

It's Got PERSONALITY

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An artist's love of vintage and colour harmonizes with the newly modernized canvas of her family's home.

When interior designer Sheree Stuart joined the design team overhauling the circa 1928 Toronto home of Nancy Macdonald and Don Findlay, architect Bill Dewson had already gutted the dark, chopped-up interiors and was planning an airy, open-concept space with classically modern good looks. So when Nancy extolled the virtues of battered finishes and thrifted furniture, Sheree was thrown for a loop. "Nancy said, 'I love charming items with a story and nothing shiny. I love tarnished, battered and old details,'" Sheree recalls. In retrospect, it makes perfect sense – patinated surfaces deeply resonated with the artist in Nancy, who runs an art school from the now renovated home. →

The overhaul of Nancy Macdonald and Don Findlay's 1928 detached brick all but gutted the original 2,200-square-foot structure, modernizing and opening up the living spaces and adding 1,000 square feet, but leaving the bones of the pretty Tudor-style facade intact. "The house fits beautifully in the neighborhood, and they didn't really want to change that," Sheree says. A wide, welcoming new porch has space for lounging, and updated windows and double front doors boost light inside.

ARCHITECTURE, Bill Dewson, Dewson Architects. **INTERIOR DESIGN**, Sheree Stuart Design. Trim **PAINT COLOUR**, Black Onyx 2133-10, Benjamin Moore. Square **PLANTERS**, CB2. **HOUSE NUMBERS**, Neutra. **WINDOWS** and **DOORS**, Kolbe.



"The curved staircase is a piece of art that we didn't want to hide with the closet at the entry, so we floated this closet off the ceiling," Sheree says. Uplighting above the closets plays up the unique architecture, where gallery-white walls are enhanced by wood floors finished in a mid-tone grey. The new front doors were inspired by time Nancy spent

living in Paris, but also dovetail nicely with the Tudor facade. A whimsical rug by Kate Thornley-Hall is thematic and references the pink scone and a vibrant painting by Nancy nearby. The side addition – half a level down – is visible through a glass wall, while a second-floor window was situated to line up with the well for this peek-a-boo view.

RUG, Kate Thornley-Hall. Fuchsia **STORAGE OTTOMAN**, Wayfair. Pink **SCONCE**, Barn Light Electric Company. Taviane Azurri engineered wood **FLOORING** (throughout), Stone-Tile. Wall and ceiling **PAINT COLOUR**, White Dove OC-17, Benjamin Moore. **ARTWORK** (in stairway), Nancy Macdonald.





LEFT Located just inside the back door at the end of the new side addition, this smart little counter area doubles as a wet bar and gardening sink. The steps lead up to the family room, which has huge windows overlooking the backyard. The painting near the stairs is by Nancy's daughter, Sammy.

CABINETRY DESIGN, Sheree Stuart Design. Quartz **COUNTERTOP** in Noble Grey, Caesarstone. **SINK**, Blanco. **FAUCET**, Rubinet. Cabinet **PAINT COLOUR**, Kendall Charcoal HC-166, Benjamin Moore. **HARDWARE**, Classic Brass. Subway **TILE**, Creekside Tile.



ABOVE The living, dining, kitchen and family rooms are all open to one another, enhancing sight lines and the flow of natural light. "Defining zones can be a challenge in open-concept spaces," Sheree says. "We dropped the ceiling over the kitchen-dining area and added a cove ceiling with wood detail and

built-in lighting to delineate this area." (The cove mirrors both the footprint and finish of the dining table.) Designed to look like old salvaged farm storage containers, the custom-made kitchen pendants inject a unique metal finish into the kitchen and contrast the warmer tone of the rustic oak cabinetry.

CUSTOM KITCHEN, PENDANT LIGHTS, custom hot-rolled-steel **RANGE HOOD** and appliance garage **DOORS**, Sheree Stuart Design. **DINING TABLE**, RH. **DINING CHAIRS, BAR-STOOLS**, Wayfair. Porcelain **COUNTERTOPS**, Laminam, Stone-Tile.



