



The kitchen is painted in Benjamin Moore's Revere Pewter

Anita and Rory McDonagh searched for three years before stepping into their new home, a 130-year-old Victorian nestled halfway down a tree-lined residential street in the heart of Hamilton.

"Sometimes you walk in the door," says Anita, "and a house just announces that it's yours." This was the case for the McDonaghs, who were not originally seeking a historical home. Their previous home in Westdale was a modern art deco house, and they knew that such a departure in style would mean a big redecoration.

As Anita and Rory identified changes they wanted to make in the 2,600 sq. ft. house, they opted for one large-scale renovation, which took the better part of a year. The historical touches that they liked so much – hardwood floors, plaster medallions on the 10-foot ceilings and 12-inch baseboards – were maintained and in some cases restored. New hardwood went in upstairs (**Robert Armstrong of Hamilton Handyman**), windows were replaced (**Arcana Windows**), and fireplaces were re-tiled (**Olympia Tile + Stone**).

"We liked the character of the house," says Anita. So the McDonaghs worked with designer **Natalie Kurjancic of Interiors By Natalie** and Robert Armstrong to create the look they wanted: a combination of classic and modern. Anita and Rory have been collecting art for over 15 years, and their home is as much



Anita designed the front rooms to be cohesive, and yet have the feeling of two rooms. **OPPOSITE:** The kitchen was enlarged by combining it with a room that used to be a study. "It didn't actually start out as a gut," Anita explains. "I thought all I had to do was move the island." The new walnut butcherblock countertop provides lots of workspace for a family who loves to cook. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** Classic Hale Navy makes an attractive first impression.

A WORK of Art

STORY **CAELI MAZARA**
PHOTOGRAPHY **KELLY HORKOFF**
FLOWERS **FASCINATION FLOWERS**



a gallery as it is a living space. The neutral palette they chose would allow the art, rather than the walls, to shine.

"The art didn't impact the décor, but I very much wanted it to fit in," Anita says.

The large front room, originally two separate rooms, has been converted into one space, which functions as a sitting room and dining room. The art in here serves to create two distinct environments. In the sitting room, city scenes by Toronto's Kate Grigg and landscapes by Stanley Cosgrove

are vibrant and boldly colourful, while the dining room has more sober colours: a winter scene by Hamilton artist E. Robert Ross and an understated floral by Barker Fairley, who painted with the Group of Seven. White and blue window coverings by **Donna Burrows Interiors** and blue glass ornaments reflect the more reserved palette. Furnishings brought from the old house have been moved from room to room, Anita says, to see what works where. The paintings have been similarly rotated. *Continued on page 40*



LEFT: “Natalie helped give me confidence in terms of what to choose,” Anita says of working with a designer for the first time. **BELOW:** “The house has a sense of history that I find quite comforting,” says Anita. **BOTTOM:** The original dining room was converted into a TV room. Carpet is from Graham & Brooks. **OPPOSITE, TOP:** Sophie’s room, an earlier extension, has a great desk nook. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Maddy’s room, an ode to New York city. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Creative storage solutions abound.



“We bought the paintings essentially to match the old house,” says Anita, “We’ve moved them all around this house to try to find their right home.”

The rest of the ground floor is finished in similar colours, greys and tans out of Benjamin Moore’s Regal line (painting by **Ian Grant of Grant Painting Group**).

The kitchen was designed with the support of both Interiors By Natalie and Cynthia Boyer from the **Affordable Kitchen Company**. The room is done in Revere Pewter, with a floor of hexagonal handmade tiles. “I thought it would be appropriate in a Victorian house to have cement tiles,” Anita says.

Tiling the kitchen turned out to be tricky – the hexagonal



shape resulted in 20 per cent waste – but the effort was worth it. Complementing the tiles are cream cabinets and countertops by **Dessco Countertops**. The McDonaghs’ beautiful Jadeite dishes from **Branch Design** are displayed in a restored glass-fronted cabinet from the home’s original 1880s kitchen. The room also features glass shelves that showcase sculptures by E.B. Cox and other treasures the family has collected over the years. Rory created a small painting by the back door.

The original staircase with a new runner from **Anderson’s Carpet and Home** leads to the second level, where they have their bedrooms and a main bath. In the bathroom, Anita and Natalie worked especially hard to create a genuinely Victorian feel. A claw foot tub is finished in cobalt and white atop striking patterned tile (**Jonathon’s Perron**

Floor Coverings), and complemented by textured, hand-rolled cream wall tiles (**Centura Tile**).

The McDonagh children, Maddy, Sophie and Kate, chose their own designs for their rooms. Maddy’s room has walls painted with wide, contrasting stripes and is finished with neutral, cosmopolitan accents.

“She really loves New York,” Anita says. “We all do. We had a really, really great trip to New York with the kids last summer, and we’re going back at Christmas.”

Sophie opted for an industrial look. Her room features a partially-exposed brick wall, a converted metal cart from **Graham & Brooks** that now serves as a bookshelf, and a row of gear wall clocks. Youngest daughter Kate’s room is done in navy blues. The master bedroom boasts

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LEFT: A stand alone tub and pedestal sink give the bathroom a spacious feel. Hand rolled subway tiles add interesting texture. **BELOW AND BOTTOM:** The McDonaghs kept the original doors between the master en suite and master bedroom. Bedding and blinds by Donna Burrows.



a bay window and, through a pair of dark french doors, an en suite bath.

The house is exquisite. Anita is clearly in her element when it comes to decorating.

"I do enjoy it," she says. "It took about 12 years to get my other house to where I wanted it, and it's been 10 months here and I'm pretty close to done. We were looking for a house that spoke to us and reflects who we are. This house did need some work, but it feels more and more like it's ours."

As to next steps, Anita says once she is finished the garden next year, things should be settled.

"This is a house you can see yourself aging in," she says. "We could stay here for a long time. There have been a lot of families through this house. It has a sense of history. I guess we're adding to that." **OH**

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