

# BELOW *the* SURFACE

BY KATIE HAYDEN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE CHAJECKI



A family kitchen by designer Sarah St. Amand and why thoughtful interior design is so much more than skin deep.

**T**here's no question this Oakville-area kitchen by designer Sarah St. Amand is impeccably designed. From the twinkling pendants and luxe walnut and marble, to the crisp black window frames and navy cabinetry that quietly nod to kitchens of yore, the refined transitional aesthetic ticks all the boxes style-wise. But what's more important to Sarah is that the 500-square-foot space is supremely functional – carefully calibrated around the busy lifestyle of the professional couple, and their teenagers and dogs, who live here.

Black frames on the new back doors and window bring a modern industrial note to the elegant transitional kitchen. (The window was enlarged to improve the sight line through the room.) Adequate clearances around the island and all the appliances enhance flow, making the kitchen much more functional. A bold, articulated sconce provides task lighting at the sink.

## BEHIND THE SCENES

The best kitchens, she explains, work like sophisticated machinery – both within the living space, and inside the cabinetry and behind the walls. And the guidance of a designer can be crucial in planning that. “I refer to myself as the director of the show,” she says. “Renovations are like a stage production: we go through everything with all the characters, and plan out absolutely everything that’s going to happen.”

This renovation meant bringing a dated kitchen into the 21st century and making it suitable for both family living and entertaining. “It was an ‘80s kitchen with terrible function,” Sarah says. “Shiny-white pressboard cabinetry and a huge vent that came down over the island stove chopped up the space.” (The transformation is part of a phased-in approach to redesigning various parts of the three-bedroom home.)

## DESIGN DETAILS UNCOVERED

The design process starts long before demolition begins. Sarah and her assistant, Sarah Rodriguez (their social media handle is #teamsarah), walk clients through an exhaustive checklist focused on how they use the kitchen, and what they want in the new space. “Design professionals have the skill set and knowledge to consider so many things,” she says. “In kitchens, for example, flow and clearances are really important. You shouldn’t have your oven or dishwasher where you can’t get around them when they’re being used.” They tailor storage to house everything from china and foodstuffs, to stand mixers, vacuums and pods for

single-serve coffeemakers. Want to add open shelving? Sarah will explain the realities of keeping it tidy, and of giving up valuable closed storage. “Like to entertain? Have pets? We look at anything that helps clients function best in the space – and offer an esthetic in line with the house, and the style that we want to create,” she says. They also consider safety and building codes, addressing details like where new wiring is installed to accommodate pendants or sconces, where to integrate USB ports for charging and home office needs. Then, once operational elements are settled, plans can be drawn, decorative pieces can be chosen, and construction can get underway.



*Set in a chevron pattern, the marble mosaic backsplash behind the chef-worthy 48” Wolf gas range injects texture and guides the eye upward to the thoroughly unique walnut-panelled vent hood. “A 48” range really makes a kitchen!” says Sarah.*



**ABOVE** Layers of colour and detailing – from a herringbone-patterned marble mosaic backsplash to a cluster of jewelry-inspired pendant lights to an X-shaped motif on the island and upper cabinets – establish the light-filled family kitchen’s warm, sophisticated transitional esthetic.

**LEFT** Specially ordered extra-wide, commercial-grade grasscloth wallpaper behind the bar sink can handle anything host or guest bartenders can throw at it. This is the sort of change that is important to address right from the start of a project because plumbing alterations can add several thousand dollars to a reno’s budget.

Hale Navy  
HC-154



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Interior design is a service that can make our time-starved lives easier. But it's a luxury service, Sarah explains, and top-notch design like this is expensive. Appliances can quickly eat up \$20,000 of a budget. Custom-made of solid walnut, and chic and comfortable enough for dinner party guests, the stools here cost \$2,000 each. Then there's the hundreds of hours the design team puts into overseeing the project. "When you go to a lawyer for your legal issues, you pay for that – or a massage therapist or auto mechanic, they're specialists. Unfortunately, the design industry doesn't always get seen as specialists."

