

# Planning *Makes Perfect*

A bulletproof floor plan, strategically placed statement pieces and chic touches enliven a small Victorian home.

By Malena Jaime • Photography by Brandon Barre

## THE OWNERS OF THIS TORONTO VICTORIAN HOME

wanted a fun space for family and friends visiting from Italy, which designer Yanic Simard achieved with colorful—yet entirely functional—pieces. “You don’t need two night-stands. We gave that function on one side, and on the other side you have a chair to throw your things on. When you push the envelope, it really brings the design to another level—it really forces you to invent and have fun,” he says.

## Step Inside

- **WHAT:** 2 bedroom, 2 bathroom, two-story home
- **WHERE:** Toronto, Canada
- **SIZE:** 540 square feet





**THE FRONT SPACE OF THE MAIN ROOM** offers a cozy window seat and work desk—yet neither are the main attraction. A black faux-iron screen serves as a divider from the foyer, while highlighting the height of the ceiling and making the space look bigger.



**THOUGH THE HOMEOWNERS** thought they'd never be able to fill up the apothecary cabinet (even though it's now packed), it serves as the perfect place for keys, gloves and miscellaneous items.

A young couple with modern tastes and a penchant for entertaining sought to make a historic, Victorian brownstone in downtown Toronto into a functional space for entertaining and everyday comfort. "They fell in love with that house," designer Yanic Simard says, who encouraged the couple to preserve the architectural details of the home. Instead of doing a full renovation, Yanic highlighted, painted, covered walls and brought in modern elements, while maintaining character by keeping the original wood floors, molding and baseboards.

"It was really important to me to keep the integrity of the house," Yanic says. "It's nice when it doesn't look completely new; it's a little chipped and banged and you see that it lived through time." By incorporating the couple's great art collection, along with an

assortment of mid-century pieces, Yanic was able to create an interesting tension between traditional and modern. By rethinking the original layout and creating distinct zones, Yanic transformed the small space into a functional home, chock-full of style.

#### DARE TO REDESIGN

The existing layout of the 25'x15' main-floor living area was not working at all. The simple solution, Yanic says, was to swap out the plans and thereby swap out the function that the space offered.

"Just because the builder labels it as the dining area doesn't mean that it has to be the dining area," he says. Instead, Yanic tailored the design to suit the couple's lifestyle, sending the dining room to the back of the kitchen and turning the remaining space into a sitting room.





**THE THIRD "ZONE"**  
offers a beautiful  
Montauk sofa for the  
homeowners to watch  
TV or read. Mirrored  
cubes serve as a  
coffee table, while  
also reflecting light  
and color.

*"It's nice when it doesn't look completely new; it's a little chipped and banged and you see that it lived through time."*

"It's all about good planning," Yanic says. By simply using furniture and area rugs to distinguish the spaces, Yanic created three distinct zones, each one offering a different function as well as style.

#### CREATE VISUAL INTEREST

"In smaller spaces you have to create focal points—visual interest," Yanic says. In the front space of the room, it was a faux-iron screen, which Yanic first employed to add privacy from the foyer on the other side. Instead, it highlighted the architecture of the home.

The next "zone," though only steps away, feels like an entirely different room due to the striking faux-leather wall covering around the fireplace. The textured surface of the wall covering, mixed with cowhide upholstery, adds richness and further distinguishes the area from the other zones.

"Don't use too much color," Yanic says. "You can bring richness with pattern. You feel it and then you see it."

