By painting a newly installed antique mantel black and laying a striped rug underfoot, designer and homeowner Lindsay Mens grounded a room that might otherwise feel too airy in its envelope of soft pink (Farrow & Ball Calamine). "I just like the tension black brings," she says. The antique mirror bounces light around in the smaller space.

but KEEP the OLD

How one designer revived her family's home with punches of black and pink, resuscitating the past while staging it squarely for today.

by KATHRYN O'SHEA-EVANS *photos* PATRICK BILLER

Classic pattern choices, like windowpane check armchairs and a striped rug, can move to any future home, Lindsay says. "Because I tend to move every three years, I'm trying to be conscious as I go forward to buy pieces that stay with me, are well-made, and can be reinterpreted," she says.

Designer Lindsay Mens has a thing for revamping tired old houses—so much so that she moves her family every few years to take a new project under her wing.

One recent adventure: this 1903 farmhouse, among the remaining original grandes dames of Grimsby, Ontario (population: 28,883), a town skirting Lake Ontario. When Lindsay got her hands on the home, it wasn't living up to its style origins, with vinyl siding and dated, clunky fixtures. "I tend to fix up old junkers," she says. "That's what I bring back to life."

This house was indeed pretty lifeless. It had sat practically untouched for four decades but for a few ho-hum updates: popcorn ceilings, a 1990s builder-grade kitchen, and peeling wallpaper. "I went in and tried to preserve as much of the original character as I could," Lindsay says, pointing to an existing stained-glass window, trim, and casing, architectural confections that she conserved. She couldn't keep the floors, though, which were downright treacherous. "Your

To hang pieces in a gallery wall that work well together, Lindsay tries to balance mixed metal frames as well as contemporary and antique pieces in equal measure. Above all, "I like art that has meaning," she says, adding that she always tries to pair clean-lined, modern things with antiques for a "soulful feeling."

Lindsay, *left*, says the mirror reflects the light fixture, effectively doubling the glow—and the style. "Rooms had a smaller footprint back then," she says. "Putting the mirror over the mantel helps the room feel bigger."

White linen draperies with black piping on the edges catch the light in the family room. Lindsay originally had the walls painted white but added stripes for an extra layer of coziness. "Every surface needs a story... wallpaper warmed up the room."

foot could get caught on a nail... they were dangerous," she says. Lindsay had no emotional trouble evicting things that weren't doing the house any favors. "I tried to be conscientious of what I put in there, so that it kind of looked like it would have been original," she recalls. A woodstove in the family room, for example, got the heave-ho. In the adjacent, more fitting formal living room, Lindsay installed an antique oak fireplace she unearthed at a favorite architectural salvage shop and painted black. Her go-to shade: Farrow & Ball Off-Black, which is "not as intense," she says. "It's a bit softer; it takes the harshness off black."

That inky color proved to be the portal to timeless choices that read as both then and now, used everywhere from the front door's interior to the ceiling of the kitchen. "Black adds an unexpected layer, and it's really cozy," she says. "I didn't want it to be a typical farmhouse." Because she shared the home with two growing daughters, she leaned into the effervescence of pink too; the walls of the living room are painted Farrow & Ball Calamine. "It's a ballet slipper pink that doesn't read as too baby or girly or juvenile," Lindsay says. "It's soft and subtle." And perfect for an old queen of a house back in power.

"I like my lighting to be a little bit dramatic or bigger-scale," Lindsay says of the Allison Willson fixture hung over the breakfast nook in the kitchen. "I like the cleanliness of the white ball; this has a rope detail around the center that ties in to the tone of the oak table." The banquette hides extra pantry storage.

"FOR ME, IF I CHOOSE SOMETHING MODERN, IT HAS TO BE BALANCED OUT BY SOMETHING ANTIQUE IN THE ROOM—AND YOU HAVE TO GET THAT EQUATION RIGHT."

—LINDSAY MENS, *homeowner and designer*

In the kitchen, Lindsay supplied the aura of history with beaded board and a hand-formed tile backsplash. "The kitchen was just drywall before; I wanted to add some of the character that maybe would have been there originally."

The designer leaned into serenity for her bouclé bed and its surrounding fixtures because of something that is not shown: The entire wall before it is adorned in a gallery of her children's highly colorful artwork. "I wanted everything else to be quiet," Lindsay says. She and her mother found the bedside table on the side of the road, refinished it, and cut a new piece of marble to fit the top.

"WHEN YOU'RE SURROUNDED BY SO MANY TREES, GREEN JUST FEELS NATURAL."
–LINDSAY MENS

"I had custom wood shutters made (and painted a soft green-gray) and ordered antique shutter hardware," she says, noting that she even had the lanterns shipped in from Charleston, SC, to suit the scene.

The thick marble countertops in the bathroom add timeless appeal, while faucets, drawer pulls, and a showerhead in a warm metallic finish lend contrast.

Lindsay enlisted her brother—"the most skilled carpenter ever!"—to trim the windows and add thicker detailed casing up top. "When my brother was re-siding, he found dentil molding that had been covered up," Lindsay says. They redid it—nodding to the past while championing the future. ■