"A home should reflect its owners. This home has its own personality – it's casual, fun and surprising. Elements contradict each other, yet they work." – Sheree Stuart

Ultimately, the design team turned the interplay of modern design and rusticity into a lynchpin for the relaxed, welcoming home Nancy and Don wanted for their blended family of seven, a changing cast as their young-adult children come and go from university. "Nancy and Don aren't lovers of pure modern, but loved the contemporary architecture Bill proposed," Sheree says. They especially liked the idea of a blank modern canvas against which to layer everything else. But Sheree was cognizant that too much vintage can negatively impact a modern space; part of her role was to get the balance right.

The old-meets-new dichotomy starts with the home's exterior. The quaint Tudor facade in front gives little indication of the broad, angular lines of the rear addition, where wall-to-wall glazing maximizes connectivity between indoors and out, and creates a sense of expansiveness rare in 1920s architecture. Inside, the designer carefully avoided cluttering the modern space. Says Sheree: "It's that balance and negative space that allows the vintage pieces to shine."

Likewise, Sheree balanced the palette, which shifts from area to area. Splashier colours reign in the four bedrooms and basement studio, but Sheree took a quieter approach on the main floor. "I knew Nancy loved colour. Her art is brightly coloured, and we wanted to incorporate that," she says. In addition, they chose a vibrant teal wallpaper to highlight the 40-foot-long wall in the side addition. "It's visible throughout the main floor – more colour would have been just too much." Instead, Sheree layered in understated earth tones and evocative textures. →

ABOVE A challenge with open-concept homes is accommodating elements like plumbing, ductwork, and posts and beams. This innovative solution in the dining room, where plumbing runs up one wall, encases pipes in a full-height storage cabinet. A second cabinet was built to match and (along with the sideboard, which was custom-built to tuck in between) amply houses china, servingware and other dishes.

Custom **BUILT-INS**, Sheree Stuart Design. Sideboard **PAINT COLOUR**, White Dove OC-17, Benjamin Moore. Cabinet **HARDWARE**, Baccman Berglund. **ARTWORK**, Nancy Macdonald. **MIRROR**, CB2. Large **BOWL** (on table), Elte Mkt.

One element here that's neutral but far from low-key is the new sculptural staircase. "This was a home for an artist, and we wanted the stairs to be a focal point," says architect Bill Dewson. "And when you move a staircase, as we did, you have the opportunity to do something spectacular." The design team is truly delighted in the beauty of the staircase, and the entire home. And Sheree's initial surprise at synthesizing the rustic with the modern is a distant memory. "A home should reflect its owners," says the designer. "This home has its own personality – it's casual, fun and surprising. Elements contradict each other, yet somehow they all work."

RIGHT The new side addition created space for modern living essentials, like a mudroom and this moody powder room. "Powder rooms should make a statement, but tie to the overall design concept. We loved the wallpaper with scribbled Shakespearean quotations in chalk!" says Sheree. A quartz countertop, concrete sink, vintage mirror and Edison-bulb light pendants enhance the dark atmosphere.

WALLPAPER by Andrew Martin, Kravet Canada. **SINK**, Native Trails. **COUNTERTOP** in Concrete colour, Caesarstone. **PENDANTS**, Barn Light. **FAUCET** by Jason Wu, Brizo.

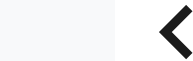


ABOVE Wide floor-to-ceiling windows fill the south wall of the spacious family room, flooding it with light. Nancy and Don located the TV in the living room (at the front of the main floor) so that this family room at the back would be a hub for group hangouts. Sheree designed the hot-rolled steel fireplace facade; for continuity, she used the same steel for the vent hood and the appliance garage doors in the kitchen. The side and coffee tables are favourite vintage finds.

Fireplace **FABRICATION**, Sheree Stuart Design. **INSERT**, Valor. **RUG**, Weavers Art. **CUSHIONS**, **BASKET**, **TRAY**, **VASE**, Elte Mkt. Loupi ceiling **LIGHTS**, Dark Tools.