"All in, this kitchen was easily \$120,000. A design like this – especially a kitchen – is a major investment," Sarah says. "But you really want to get it right the first time. You don't want to have it all done and then think, 'I wish I asked for a built-in espressomaker!'" ♦



*Like a pair of glittery diamond earrings, a cluster of crystal bulb pendant lights hung at staggered heights adds a layer of interest over the island and helps make the space refined enough for entertaining. All lighting in the room is set on dimmers to boost ambience when needed.*



*The refined walnut panelling inside the island nook – where the custom-made tailored walnut and leather-look vinyl counter stools tuck away – give the kitchen a polished, carefully considered look.*



**ABOVE RIGHT** The rich graining of the walnut panelling on the end of the island is a textural and organic balance to the kitchen's long stretches of white-and-navy cabinetry. Kitchen flooring is always carefully chosen, says Sarah, "these are high-traffic areas, so it has to be slip-resistant, but also comfortable, and sometimes it has heating in place as well."

**SOURCES** **KITCHEN DESIGN:** Sarah St. Amand Interior Design **COUNTERTOP:** Quartz **FRIDGE:** Sub-Zero **STOVE:** Wolf **DISHWASHER, ARTICULATED LIGHT OVER SINK AND PENDANT LIGHTS OVER ISLAND:** Universal Lamp **BLUE CABINET PAINT:** Hale Navy Benjamin Moore **WHITE CABINET PAINT:** Swiss Coffee Benjamin Moore **FAUCET AT MAIN SINK, SMALLER SINK:** Brizo **DOOR INTO LAUNDRY ROOM:** Door crafted by SSID Contracting Team **SLIDING DOOR MOUNTING BAR AND SLIDERS:** 1925 Workbench **FLUSHMOUNT LIGHT:** (by wood door) Universal Lamp **MUDROOM NOOK BLUE BEADBOARD PAINT COLOUR:** Hale Navy, Benjamin Moore **HOOKS:** Richelieu **BENCH CONSTRUCTION:** SSID Contracting Team **RUG:** Dash & Albert **BENCH CUSHION FABRIC:** Avant Garde Fabrics **THROW PILLOWS:** Custom-made with Robert Allen fabric



*An X-patterned banding on the seat cushion is an ornate and intricate contrast to the simple style of the bench in the entry hall; it echoes X detailing on the island, range hood and upper cabinets.*

**ABOVE** A clean-lined walnut bench nook is an eye-catching vignette when the homeowners enter the kitchen area from the garage; durable materials like a washable indoor-outdoor rug and wipeable painted bead board panelling mean dirt and splashes won't hamper the crisp look.

**RIGHT** Sleek brushed-brass hardware and a striking flat-panel walnut door put an elegant twist on the sliding barn door. Wide-plank, wood-look porcelain flooring flows from the kitchen right into the adjoining laundry room.



*Award-winning designer Sarah St. Amand, principal/owner of GTA-based Sarah St. Amand Interior Design, specializes in residential and commercial design. CDECA member, Sarah's work is nationally recognized and won the Best of HOUZZ 2016 award. For more information, visit [stamanddesign.com](http://stamanddesign.com). [sarah@stamanddesign.com](mailto:sarah@stamanddesign.com), Instagram @sarahst.amandinteriordesign. Portfolio & featured articles on [houzz.com](http://houzz.com) 519.802.6328*





# work of art

An underused storage area is transformed into a sophisticated sitting room

BY SARAH ST. AMAND • PHOTOGRAPHY BY KELLY HORKOFF



Quiet neutrals can add sophistication and longevity to interior design

Collingwood  
OC-28

Swiss Coffee  
OC-45

## FAQS

Before starting a project like this, it is important to understand the client's lifestyle and their family dynamic in order to tailor the design specifically to everyone's needs. Based on the answers to the questions below, a style and concept will present itself.

