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Living large in a small space

DESIGNER DIGS: Toronto Interior Design Group's Yanic Simard uses tricks of the trade to make room for style in 640 square feet

By SPECIAL TO QMI AGENCY

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Simard fused living and dining room functions by positioning a custom sofa next to a round Saarinen marble table. (QMI Agency photo)

TORONTO - You want style, sophistication and comfort - it's a big challenge in a small space.

Yanic Simard, principal of the Toronto Interior Design Group and regular guest expert on CITY-TV's CityLine, moved into a 640-square-foot, two-bedroom Victorian home in Toronto's Bloor West Village and set out to prove it could be done. He lets us inside and tells us about his design challenges - and his creative solutions.

Location, location, location

"Choosing a house with a good frame is key when you want to design a space that feels bigger than it actually is," Simard says. His compact Victorian boasts 10- and 11-foot vaulted ceilings, eight-foot doors and oversized baseboards, which kick-started the design project.

Continuity through colour

Visual flow is paramount to making a small space appear larger. In Simard's house, flow is achieved through interiors finished in black, white and grey.

Accent colours distinguish each room - mossy green, bright green, brown and baby blue - and bring variety to the landscape.

Unifying the space

Nearly identical tri-coloured silk drapes adorn almost every wall. "Tying elements of each room together is the easiest way to create visual flow," says Simard. "And with these gorgeous drapes, I was able to create a connection between all of the rooms beautifully."

Multi-tasking

Simard fused the functions of living room and dining room by positioning a custom sofa next to a round Saarinen marble table. And the den doubles as a guest room, thanks to a custom-made sofa bed.

Applying magic

The main hallway, not quite a metre wide and six metres long (fondly referred to as "the tunnel") was one of Simard's biggest challenges.

He created artificial depth with graphic wallpaper applied on both walls and a light fixture that provides illumination both upward and downward. The final touch: three shapely gold mirrors mounted on one wall artificially widen the hallway. "The tunnel" then becomes a warm invitation to and from the heart of the apartment.

To create a capacious feel in the den/guest room, Simard dressed up the indented wall with a textured, semi-reflective wallpaper, which allows the pool of sunlight from the window opposite to radiate throughout the room.

Get creative with tight space

"A good and well-planned furniture layout is key to a sophisticated environment," says Simard.

Finding creative solutions and maximizing space are top priorities:

A stainless-steel IKEA trolley sits in the kitchen for storage, but can be trundled to the living room and used as serving centre.

A cramped closet in the bedroom is remedied by foldaway storage: an ironing board, tie rack, shoe storage and seasonal storage which is only used when needed.

Storage in every room reduces clutter and keeps a chic abode chic: an armoire in the den/guest room; a French antique chest and hidden storage under the sofa in the living room; baskets in the ceiling-high cabinets in the kitchen; and a closed vanity and a stainless steel cart in the bathroom.

Finish strong

"To make the space feel comfortable and luxurious, various types of fabric have been used, sometimes unusually," says Simard. Linen, silk, velvet, chenille, suede and sheers provide a visual and tactile finale to the project.

Chairs "are an easy way to make a strong and unique statement without too much commitment," says the designer, who furnishes with at least six different styles of chairs at a time.

Finally, Simard likes to create drama and style by mixing old and new: mid-century mixed with antique and Art Deco joins '70s. Meanwhile, unique light fixtures and understated pieces of all sorts dot the apartment for a personalized look.

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