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# Living large in a small house

August 27, 2010  
DONNA LAPORTE

STAFF REPORTER

Designer Yanic Simard is proof that you can live large in a small space.

The principal designer of the Toronto Interior Design Group [www.tidg.ca](http://www.tidg.ca) recently decided to rent a house and renovate when he couldn't find a suitable one to buy.

The 640-square-foot Victorian house, in the Jane and Annette Sts. area of Toronto, captivated him with its high ceilings, oversized baseboards and potential for an outdoor deck.

BRANDON BARRÉ PHOTO

For the den, Simard designed a sofa-bed that is stylish as well as comfortable.

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"I just fell in love with it, with the neighbourhood, with the surroundings, with the layout, with the potential that this place had," says the 34-year-old Simard.

Just 14 feet at its widest point, the house's long and narrow dimensions posed some interesting design challenges.

"As an interior designer, we are fortunate enough to have the vision to see past all the imperfections and we have the tricks to make it right," he says.

Simard and his team spent three months on the project — about half the time it would normally take working for a client.

Having a team of talented designers, as well as being able to custom design furniture, is a huge advantage, he admits, but in the end the design principles they used can be broadly applied by any homeowner.

Consider what Simard has done in the living/dining/office/TV room.

You read that right.

The 12-foot by 13-foot "multi-functional" room stands up to the test by the deft choice and placement of furnishings.

"I always live in one room," Simard says, so "the right pieces are paramount."

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To wit, he designed a "Saladino" style sofa to serve many masters. It's extra deep and hard enough to double as dinette seating.

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"It's wider than a twin bed," he says — perfect for when mom comes to visit. "Firm enough to sleep on but plush enough to sit on."

The corduroy-style seat cushions stand up to wear but the sides don't have a pattern.

But what if you can't afford to custom design a sofa, you might wonder? He suggests purchasing a lounge, with an arm on one side, so that a table can snuggle up to the opposite end. You could specify that seating be made of high density foam rather than a softer feather stuffing.

Positioned at one end of his sofa is a Saarinen marble table and two café chairs with an antiqued gold finish, which remind him of wedding rental chairs.

A Chinese barrel stool takes little room.

A giant floor mirror rests behind a U-shaped table, which doubles as a workspace. Opposite the sofa is a French antique reproduction unit for more towels, DVDs, everyday practical stuff. Atop that is a flat-screen TV.

Simard says that, when taking on such projects, he addresses storage first. "Then I build and design everything around storage."

So in the bathroom, for example, there's a small cart to hold toiletries and towels as well as a large vanity.

The den, which doubles as a guest room, has a small, custom-designed sofa bed in cerulean velvet. A feather bed, which goes on top, is stored under the living room sofa. More storage can be found in a large chrome armoire – a standout piece.

The cozy room boasts a fireplace, tiny side tables, a custom screen for dramatic effect and an Art Deco chair with French pillow top.

Enveloping the room and offering privacy are custom floor-to-ceiling linen and suede drapes. Indeed, throughout the house are nearly identical tricoloured drapes in a variety of fabrics, which help create a visual flow.

The master bedroom's customized closet takes full advantage of the high ceilings. Out of season clothes can be rotated to the upper portion.

Three narrow mirrors on a wall that jogs in the middle give the illusion of a straighter line.

One of the biggest challenges was the narrow hallway — just 3 feet wide and 20 feet long. Graphic wallpaper, an Artemide light fixture throwing light up and down, three gold mirrors and a runner with horizontal lines create the illusion of a wider space.

In the galley kitchen, he installed caramel melamine cabinets with maple veneer and chrome pulls and added a granite backsplash.

He abhors having small appliances, such as a microwave or toaster, on the counter, so he keeps them on a stainless steel cart, which can be wheeled into the living room or outside for entertaining.

Speaking of which, the deck — which he had built atop a very small patio in poor shape — adds an outdoor "room" of about 100 square feet.

He has adorned it with an exterior sofa and club chairs and a lamp. A large cover keeps cushions dry and out of sight when necessary.

"It's refreshing to come home," Simard says. "And it's very inspiring."

An interior designer needs a nice space to come home to, he adds.

Welcome home.

*Yanic Simard is the design guest expert on Citytv's CityLine. The makeover will be featured on the show in November.*

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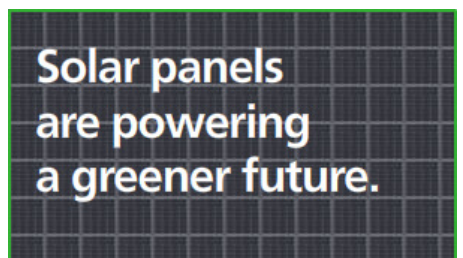


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Designer Yanic Simard has some tips to help you optimize a cozy living space:

- Instead of putting appliances on the counter, invest in a stainless steel cart, which you can wheel to another room or even use outside.
- Floor-to-ceiling curtains create warmth and connect rooms together. Closed, they offer privacy and create another wall.
- A runner in wide stripes helps "push" the walls in a narrow hallway.
- Chairs that are open let light through, whether made of wood (such as a wishbone-style chair), clear acrylic (as in a "ghost" chair) or a café chair. The same goes for side tables.
- Maximize closet space by getting an organizing company to redo shelving. Often space is wasted in the typical closet with a just single hanging bar.
- Have a professional treat the fabric on sofas and chairs to protect them, as they will be used more often than those in a larger space.
- Rent a locker off-site, if necessary, for such things as winter tires, skis and other bulky items or heirlooms you don't have room for but want to keep. (Make sure you have them well insured.)
- Shop around for that special piece. Don't go out and furnish your whole place from one store.

Sources

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- Bedroom closet organizer:** Closet & Storage Concepts, 905-337-2900, [www.closetandstorageconcepts.com](http://www.closetandstorageconcepts.com)
- Window treatments and toss cushions:** Drapica, 416-756-3341, [www.drapica.com](http://www.drapica.com)
- Bed reupholster:** Elite Shoppe, 905-625-8820, [www.eliteshoppe.ca](http://www.eliteshoppe.ca)
- Treatment of upholstery items:** Fiber Protection Services Inc., 416-614-1985.
- Den sofa, club chair and family room sofa:** Re-Wrap Custom Upholstery, 416-214-6400. [www.rewrap.ca](http://www.rewrap.ca)
- Hallway wallpaper:** Crown Wallpaper, 416-245-2900, [www.crownwallpaper.com](http://www.crownwallpaper.com)

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