- What hours do you work?
- Do you have kids?
- Are there any pets?
- How many people are in the family?
- Do you entertain?
- How would you describe your style?
- Do you like your home to look lived-in?

For Lisa, it was clear that an elegant retreat with luxe furnishings and fabrics was the direction to take. There are unlimited fabrics and furniture options available, so my role is to filter through the variables and make selections that speak to the client's style, use of the space, and take into consideration the budget.

## FABRICS AND FIXTURES

Since this room was intended to be a kid-free zone where Lisa could relax with a good novel after a stressful day at work, a collection of fabrics —silks, satin and gauzy sheers —were chosen for the drapery panels. The fabrics help to underscore the casually elegant yet comfortable atmosphere.

To prevent decor from looking dated too quickly, a monochromatic neutral, quiet colour scheme will create a timeless ambience. Whereas monochromatic rooms instantly captivate, they can also look dull and lifeless if there is little interest in the space. That's why lighting is very important to soften the look and create a cosy atmosphere.

After 10 years in this house, the homeowner hadn't touched a single room. The decor was dated and the inexpensive builder-grade finishes were not holding up, esthetically or otherwise.

Lisa, the homeowner, is a single mother of two and a professional with a very hectic work schedule. She craved an orderly feminine corner of the house that was all her own.

The living room had been used as a storage hub for an old piano, desk and storage boxes that never got unpacked. It was certainly time to adopt a fresh decor to make this room an integral part of Lisa's home.





A small hit of colour in a monochromatic room creates interest, like the unexpected silk chartreuse toss cushions

The use of gold accents in the framing, hardware and decor effortlessly warm up a neutral, cool room

## ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

When designing a room, I like to treat it very much like a theatre production: there is the star of the show, the accompanying role, and the rest of the cast. It can take some time to assemble just the right materials and design elements to capture the look.

The star of this show is the custom wool-silk area carpet, along with the large-scale artwork. The built-ins are the supporting role and the furniture and fabrics are the cast. All of the elements in this space offer a pleasingly graceful atmosphere.

Lisa really enjoys the room and is thrilled with the way it looks. It proves how much our environment truly affects us and how a stress-free space can become a retreat from the overload of everyday life.

With each client, I ensure my designs look different from one to the next. No two clients are alike, they're different people, so their rooms should look different too, as a reflection of their personal style.◆

Several forms of light are the key to any good design. Pot lights highlight artwork and provide overall light in the room. Incandescent lighting from lamps offers a softer light. Accent lighting, like the glass-front cabinets in the built-in cabinetry, and candlelight, provide a lovely glow.

For optimum flexibility, it's a good idea to put lights on their own switch and on dimmers. It allows you to control the lights, with some on and some off as needed.

A small hit of colour in a monochromatic room creates interest, like the unexpected silk chartreuse toss cushions. I love rooms that can be easily altered just by changing toss cushions or adding a throw over a chair in a trending or seasonal colour.

### SOURCES

**PAINT:** Collingwood OC-28 on walls and ceiling, Swiss Coffee OC-45 for trim and millwork; benjaminmoore.com

**FURNITURE, ARTWORK AND ACCESSORIES:** Sarah St. Amand Design

**FLOWERS:** La Petite Fleur lapetitefleur.ca



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# designer KITCHEN

A designer learns first-hand that the road to a dream kitchen is filled with dust and decisions

BY SARAH ST. AMAND • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE CHAJECKI

**I**f you ask a designer what was the most challenging project they have ever tackled, most will respond “my own home.” For me, that couldn’t be more true. With unlimited choices and a library of samples to choose from at our fingertips, what might seem like the perfect choice one day will likely change the next.

After several months of planning and conceptualizing and daily phone calls to my designer friend to help confirm my selections, it was finally time to begin the inevitable demolition of our kitchen.



