

Spare period



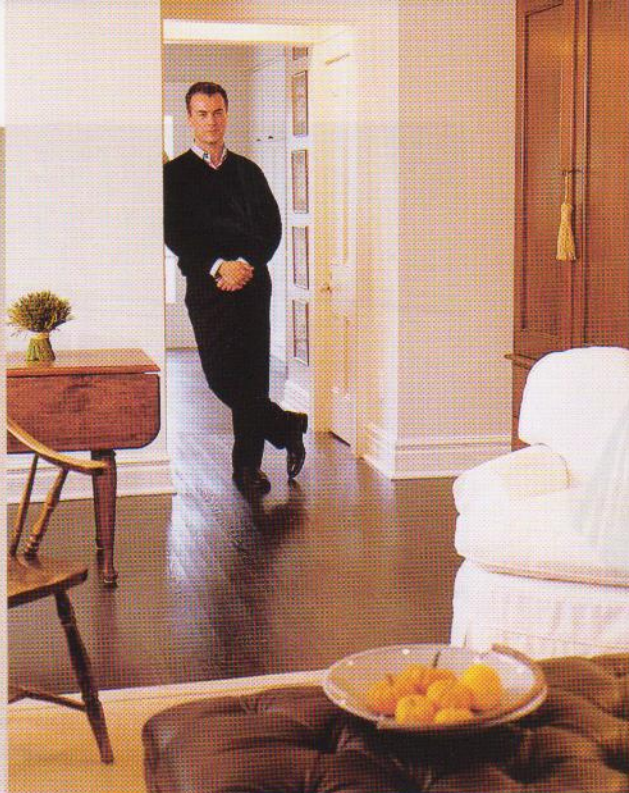
This clean-lined take on Colonial plays a little loose with history for a look that's crisp and current.

BY WENDY JACOB
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL ALBERSTAT



There's a union of the contemporary and the historical in the living room. The Victorian floor lamp and gunmetal-grey fireplace impart a heavy, 19th-century character, while white denim slipcovers keep a camelback sofa from

looking stuffy, and a footstool and Windsor chair add rustic notes. The designer places mirrors near windows to reflect the natural light. Paint: Down Pipe (on mantle), Farrow & Ball; denim, Designer Fabrics; red vases, Stylegarage.



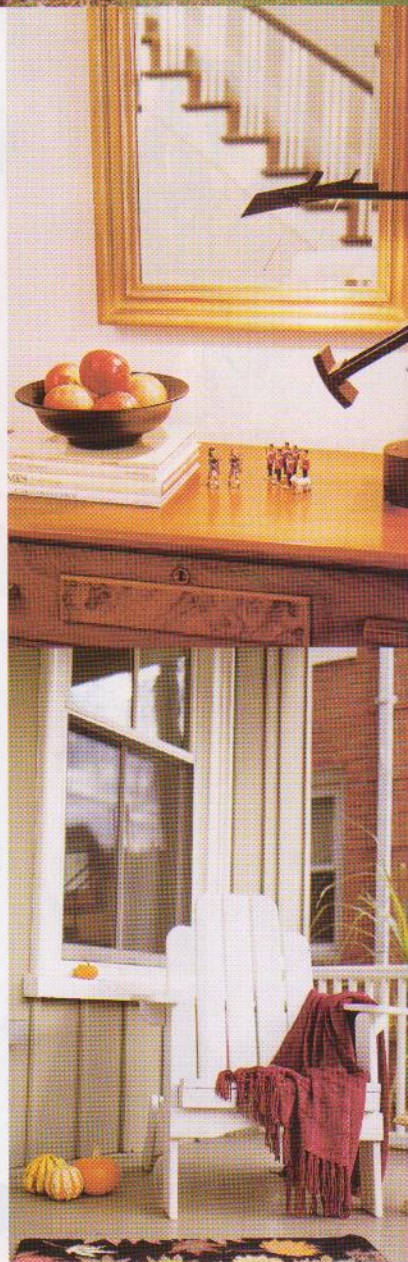
To truly achieve

the neo-Colonial look of this 1,500-square-foot Toronto house, the role of a modern innovation — the big green garbage bag — cannot be underestimated. “In initial meetings with clients, I usually say, ‘Your first job is to edit collections and furnishings down to the best pieces, items that really look great and have some meaning,’” says designer William MacDonald. “Most people have a lot of junk. Call it what you will — everyone has it. I hand them a garbage bag, and I take one myself.”