LEFT Inspired by Nancy's love of old, imperfect finishes, Sheree ran an eye-catching wallpaper that looks like timeworn paint peeling off rusting metal down the length of the new addition (back-ground). A metal console exactly fits into a cove of the family room. "It's important to catalogue the pieces you want in your new space before you start construction so you're able to fit them seamlessly," Sheree says. A short flight of stairs runs from here to the new addition and back door.

CONSOLE, RH. Mural **WALLPAPER**, Murals Wallpaper. Tech Lighting **SCONCES**, Dark Tools. **LANTERNS**, CWI Lighting.



RIGHT One of two bedrooms in the wide new rear addition of the house, this “kid’s” bedroom is as cheerful as a field of sunflowers on a sunny day – complete with a weathered farmhouse chair, pastoral painting and bed that looks like it was hammered together from old barnboard.

HEADBOARD, RH, RUG, IKEA. DRAPES, Sheree Stuart Design. DRAPE FABRIC by Sanderson, Theo Décor. **PENDANT LIGHT**, Barn Light Electric Company. **THROW, HomeSense. FLOWERS** (throughout), Terrain.

BELOW A double vanity packed with storage gives Nancy and Don lots of elbow room in their ensuite. Sheree took her design cue from the spirited floor tile, deviating from the monochromatic scheme only in the artwork by Nancy’s daughter, Sammy.

VANITY, Sheree Stuart Design. COUNTERTOP in Simply White, Quartex. **FLOOR, WALL TILE, Creek-side Tile. FAUCETS, Brizo. PULLS, RH. LIGHTS, Barn Light Electric Company.**



“Nancy appreciates that reusing things actually benefits the world.” – Sheree Stuart

BELOW Drapes in a painterly fabric by British artist Jessica Zoob pull together the blue, green and yellow shades in Nancy and Don’s bedroom, which is located in the rear addition and looks out across the second-floor balcony to the backyard. In another tip of the hat to Parisian chic, Sheree had the battered but ornate salvaged doors installed on a built-in; they conceal the TV and inject a surprising raw beauty into the serene space. Nancy painted the lush canvas over the bed, and Sheree designed the custom-made dressing table.

MILLWORK DESIGN, Sheree Stuart Design. GREEN DOORS, Antique Door Store. PENDANT LIGHT by Tech Lighting, Dark Tools. **DRAPERY FABRIC** by Jessica Zoob for Romo Black, Billbrough & Co. **RUG, Weavers Art. BED, THROW, RH. Yellow PILLOWS, Elte Mkt.**

RIGHT In the second-floor guest bathroom, Sheree juxtaposed a weathered vintage dresser that Nancy repainted in her favourite faded teal hue with a stately carved wood mirror. “Be careful to balance old with new. Too many vintage items can clutter a space and kill the look,” Sheree says. “It’s that balance and negative space that allows vintage pieces to shine.”

COUNTERTOP in London Grey, Caesarstone.



RIGHT Wallpaper depicting empty frames is a fitting accent in the bathroom connected to the basement art studio. Young artists and wet paintbrushes are no match for the heavy-duty stainless-steel sink. Turquoise industrial sconces add a hit of Nancy's theme colour.

WALLPAPER, Wayfair Canada. **SINK**, Nella. **SCONCES**, Barn Light Electric Company.



LEFT The flowing open staircase was designed to be a major focal point in the understated new architecture and bring light through the space. (The third floor houses a guest room and full bath.) Sheree doubled down on the staircase's drama by installing uplighting at intervals all the way up. "We put them on a timer – it's like candlelight for your home," she says. The graphic runner is an IKEA rug that Sheree had cut into strips and bound. All the art is by Nancy.



ABOVE A deep well in the backyard allowed for a huge window that fills Nancy's basement art studio – where she paints and teaches children to paint – with natural light and leafy views. Bold furniture colours encourage imaginative output, as does the mantra "Art is survival" jotted on the chalkboard. "Nancy is a big believer in reusing and multi-purposing old items," Sheree says. "Four of the chandeliers came from her old home, and we added two more."

RED SECTIONAL, IKEA. **CHALKBOARD PAINT**, Benjamin Moore.

"Nancy emphasized that there be no muddy colours. Only pure colours. And if you look at her art, the house complements those colours." – Sheree Stuart