## DEMOLITION DAY

When my crew started to tear out the 1,200 square feet of 20-year-old ceramic tile, there was no turning back. It was the first step to the tornado of dust that became a part of everyday living. Next came phase two, which involved the removal of the stippled plaster ceiling turning our living space into a vortex of drywall dust.

## MAKE-SHIFT AND MAKE DO

With a busy household, a husband, three kids all under the age of 12 and a teenager, this renovation wasn’t fun. Two pails of paint with an old door on top of them became a table for cereal in the morning, and a crockpot became our best friend in the evening. The renovation was planned over the warmer months so we could utilize

the bbq, which became a saving grace. Paper plates and plastic cutlery were well stocked in our pseudo outdoor kitchen. The local pizza joint didn’t need to ask what we wanted on our pizza. By the third week of construction, we couldn’t wait for a homemade meal.

## THE ISSUES

The pre-reno space had dark, dated cabinetry, minimal lighting, an awkwardly shaped island and a wall that divided the living space from the kitchen. We decided to remove the wall in between the kitchen and living room to create an open-concept space. The kitchen is now more functional, brighter and expansive and suitable for keeping an eye on kids and entertaining friends.

### WHO'S ON FIRST?

Designing a fabulous kitchen requires more than just coming up with the perfect layout—the choices are endless—white cabinets, wood-stained cabinets, floating shelves, white countertop, dark countertop, chrome hardware, polished nickel hardware, appliances, and the list goes on. The decorative details inevitably are what make a kitchen special. Details like hardware, cabinet profile, upholstery and lighting capture the personality of a homeowner.

### STATEMENT LIGHTING

Most people would consider lighting to be the last decision to be made, however, it is imperative the electrician is given direction during the demolition phase so he knows exactly where to place the electrical boxes. The placement of lighting in relationship to the cabinetry is an integral part of the kitchen in the planning stages.

The oversized sconces flanking the hood and the pendant lights over the island were the jumping-off point for the style direction I wanted so I opted for outdoor sconces that gave me the scale needed to create visual impact. The sconces were also an unexpected element in the design of the kitchen. If you have the space for it, don't be afraid to do something unique.

### APPLIANCES

The next decision was appliance selection. It is important to choose them prior to the final design of a kitchen as the cabinetry is dependent on the sizes selected. Prior to the construction phase, electrical, gas and plumbing rough-ins must be decided based on the appliance specifications. After several hours of research I opted for professional appliances for the home from Fisher and Paykel.

### STELLAR SURFACES

The countertop selection is essentially the icing on the cake. It can be a showstopper or it can be an understated design element. There are numerous choices from granite, quartz, soapstone or marble, and the process of narrowing them down can be daunting. The size of slabs vary so it must be chosen at the beginning of the process. The size of an island is sometimes determined by slab size. Price per square foot can also be a factor but with careful planning and budgeting, it is possible to splurge where you want to and yet save without going over your overall budget.



*Details like hardware, cabinet profile, upholstery and lighting capture the personality of a homeowner.*

Onyx 2133-10,  
Benjamin Moore

Swiss Coffee  
OC-45,  
Benjamin Moore



*It is important to take the time to carefully consider your space and **how you see yourself living within it.***



Marble was my stone of choice but I did not want the maintenance of sealing it and worrying about guests placing a glass of wine on the surface and creating a stain. It is a very porous material and absorbs liquids, a beautiful choice, but there are many quartz options that mimic the look. After searching high and low for just the right piece, I came across one that was a creamy white with lovely fluid veining that was perfect for my cabinetry colour, Swiss Coffee OC-45 from Benjamin Moore.

### DEFINING DETAILS

The cabinetry is the part of a kitchen that is most noticeable. By adding details like crown moulding, beautiful hardware and furniture-base toe kicks, the look is elevated. If budget is an issue, keep cabinetry minimal and perhaps splurge on lighting or a decorative backsplash. In order to maximize the kitchen's storage capacity, the cabinets were extended to the ceiling with a five-inch crown detail taking full advantage of the nine-foot ceiling height. The extra space can be used to stow away off-season items and other specialty kitchenware.

