



Translation

At around this time

last year, I finally succumbed to the siren call of Toronto's real estate marketers and bought a loft-style condo in the city's Entertainment District. When I first laid eyes on the 935-square-foot unit I now call home, I had two immediate reactions: I loved the layout, but hated the finishes. On the plus side, the open-concept apartment stretched from a roomy, high-ceilinged foyer through a central kitchen and dining area to a spacious living room, allowing the eye to travel unimpeded through the entire length of the space; a large, long bathroom and small but high-ceilinged bedroom were located off to one side. In the not-so-great department, the unit had been outfitted with less than stellar materials and finishes, such as light-coloured hardwood

TOP LEFT: H&H senior features editor Danny Sinopoli. Painting, *Wasser #04* by Bert Myerboe, Lausberg Contemporary Gallery.

TOP RIGHT: A luxurious damask wallpaper covers all four walls (and two doors) in the loft's foyer, creating a striking first impression. A sculptural tablescape and large floor mirror magnify the drama. Silvergate

wallpaper, Farrow & Ball; wallpapering and painting, Thistle Painting & Decorating; mirror, Elte; floral arrangement, branch, Earthwork; tablecloth fabric, Designer Fabrics; tablecloth sewing, Pat Walker.

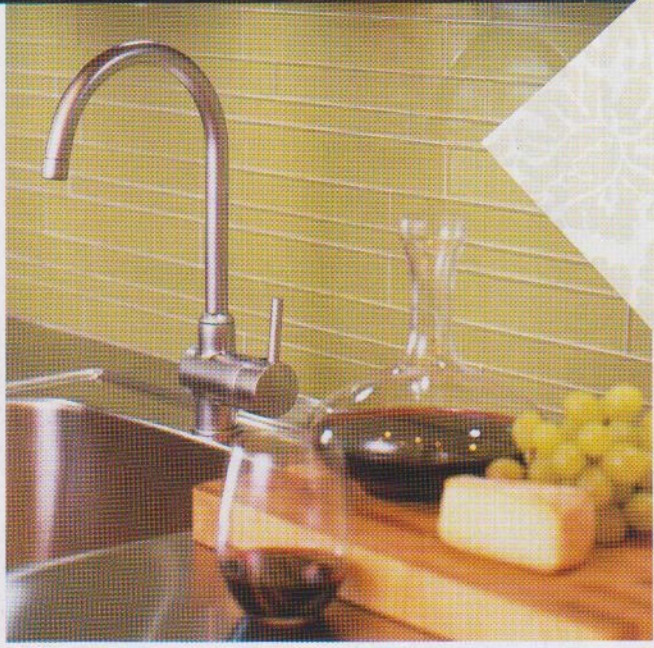
RIGHT: Located near the front door, a handsome bar unit pops against the wallpaper. Bar, DeBoer's; nickel compote, small vases, Global Views.





Bridging the living room and the foyer, the kitchen serves as the left's hub, providing a place to cook, eat, work and socialize. In addition to the wall storage, 14 drawers and cupboards are contained within the island. Zebra wood barstools with stainless steel bases both pick up on the metal in the room and contrast the darker woods.

Countertops, United Restaurant Supplies; stools, Visitor Parking. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Green glass subway tiles of varying widths on the backsplash provide eye-catching colour. A curvy gooseneck faucet lends a sinuous touch to the otherwise clean-lined space. Interstyle backsplash tiles, Vitroceram; faucet, Ikea.



The Palette

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Foyer wallpaper, Silvergate BP 802, Farrow & Ball; bedroom throw pillow fabric, Ralph Lauren Foxberry Plaid in Heather Blue, bedroom drapery fabric, 14743 in colour 323, living room throw pillow fabric, Ground Work's Silk Tree in Sandy Gold, all Kravet Canada; sofa throw pillow fabric, Channel Up in Mint Chocolate, Robert Allen; sofa upholstery fabric,

Adonis in colour 33, Joanne Fabrics; living room drapery fabric, Seffner in Wheat, Beacon Hill; flooring, Goodfellow Bellefloor Red Oak in Wenge (175-738), The Home Depot; backsplash tile, Tempo Corbusier in Green by Interstyle, Vitroceram; Vinnia drawer and door pulls, Ikea; wall colour, String (8), Farrow & Ball.



ABOVE: Sumptuous dark green velvet drapes rise to the 11-foot ceiling in the bedroom, accentuating the height of the otherwise small room and effectively dampening street noise. In addition to gold, green is a major accent colour in the apartment, also seen here in the

raw silk headboard upholstery. Headboard fabric, Designer Fabrics; Fogs from Liquid series by Marc Rembold, Lausberg Contemporary Gallery; drapery and pillow fabric, Kravet Canada; sewing, We do Draperies; bedding, Au Lit Fine Linens; wall colour, String (8), Farrow & Ball.

flooring that had suffered water damage, tired-looking maple veneer cabinetry in the kitchen (including upper cabinets that fell short of the ceiling, a big pet peeve of mine) and ho-hum beige tiling on the kitchen floor. In the bathroom, unappealing slabs of dark black-green granite covered the floor and shower stall, but I felt that I could live with that (at least temporarily). In the end, I held to my belief that good bones trump expendable materials and put in a successful bid. I took possession on October 1, 2006.

