LET IT SNOW!

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A TORONTO DESIGNER RENOVATES AN 1878 WORKERS' COTTAGE AND DECKS THE HALLS FOR CHRISTMAS.

OPPOSITE: Chris Bell (*left*) and Colin Baird with Cole, their flat-coated retriever. The shingled cottage has a Cape Cod or Nantucket spirit, says Colin. *Antique* ***ladder,*** *Vintage Fine Objects;* ***Christmas lights,*** *Home Hardware/Home Building Centres.*

The mantel is dressed with a fresh garland of Scotch pine in the cosy living room. ***Greenery*** *(throughout), Sheridan Nurseries;* ***coffee table,*** *Elle & Eve.*

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TOP LEFT: A tree is simply decorated with a string of lights set on a dimmer for a soft, inviting glow. ***Desk, framed art,*** *Of Things Past;* ***table lamp,*** *Ralph Lauren Home.*
BOTTOM LEFT: Columns were installed to define the living room from the family room extension, which was formerly the porch. ***Sofa,*** *Lee Industries; antique* ***chest,*** *Joliette;* ***rug,*** *RH.*

THERE'S A STORYBOOK QUALITY to this cedar shake house in Toronto's Cabbagetown neighbourhood. Dwarfed between two Victorians, the heritage cottage has a unique appeal that wasn't lost on Colin Baird, an associate designer at TOM Design Studio, and his partner, Chris Bell, a TV studio executive. "We snuck in to see it before it was listed and immediately fell in love," says Colin. "We knew we had to buy it."

They purchased the house in 2017. Along with charm, it had a yard for their dog, Cole, and room to grow (they've since welcomed their son, Wesley). What the couple loved most was the feeling of the original cottage. When a contractor floated the idea that demolishing the 1,000-square-foot, one-storey structure and starting fresh would be easier than renovating, he was quickly shown the door. "We wanted to keep the footprint and honour the original house," says Colin. But while the couple admired its history, they certainly weren't going to stop time.

They started by painting the exterior in Benjamin Moore's Swiss Coffee. Next, they renovated the kitchen, which took about four months, with a total budget of around $35,000. "None of the cabinets went to the ceiling and everything was worn," says Colin. "For the kitchen design, we were inspired by classic cabinets from deVOL Kitchens and Plain English, so we worked with Distinctive by Design, a kitchen remodelling company, to come up with an updated yet timeless layout that was still budget-friendly." The only element they kept was a bank of glass-fronted upper cabinets. "We wanted that comfortable feeling of a lived-in house that has history," says Chris. "The original cabinets helped connect the kitchen to the rest of the house." Most recently, they've redone the hardwood floors throughout, an update that also rang in at around $35,000.

The house is decorated with contemporary canvases painted by Chris, as well as pieces the couple inherited or bought early in their relationship. "If we see something we love, we snatch it up and try to make it work by moving

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Key Paint Colours

Exterior colour:
Swiss Coffee (OC-45), Benjamin Moore

Front door colour:
Light Blue (22), Farrow & Ball

Living room wall colour:
White Dove (OC-17), Benjamin Moore

Dark interior window frame and tub exterior colour:
Black Jack (2133-20), Benjamin Moore

Lower kitchen cabinet colour:
Pavilion Gray (242), Farrow & Ball

Bathroom wall colour:
De Nimes (299), Farrow & Ball

Principal bedroom wall colour:
Templeton Gray (HC-161), Benjamin Moore

TOP AND BOTTOM RIGHT: This seating area was originally used as a home office but, after baby Wesley arrived, the sofa was added to create a family room. ***Vessels*** *(on side table), Aberfoyle Antique Market.*
BOTTOM LEFT: Outside, fresh garlands and boxwood wreaths usher in the season. ***Sconce,*** *Shades of Light.*

"We aim for elegant and understated versus an explosion of Christmas — I think the green keeps it classic" — Colin Baird

