



Serenity Now

Yearning for a calm oasis, one empty-nest couple ditched the antiques, tackled a gut reno and embraced a sleek, clutter-free aesthetic.

text by *Bonnie Schiedel* | photography by *Michael Graydon*

ABOVE: Custom-made Parson-style chairs are slightly lower than the average dining chair, so they can be used as extra seating in the adjacent living room. An oversized 3-1/2' x 8-1/2' island separates the kitchen from the dining and living areas. The display shelf running the length of the main wall keeps the look open and bright, while

hidden hardware makes the upper cabinets to the left of the panelled refrigerator almost disappear. Light fixture, Trianon; dining table and chairs, William MacDonald Interior Design; countertop, Green Mountain Soapstone; cabinetry, MCM 2001; backsplash, Adanac Glass & Mirror; stools, Stylegarage; dishes, Kate Spade; urns, Teatro Verde.



“Starting fresh”

is one of the more alluring aspects of renovation. For Toronto homeowner Donna and her husband, starting fresh not only meant a complete style transformation of their 1980s-era condo, from dark and Victorian to airy and modern, it also meant jettisoning nearly all of their possessions, right down to the flatware and pillow cases.

The homeowners' bold move was prompted by life changes: the couple had recently retired from demanding careers as an accountant and nurse, and both their children had grown up and moved out. So, their new relaxed lifestyle meant they craved a home to reflect their growing appreciation for simplicity and space. “It was so wonderful to edit,” says Donna. “We found it was very freeing, spiritually, not to be attached to a lot of stuff.”

While they did consider moving, they loved their neighbourhood and the building, which they had lived in since 1991. Enter designer William MacDonald, a close friend of the couple, who had decorated their country home in a clean minimal

ABOVE: Designer William MacDonald opted for navy upholstery as a fresh alternative to brown or black. The custom-made sectional gets a pop of colour from cushions in on-trend silk-velvet ombre. Wall-mounted lamps retain the neat aesthetic. Sofa, coffee table, Stylegarage; pink and red cushions, Constantine; blue cushion, Teatro Verde; lighting, Mille Luce Designs; curtains, Hollace Cluny; Martha Sturdy tray; flooring, Floorworks.

RIGHT: Owner Donna at the oversized kitchen island, topped with soapstone.





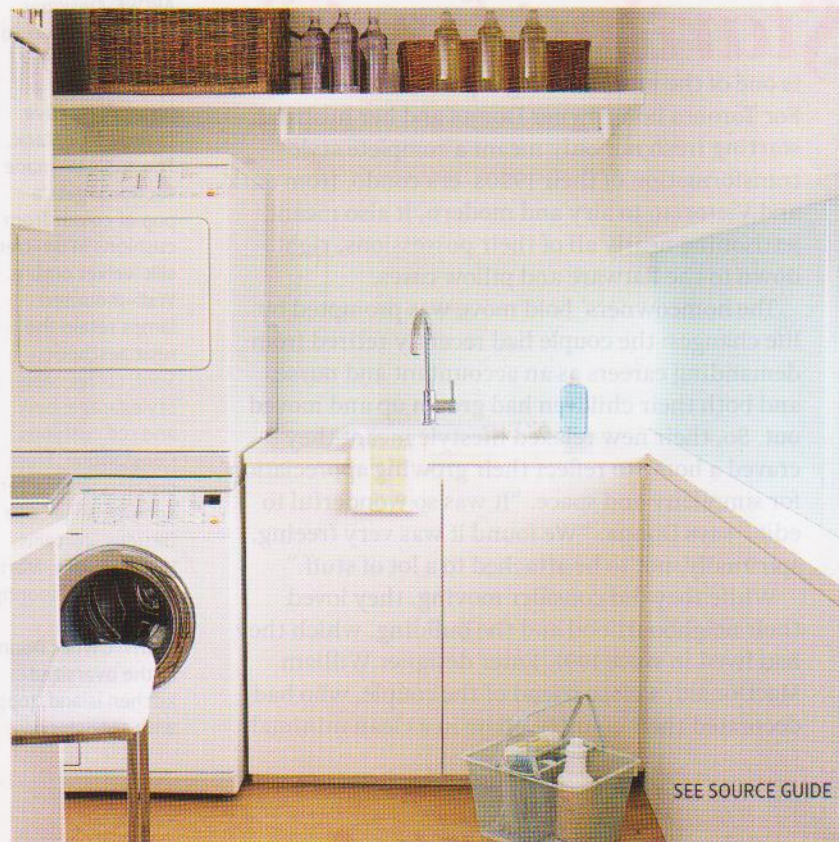
ABOVE AND TOP RIGHT: Flooring, Floorworks; tub, showerhead and faucets, Taps Bath Centre; decking, Unicorn Universal Woods. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The pristine laundry room shares a panel of frosted glass with the kitchen, allowing light to pour in. Cabinetry, MCM 2001.



