STRETCH

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more often like a busy highway on which Lyla and the neighbourhood kids ride their toy tractors and ladybug cars. And it isn't perfect — yet. “We've barely touched the exterior,” says Alison. “But we're not rushing to finish everything, because you still have to have a life.” She's confident the ideas for the outdoor updates will come tumbling forth on some other morning. **H&H**

A GRAND PRIZE

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you notice the light streaming in from the wall of windows in the great room, and how everything is cast in a soft, warm glow, carrying the palette of greys, creams and soft blues and greens seamlessly from room to room.

Everywhere you look there are hip yet classic vignettes. Look left and you see a creamy precast limestone mantel flanked by graphic photographs and topped with a beautiful mirror framed in open fretwork. Look right and you see the shell chandelier casting a golden glow in a dreamy, grown-up dining room.

More than 60,000 people came to see the decorating and get the source list of suppliers and paint colours while the house was open to the public for three months last fall. When it was finally closed, getting fluffed and ready for the big draw, we all marvelled at the perfection of the floors, counters and surfaces throughout, relieved that everything will stand up well under the wear-and-tear of a busy family.

We heard stories from the volunteers who staffed the house, about how people would sit in the rooms and imagine themselves living there. What got the most oohs and aahs? The dog shower, the Hästens “bed to end all beds,” the Carrie Bradshaw-style dream closet from California Closets, the Kallista tub, graphite Samsung front-load washer and dryer, and the

“TV pit,” billiards table and putting green in the basement.

When I asked our team what they like best about the house, Sheri told me she loves the library, which didn't surprise me: often the cosiest rooms are the favourites. Trish loves the unexpected hits that she says are the magic of this house, like the bold drapery fabrics and the pop of kelly green in the kitchen. Erin loves the scale, the floors and the feeling of casual luxury. I love the bathrooms. The design of the vanities and mirrors came from a project that we featured by Montreal designer Julie Charbonneau. We loved that bathroom so much we adopted it. Julie tells us she's flattered!

And of course building a house from scratch wouldn't be complete without a few stories. There was the scramble to the finish line that included 1 a.m. web surfing to find the dining room chairs (Craigslist) that would later be slipcovered, 3 a.m. vacuuming, and the help we received from Oakville mayor Rob Burton and Princess Margaret Hospital chairman Paul Alofs so we could get this baby open on time.

It was hard to leave this house. When you design a space, you want it to come to life, resonating with a great energy that feels good to each person who enters it. For many months, you fuss over it, reworking the details, moving furniture, putting a lamp here and a bowl there, until finally, hopefully, suddenly — it's right.

And when the crowds come, you watch the faces and see the smiles and you know they feel it. A huge thank you to everyone who gave their time and talent to make this house sing. **H&H**

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- » Tour the dream closet in the principal suite
- » See the great pet shower in the mudroom
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- » Find a complete source list for all furniture and accessories

PAINT & WALLPAPER

ENTRY FOYER, SERVERY, KITCHEN, GREAT ROOM, HALLWAY

Walls: Balboa Mist (OC-27 Ulti-Matte), Benjamin Moore

Trim, stair risers, stringer: Cloud Cover (OC-25, Impervo satin), Benjamin Moore

Ceiling: Balboa Mist (OC-27 cut 50%, flat), Benjamin Moore

DOORS, WINDOWS IN GREAT ROOM AND KITCHEN

Doors, mullions: Soot (CL3186A, satin), General Paint

Trim, casings: Cloud Cover (OC-25, Impervo satin), Benjamin Moore

Kitchen cabinets: Flawless Grey (6212-31, eggshell), Sico

Servery cabinets: Kendall Charcoal (HC-166, satin), Benjamin Moore

LIBRARY

Walls: Packing Nut (CL2881WD, flat), General Paint

Trim, built-ins: Wood Ash (CL2854D, latex satin), General Paint

LIVING ROOM

Walls: Floral White (OC-29, Ulti-Matte), Benjamin Moore

Trim: Amherst Grey (HC-167, Impervo satin), Benjamin Moore

Ceiling: Floral White (OC-29, cut 50%, flat), Benjamin Moore

DINING ROOM

Walls: Avant Garde, Modern Trellis (5003283) in Alabaster, by Schumacher, through Bilbrough & Co.

Trim: Vault (CL3255D, latex satin), General Paint

Ceiling: Gorge Water (CLW1031W, flat), General Paint

POWDER ROOM

Walls: Imperial Trellis by Kelly Wearstler, through Bilbrough & Co.

Trim: Dove Wing (OC-18, Impervo satin), Benjamin Moore

Ceiling: Dove Wing (OC-18, flat), Benjamin Moore

MUDROOM

Walls: Soot (CL3186A, Washable Flat), General Paint

Trim: Gorge Water (CLW1031W, latex satin), General Paint

Built-ins: Japanese Paper (6195-21, eggshell), Sico