TOP LEFT: The outdoor lantern sconces in the kitchen are a nod to designer Tommy Smythe. "Tommy's work was a big influence on this design," says Colin. "The lanterns are simple, classic and don't overpower the space." ***Range,*** *Wolf;* ***counters,*** *Caesarstone.*
TOP RIGHT: A wheat sheaf candle sconce affixed to a dark hutch brings lustre. ***Hutch,*** *RH.*
BOTTOM RIGHT: The original glass-fronted uppers preserve the kitchen's charm while pale grey, Shaker-style lowers add quiet colour. The bevelled counters bring a custom feel. ***Faucet,*** *Kingston Brass;* ***sink,*** *Blanco;* ***hardware,*** *Lee Valley.*

In the dining room, a wagon wheel pendant and painted-black pedestal table create an eclectic look. ***Dining table,*** *Ethan Allen;* ***rug,*** *Peaks & Rafters;* ***large art*** *(above sideboard) by Ed Bartram.*

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Colin's Holiday Decorating Tips

FIND A STAR HUE. "We always start with a foundation of green, then we layer in signature colours. This year, it was a combination of copper, bronze and orange."

GO GREEN. Every surface is an opportunity to add greenery. Colin likes to tuck sprigs behind picture frames.

KEEP IT SIMPLE. "We use one hero gift wrap, plus brown and white kraft paper, which is a great base for elaborate ties and ribbons."

HANG THEM HIGH. Colin suggests hanging holiday cards like a bunting, rather than cluttering your tabletop or mantel.

DECORATE IN MULTIPLES. Displaying holiday collections makes an impact, says Colin. A cluster of bottlebrush trees, for instance, strikes a festive note.

TOP LEFT: In the bathroom, an antique carved mirror makes a statement above the original pedestal vanity.
BOTTOM LEFT: New hardware, a moody wall colour and a coat of black paint on the original clawfoot tub update the space. ***Shower curtain fabric,*** *Tonic Living.*

furniture around," says Colin. There are also a few nods to designer Tommy Smythe's signature moves, including the lantern fixtures and a gilded bull's-eye mirror. "We lean traditional but balance that with modern pieces that make a space feel young and a little more masculine," says Chris.

For Wesley's nursery, they sidestepped anything too juvenile or precious. "We didn't want it to feel age-specific," says Colin. A dreamy pastoral wallpaper was too expensive for the entire room, so they used two framed panels to visually anchor the area behind the crib.

Colin, who hails from New Brunswick, embraces the festive spirit, trimming a minimum of three Christmas trees. "I think anyone born in that area has an innate love of the holidays," says Chris. The couple's decorating, though, is streamlined and sophisticated. "We aim for elegant and understated versus an explosion of Christmas," says Colin. "I think the green keeps it classic." Swags are attached to sconces and candleholders, and garlands and wreaths dress up windows. "We like to add greenery in unexpected places — it's an easy way to inject warmth," adds Chris.

This year, the holidays will be spent fireside, reading Wesley holiday classics and playing Christmas music. "It's the one time of year for us where we lean in to our favourite traditions and the nostalgia of the holidays," says Colin. "We both have fond memories from our own childhoods, and we want to create those same memories for Wesley here in this house." H&H

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CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT:
Two framed wallpaper panels are budget-friendly and don't make the nursery feel too sweet. ***Lantern,*** *Shades of Light;* ***wallpaper panels,*** *Schumacher;* ***crib, throw*** *(on chair), RH.* • Every door in the house is painted black for distinction; in the principal bedroom, an aerial photo of Georgian Bay has a sentimental pull. ***Rug,*** *Ikea.* • Chris, with their son, Wesley. ***Sofa, throw pillow,*** *Muskoka Living;* ***art*** *by Chris Bell.* • Holiday cards are strung up in the kitchen with clothespins. The deep sill is perfect for styling. ***Urn,*** *Lëuk;* ***candles,*** *Yummi Candles.* • Two vintage trumpets frame a collection of bottlebrush trees for a pared-back take on a Christmas village.