These homeowners had already built an addition on the back of their two-storey, circa-1870 house a decade ago to enlarge a tiny kitchen — really no more than a summer kitchen — to 18 by 18 feet and create a new 18-by-21-foot master bedroom above it. Avid collectors, “they have a real appreciation for the past. They just wanted to clean up the design and bring it into the

RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM: With its board-and-batten siding and simple period windows and door, the 1870s house is a charming find in midtown Toronto. Designer William MacDonald (pictured top) paired an antique

mahogany chest with a traditional gilt-framed mirror but saved them from a period staleness by adding an angular modern Tizio lamp. A Muskoka chair on the front porch is an inviting perch on a sunny fall day. Rug, throw, Pottery Barn.





TOP LEFT: In this unusual vignette, a cane-back chair doubles as a table and underlines a play in scale between an oversized antique lantern and a tiny pen-and-ink drawing. **CENTRE LEFT:** A clutch of hotel and antique silver is displayed in sturdy Depression glass on a kitchen counter. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Stacking prints in a column, like these botanicals on a kitchen wall, puts a modern

spin on the traditional pieces. Paint, Old White (on wainscoting), Slipper Satin (on walls), Farrow & Ball. **TOP RIGHT:** Added 10 years ago, the bright, Shaker-style kitchen still looks fresh. The glass-paned upper cabinets were jammed with collectibles. MacDonald plucked out light-toned elements and showcased them on the counter. Platter, Williams-Sonoma; paint, Lime White (on ceiling), Farrow & Ball.

21st century,” says MacDonald. So he was hired to finesse the decor.

Perhaps his greatest contribution to the interior was the editing process. “The most luxurious thing is empty space. Not every corner needs to be filled,” he notes. He encourages homeowners to cut down on multiples. “Instead of 10 of something, they may only need three.”

Once things are pared down, he rethinks how they’re displayed. He leaves “breathing room” around each object so it can be fully appreciated. In the dining area, for example, he pulled the drop-leaf table away from the wall to give it more presence.

Another key task was choosing the right

This antique pine table can seat eight for dinner but is a trim 2' wide when the leaves are folded down. A recessed display niche stands in for a more common hutch or dresser; MacDonald says that books stacked on their sides are more visually pleasing. Paint, Slipper Satin (on walls), Lime White (on ceiling), Farrow & Ball; sheaves, Trianon.



In the master bedroom, an antique pine writing desk paired with another Windsor chair is left mostly uncluttered — another of MacDonald's "spare corners" Cupboards built in under the eaves are an efficient way to use the odd little spaces often found in old houses.





colour palette, one that would highlight the owners' collection of antique furniture and make the small rooms seem open and airy. He settled on six shades of soft white, ranging from pure white to a pale greyish hue. "White is probably the hardest colour to choose. I find 99 per cent of the time people pick a pink white, but I prefer green whites. They have more dimension, more guts," he explains. And he cautions homeowners not to paint ceilings bright white, as many painters suggest. "When light hits the ceiling, everything in the room gets washed out. Soften the room's look by painting the ceiling a warm grey-green instead."

To keep the rooms from appearing static, judiciously chosen red and black accessories were introduced. Sisal rugs edged in beige continue the neutral colour scheme. In other spots, the dark wood floor was left bare to contrast with the walls and coordinate with the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 148

TOP LEFT: In the master bedroom, a snowy backdrop of linen bedding, tablecloths and lamps is punctuated by rustic antique treasures, like the battered blanket box, and textural new pieces like wicker magazine baskets and a wreath of dark branches. Wall paint, Old White, Farrow & Ball. **TOP RIGHT:** The back porch has an appealing symmetry, created by simple classical columns, a central stair, french doors and oversized terracotta urns. Landscaping, Perennial Gardens. **CENTRE RIGHT:** A skylight illuminates the clean-lined white

bathroom. Beadboard wainscoting and black-and-white mosaic tile mimic authentic period touches. MacDonald added a niche above the tub to hold an old oil lamp. Shower curtain, The Bay; hooks, Summerhill Hardware. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The mirrors' dark frames provide a strong focal point in the otherwise white bath. Period-style cabinetry is paired with rich accents: a Carrara marble counter, reproduction chrome faucets and taps, and traditional-style knobs. Paint, Strong White (on walls, millwork), Farrow & Ball.