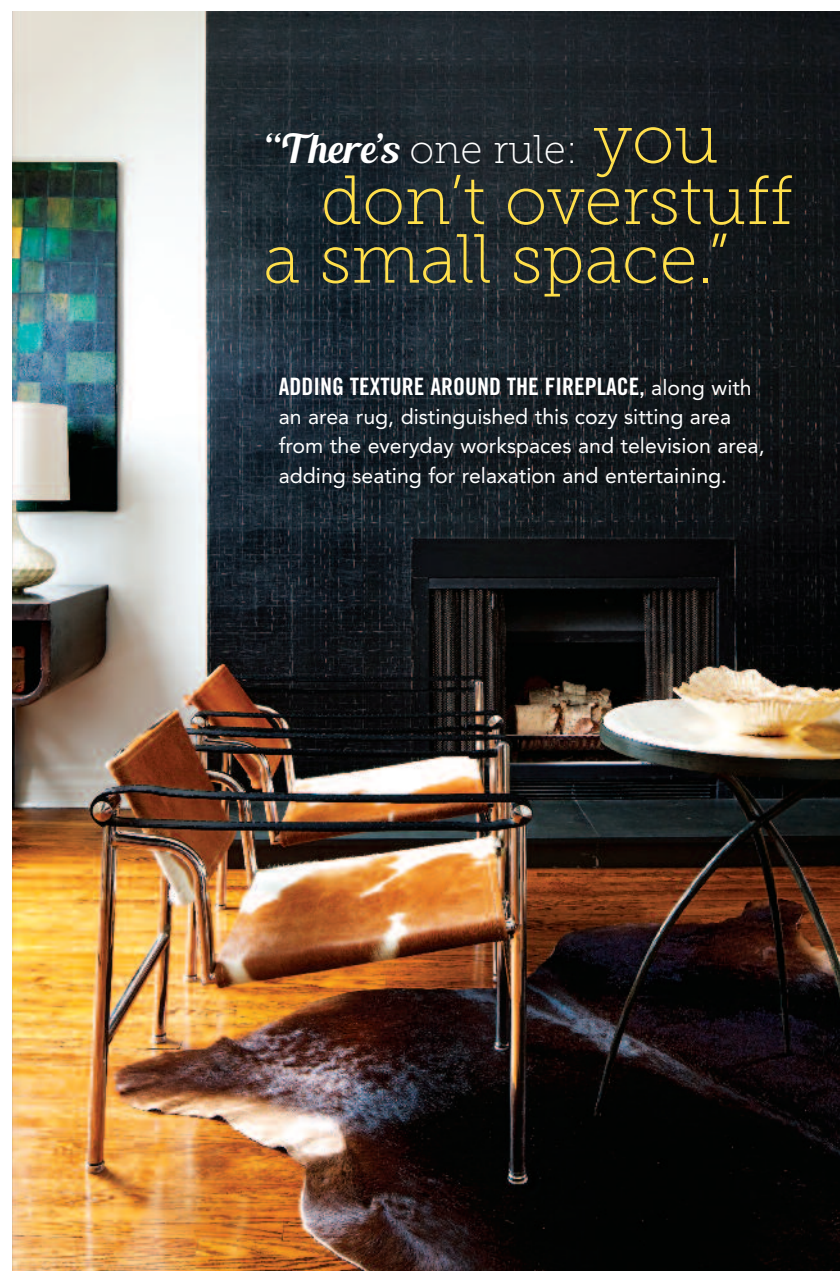
#### FURNISH, DON'T FILL

"There's one rule: you don't overstuff a small space," Yanic says. "It's OK to bring in furniture, but bring in the right furniture." The right furniture items, he says, are open, leggy pieces with reflective surfaces. "[For example], the desk, even though massive, is sitting on open, metal legs," he says.

As for accessories, Yanic opts for fewer pieces that make a statement. For instance, a large iron apothecary cabinet in the foyer looks like it may belong in a library or bank, but offers both function and visual appeal. "That was my favorite piece—it's a one-of-a-kind piece." Have fun with accessories, he says, and spend money on the bigger furniture, like sofas or upholstery.







*“There’s one rule: you don’t overstuff a small space.”*

ADDING TEXTURE AROUND THE FIREPLACE, along with an area rug, distinguished this cozy sitting area from the everyday workspaces and television area, adding seating for relaxation and entertaining.