Since I wasn't moving in until December 1, I had two months to gut the place and get the proposed renovation well underway (maybe, I thought hopefully, even finished?) before I actually had to live in it. Initially, I had only intended to put down new flooring, install new cabinetry and appliances in the kitchen, open up the bedroom by removing some sliding closet doors and, finally, paint the place. Very shortly, though, the project was expanded

CONTINUED ON PAGE 264



Sliding closet doors were removed to open up the bedroom and create a nook tailor-made for a tallboy dresser. A green velvet curtain echoing those across the room conceals what remains of the still-sizeable closet. Drapery fabric, Kravet Canada; candle, Acca Kappa; framed print, vase, Elite.

BELOW: The once-dark bathroom was brightened with new white marble tiles and a soft grey-blue on the walls. An oval-shaped vanity was chosen for its white marble top and wenge base, which pick up on materials used throughout the loft. Vanity, Pordier; faucet, Moen; toilet, Kohler; toiletries, Acca Kappa; wall colour, Nickel (P22B1-4), Para



LOFT IN
TRANSLATION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 225

significantly when a foorer suggested that I also tackle the bathroom (doing major work on it later might damage my pristine new floors, he said) and I swallowed the bait. Not surprisingly, adding the installation of a new bathroom to the already very tight timetable proved costlier, more time-consuming and infinitely more frustrating than the reno might otherwise have been, but I'm glad in retrospect that I did it. When the apartment was more or less completed some seven months later — yes, it took that long — I sure wasn't in the mood for any more tradespeople, plaster dust or future reno projects of any kind.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Once the parameters of my project were finally established, I called on designer William MacDonald, a longtime friend, to help me create a colour and materials palette for the walls, floors and kitchen. As a rule, I prefer dark floors over light ones, so we settled on Italian-made red oak flooring with a wenge stain; it would be laid throughout the unit except in the bathroom, where white Carrara marble tiles would replace the sombre granite. To outfit the all-important kitchen area, which connects the foyer to the rest of the apartment and effectively serves as its hub, we paid a visit to Ikea's kitchen design department, where we chose a handsome black-brown finish for the cabinetry and island, clean-lined stainless steel pulls and stainless steel appliances. The stainless steel tops for the island and counter were custom-made by a restaurant supply firm. For a shot of needed colour and interest, I picked green glass subway tiles for the backsplash with the help of *H&H* design editor Stacy Begg, who also later advised on fabric and bedding, key furniture picks and the purchase of an all-important element: a 10-by-10-foot rug for the living room.

Early in October, my contractor,

Edwin Gregorio of Toronto's PEG Contracting, a firm that works closely with Ikea and specializes in installing kitchens and bathrooms, began demolition, which went off smoothly. The installation of the bathroom tiles and the hardwood floors soon followed. While this was going on, I turned with MacDonald's help to establishing a decorative scheme, which I wanted to have a cool, masculine vibe and a rich yet relaxing palette of browns, beiges, gold and green. For the walls throughout the unit, MacDonald suggested a lush yet neutral shade that would complement my furnishings and form a good backdrop for art. For the bathroom, we settled on a cool metallic tone that works well with marble and chrome.

By the time moving-in day rolled around, all of the flooring was down and most of the kitchen was installed, but I still had no bathroom — or, more specifically, no shower, commode, vanity or any other feature except for the marble tiling that had been set down weeks before. That evening, I was too tired to contemplate it all, so I checked into the nearby Gladstone Hotel overnight, but the respite was cruelly short. For the next two months or so, I would be shaving at the kitchen sink and showering at the gym. When each of the missing elements — a vanity here, a tempered-glass shower door there — finally trickled in, they all came together nicely. (The new vanity's wenge base, for instance, echoes the hardwood floors in the rest of the apartment and the low-flush toilet is as elegant as it is eco-friendly.) Mostly, though, I was just so happy by that point to have running water and an in-house shower stall.

When spring finally bloomed, all of the major elements were installed and much of the furniture was fixed, but a key feature still wasn't in place: the window treatments. When they finally were hung — diaphanous linen sheers in the living room and green velvet drapes in the bedroom — the effect was transforming. In the living room, the harsh light and dirty windows I'd been living with for months

disappeared, while the thick velvet drapes in the bedroom created a luxurious cocoon and even muffle the voices of the clubgoers who haunt the Entertainment District into the wee hours every weekend. As a *pièce de résistance*, MacDonald suggested covering all four walls of the foyer — including the doors! — with a subtly patterned wallpaper. The effect, needless to say, is a dramatic one, suggesting hidden passageways (no small feat in a relatively small apartment) and making a grand first impression.

Of course, current delights such as these have gone a long way toward erasing the most painful memories of the reno, which, in addition to depleting my bank account, taxing my mental health and depriving me of a bathroom for months at a time, was marked by crises that only a masochist would revisit. In brief, some were minor and some were catastrophic, the worst of all being the near-demolition of my new building's lobby. One cold morning last November, a wayward deliveryman wielding heavy boxes of flooring caused one of two gigantic mailbox units anchored in the space to crash forward into the second one, which in turn fell backwards into a wall, taking the wall down, too. Standing nearby, my doorman had looked on in silent horror, plaster dust settling on his shoulders and a sea of mail at his feet. I was likewise dumbstruck, but also calculating the inevitable costs of the disaster, which included \$1,200 in repairs and a severe reprimand from my condo board. At a meeting of said board a couple of months ago, I also had to slink down in my chair when the matter was brought up again as a lesson in how *not* to renovate. (When it happens, I think that I could produce, write and star in the inevitable TV show.)

Once the meeting was over, though, I left the boardroom, walked down the hall to my apartment and retreated into the sanctity and comfort of my newly completed home, a true refuge. What more could you ask for in the urban jungle? **H&H**