PRETTY & PUNK

Architecture **ERA ARCHITECTS**
Design **TOM DESIGN STUDIO**
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A TORONTO VICTORIAN GETS DUSTED OFF AND FULLY REIMAGINED BY TOM DESIGN STUDIO.

LEFT: Punchy drapes, vintage coffee tables, and a blush-hued mantelpiece and settee bring great style to the formal living room. ***Pendant*** *by Fortuny, Trianon;* ***drapery fabric,*** *Kravet Canada;* ***coffee tables,*** *Decorum Decorative Finds.*
TOP RIGHT: Associate designer Haley Dermenjian *(left)* and designer Tommy Smythe.

IN **A NEIGHBOURHOOD** lined with leafy trees and stately heritage houses, it's rare to find an interior that hasn't been completely modernized behind the ornate brick façade. "It's so special when the original fireplaces, some of the original staircase and all of the plasterwork are still intact," says Tommy Smythe, co-founder of TOM Design Studio. He first set eyes on this 125-year-old diamond in the rough in 2021, during the malaise of the pandemic. Tommy was helping his longtime clients, a family of five, find a place with more space and lots of design potential.

The 4,420-square-foot Toronto Victorian had more than a few rough edges. Because of a leak, the main-floor ceiling was covered in gaudy red plastic, and the kitchen was tiny and had no flooring. "Our plan was to bring this grand old dame back to life," says one of Tommy's clients. "We wanted to keep all the best architectural bits — like the arches and crown mouldings — but create an open kitchen and family room at the back of the house, and expand the principal suite."

Tommy envisioned comfortable rooms for modern living that still respected the home's origins. "I wanted the place to look as though it had been passed down through the same family, and that each generation had kept the best elements, then added their own character and personality."

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— Tommy Smythe, designer

Key Paint Colours

Living room mantelpiece colour:
Savoury Cream (2105-70), Benjamin Moore

Front door colour:
Hague Blue (30), Farrow & Ball

Foyer wall colour:
School House White (291), Farrow & Ball

Upper kitchen cabinet colour:
Simply White (OC-117), Benjamin Moore

Lower kitchen cabinet colour:
Hidden Falls (714), Benjamin Moore

Principal ensuite vanity colour:
Cromarty (285), Farrow & Ball

Principal bedroom wall colour:
Skylight (205), Farrow & Ball

The dining room chairs are upholstered in a mix of fabrics. "We love the colour and whimsy they bring to an otherwise masculine-feeling space," says one client. ***Ceiling fixture*** *by Ingo Maurer, Eurolite;* ***dining chairs,*** *Trianon.*
OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT: When the clients first saw the grand foyer, they were immediately smitten. ***Table,*** *Ribbehege & Azevedo;* ***rug,*** *Elte.*
OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT: Botanical wallpaper and a sleek bench bring sophistication to the entry. ***Wallpaper*** *by Kelly Ventura, Memo Showroom;* ***bench,*** *Hopson Grace;* ***tile,*** *Saltillo Imports.*
OPPOSITE, BOTTOM LEFT: Dark millwork and the iconic Zettle'z 5 lamp create a stylish spot for reading or enjoying a digestif. ***Ceiling fixture*** *by Ingo Maurer, Eurolite;* ***millwork,*** *Marana;* ***armchairs,*** *Trianon.*

The kitchen design incorporates a lively mix of materials. ***Pendants,*** *Victorian Revival;* ***vent hood cladding, cabinets,*** *Marana;* ***range,*** *Wolf;* ***counters,*** *Stone Tile.*
OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT: To bring more light in, Tommy designed slim rectangular windows and had them installed just above the counter.
OPPOSITE, BOTTOM RIGHT: In the family room addition, the mid-century modern chair complements a clean-lined mantel and contemporary built-ins. ***Pendant,*** *Elte;* ***mantel,*** *Trumeau Stones.*

A custom banquette with tufted upholstery is tucked into a bright corner of the kitchen. ***Construction,*** *Alair Homes;* ***table,*** *RH;* ***chairs,*** *Sunpan;* ***tile,*** *Saltillo Imports.*

To get the collected-over-time layers just right, Tommy worked with Toronto's Era Architects, a top studio specializing in historical preservation and renovation. The idea was less about making radical changes and more about "surgical tweaks," as Tommy calls them. "We kept asking ourselves: What would the original architects do to make this space better?" he says.

The floor plan remains quintessentially Victorian, with a grand foyer and side hall that runs alongside a formal living room at the front of the house, a dining room in the middle, and a kitchen at the back. And while many of the details are original, "we weren't purists," says one client of their approach. "For instance, with Team TOM's backing, we had a lot of the house's woodwork painted."

Throughout, lighting is used to add moments of whimsy, as seen in the vintage pendants above the kitchen island. "Those were Tommy's idea, and they jump-started the design process for the whole space," says his client. Tommy combined oak vent hood cladding, beautifully veined stone, and painted uppers and lowers in contrasting shades for an eclectic mix. "Large kitchens can feel like an airport terminal if everything is white," says Tommy.

Tommy and Era designed a 300-square-foot addition on the back of the house, extending the kitchen and adjoining a new family room. The design team also took down a wall around a back stairway,

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exposing what would have been a passageway for domestic staff, and added a wood-burning fireplace in the family room. "You wouldn't build a room that big in the Victorian era and not have a fireplace," says Tommy.

The traditional yet modern vibe is well-considered and curated, with twists and winks reminding visitors that this is a stylish family home, not a museum. "I always like a little punk with my pretty," says Tommy, noting details like the custom graphic drapes in the living room and the Ingo Maurer chandeliers in the dining room made from sheets of paper covered in playful bursts of text and drawings. Associate designer Haley Dermenjian loves the meshing of different styles and eras. "Introducing furniture, textiles and lighting that blend old and new creates a multidimensional story," she says.

Though the project technically wrapped in September 2023, the house isn't entirely "done." There are walls waiting for art, and space for new furniture pieces and accents. "It's so important to me that a home reflects the people who live there," says Tommy. "I wanted to give my clients room so that, over time, they can fill the bookshelves, add more art and put a rug here or there. We've given this house another 200 years." H&H

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