#### TRICK THE EYE

Throughout the home, Yanic turns to mirrored surfaces to reflect light and create the illusion of added space. In the couple’s guest bedroom, two tinted mirrors reflect the expanse of the room, while a nearly invisible armoire offers closet space for guests.

“It’s tricky because it’s reflective—so it’s there but not there,” Yanic says. Additional tricks included an area rug with a ribbed pattern, strategically placed with the texture running horizontally to make the room appear wider. The zigzag of the yellow drapery also distracts one from noticing the size of the room.

“Drive the eye to one place, then they forget that it’s a shoebox.”

See Sources, page 128.



OPTING FOR FURNITURE that was lifted, open and leggy helped add style to the home without overwhelming it.

## Answers from the Expert

Designer Yanic Simard’s tips for tackling a small space.

- 1 **Look at your lifestyle.** Realistically determine what use you will make of a room. Always design a thing by considering it in its larger context.
- 2 **Start with a layout.** My favorite part was to do the layout. When the base is good, and you have a good layout, you build a very good structure. It’s like a jigsaw puzzle—it all comes together at the end. Have a vision.
- 3 **Don’t be afraid to make mistakes.** Allow some time to think about it. What you thought was a great idea yesterday might be the worst idea you ever had today. Revisit. Try things in the space. Move things around. When you start living with it for a few days, you might see it’s working for you.
- 4 **Start with function.** Begin with the basics, then build on top of it, adding cosmetic things. Ask, “Are you going to have a chaise and a sofa, or a sectional?” Pick the big pieces, and then go buy the pretty stuff. That’s usually the mistake—you design the whole room around this little table and [in the end] compromise quality and function because of one exciting little piece. There’s a recipe for everything.
- 5 **Don’t force it.** If you know it doesn’t work, abandon the idea and go in another direction. Some people might have forced the homeowner’s furniture in that beautiful Victorian space. Instead, work with what the space has to offer.

For more information on designer Yanic Simard, principal designer of the Toronto Interior Design Group, visit [tidg.ca](http://tidg.ca).







## Kitchen Revamp

In his own 85-square-foot galley kitchen, Yanic incorporated a few simple tricks to quickly refresh and make the most of the space. Here's how you can do it at home.

- 1 **Work with what you have.** Yanic simply refreshed his existing Ikea cabinets with a coat of paint in a bold yet subtle blue. "The deep, masculine hue with its blue undertone gave the kitchen a completely new look," Yanic says. Inspiration for the color scheme also came from the pair of Chiavari chairs, which had previously sat in another room, but created the perfect bistro seating area when paired with a marble table.
- 2 **Mix and match finishes.** Next, Yanic simply had to replace the pulls, which he had electroplated in a brassy-gold finish. "Mixing metals is one of my signatures these days," Yanic says. He opted for a mix of gold and stainless steel in his kitchen, and then replaced the cabinet knobs with crystal ones for a little pizzazz.
- 3 **Streamline your space.** Surprisingly, Yanic removed some cabinets to allow for a slimmer, higher European refrigerator. "It's a small space but I actually had too much storage," he says. "It's all about keeping what you need at the end of the day. You don't need three sets of pots and pans."
- 4 **Maximize your space.** Pulling from his bag of tricks, Yanic once again turned to mirrors, using them to add depth and perspective on either side of the stove. Other tricks include concealing appliances in cabinets to keep counters clear. Drilling a hole in the back of a cabinet allowed Yanic to keep a microwave concealed yet accessible. He suggests placing a toaster on a tray to be pulled out as needed, then easily tucked away.



**IN HIS KITCHEN, DESIGNER YANIC SIMARD** opted for bold color and a mix of brass and stainless steel finishes. Yanic used the same marble for both the countertops and backsplash, making the most of the beautiful grain and keeping the look simple. By cleverly hiding appliances, he was able to maximize counter space for cooking. Simple bistro seating and lots of light further open the space.