style. He sketched a new floor plan on a napkin to show how the existing 1,500-square-foot, 4th-floor condo could be dramatically altered: one bedroom instead of two, an open-concept living room/dining room/kitchen rather than separate formal rooms, and a yoga/media room instead of a study. Before the walls came down, MacDonald and the homeowners regularly met with the team of Tim Scott of Natale and Scott Architects and Orest Boszko and Michael Verity of Boszko and Verity Construction for nearly a year of meticulous planning and research. "We would have intense meetings about the knife drawer: 'Do you want it here, or here?'" laughs MacDonald. Once the main decisions were made, a further 10 months of construction and design followed.

The result is a spare, open space accented with rich wood and glowing colour that harmonizes with the homeowners' desire for a warm minimalist style. "People say that coming in the front door is like the Wizard of Oz, where you walk from a world of black-and-white into colour," says MacDonald. Adds Donna,

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ABOVE: A soapstone countertop runs the length of the bathroom, giving the owners a place to primp or display favourite objects. A frosted glass wall divides the bathroom from the bedroom. Countertop, Green Mountain Soapstone. **RIGHT:** The artwork was a surprise anniversary present to Donna from her husband, purchased on a trip to Cow Head, Nfld. Wall-mounted lamps keep bedside tables clear. Artwork, Shawn McNevin; bedding, Au Lit Fine Linens; Virginia Johnson pillows, L'Atelier; bed, MCM 2001; lighting, Mille Luce Designs; curtains, We Do Draperies.



Clean Sweep

Whether you're downsizing dramatically, revamping your style or hoping to part with just a few items, consult these resources:

GIVE IT AWAY

- To find a list of Canadian charities that accept furniture, electronics and other household items, visit www.charityvillage.com and click on "Volunteer and Donate" then "Donate Your Used Stuff." This list includes national programs that will often pick up items: Clothesline (Canadian Diabetes Association, www.diabetes.ca or 1-800-505-5525); ReStore (Habitat for Humanity, www.habitat.ca) and the Electronic Recycling Association of Canada (www.era.ca or 1-877-9EWASTE).
- Join www.freecycle.org, an online organization where you can connect with people in your area who are interested in your unwanted items. Membership is free.

SELL IT OFF

- In addition to the tried-and-true options — garage sale, online auction and newspaper classifieds options — consider free online classifieds like www.craigslist.org or www.kijiji.ca (beware of posting personal information).
- On eBay, consignment sellers known as trading assistants will handle the online posting and sale of your items, including the shipping, in exchange for a set fee and perhaps part of the selling price. To find one in your area, visit www.ebay.ca and click on "Sell," then "How to Sell," then "Advanced Selling" and finally "Trading Assistant."
- Look in your Yellow Pages under "Auctions" to locate an auction house. To get useful tips about the auction process, visit the Auctioneers Association of Canada at www.auctioneerscanada.com.
- Not sure what it's worth? Contact the Canadian Personal Property Appraisers Group (1-800-891-0516 or www.cppag.com) to find a local accredited appraiser.