### DISASTER AVERTED

If not precisely planned, a tiny kitchen or a grand kitchen can lead to chaos. There are so many aspects of a renovation that must be considered and without a plan in place and consideration of all aspects of a renovation, it can be a terrible experience and result in a disaster. It is important to take the time to carefully consider your space and how you see yourself living within it.

After many years in the industry, I have consulted and assisted many of my clients with their renovations and helped them through the process. After living through the chaos, I can now empathize with the chaotic way of living for months on end.

### NO PAIN, NO GAIN

But one thing is for sure, after a few meltdowns and the usual construction issues, I would go through it all over again. After all, in the grand scheme of life it's not a long time and the benefit is a beautiful dream space that transforms a house into a home.

One tip I can offer— brace yourself and learn to enjoy a lot of take-out!♦



**SOURCES**  
APPLIANCES: Fisher and Paykel **DINING ROOM**  
FABRIC ON SIDE CHAIRS: Kravet through designers  
HOST AND HOSTESS CHAIRS, ROMAN BLINDS: Joanne Fabric through designers  
PATIO DOOR: Dayside Windows and Doors  
CUSTOM FURNITURE AND CABINETRY, SINK, FAUCET, ACCESSORIES, custom hardware on back of counterstools and buffet through Sarah St. Amand Interior Design  
SINK: ACF Surfaces  
FAUCET: Aquabrace  
FABRIC ON COUNTER-STOOLS: Kobe fabrics  
PAINT: Walls & Cabinetry, Swiss Coffee OC-45, Benjamin Moore  
ISLAND AND COFFEE STATION: Swiss Coffee with Onyx accent, Benjamin Moore  
SCONCES BESIDE RANGE HOOD: Universal Lamp

Award-winning designer Sarah St Amand, principal/owner of GTA-based Sarah St. Amand Interior Design, specializes in residential and commercial design. CDECA member, Sarah's work is nationally recognized and has most recently won the Best of HOUZZ 2016 award. For more information, visit [stamanddesign.com](http://stamanddesign.com), [sarah@stamanddesign.com](mailto:sarah@stamanddesign.com), Instagram @sarahst.amandinteriordesign 519.802.6328



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# IN THE PINK

Embracing the bold and bright side of the colour wheel

BY SARAH ST. AMAND • PHOTOGRAPHY BY KELLY HORKOFF



In an era of Pinterest, design blogs and Instagram, at the onset of a design consultation, homeowners are often armed with a myriad of images and ideas about everything from coffered ceilings to sofa upholstery to colour palettes.

So it was a rare moment when homeowner Freda Hart presented me with only a few parameters for the redesign of her living room and breakfast nook. The primary mandate was COLOUR.

Hart's adoration of bold hues and disdain for beige became apparent as the design process got underway. The only challenge was to narrow down the colour preferences in order to develop one cohesive palette. Hart knows what she likes and what she doesn't and we were both on the same page.

## THE LAY OF THE LAND

When someone is drawn to a colourful interior, you need a starting point, something to work from, whether it is a piece of art, an area carpet, or a fabric. It provides the direction to begin the process of choosing a colour palette.

By gathering a variety of patterns, fabrics and colours to show a homeowner, I can elicit an understanding of their likes or dislikes and ensure they are not making hasty decisions just to get the project completed. Because colour is subjective, people usually know instinctively if they like a colour or not.

In this case, Hart wanted to take her time to make final decisions. She put no parameters on a timeline for the room to be completed because it was more important for her that it was a room she



**“BECAUSE COLOUR IS SUBJECTIVE, PEOPLE KNOW INSTINCTIVELY IF THEY LIKE A COLOUR OR NOT.”**



would love. After several shopping excursions and consultations, a colour scheme emerged.

In the way you wouldn't build an outfit around a pair of socks, instead selecting a beautiful scarf or a great piece of jewellery, the same goes for decor. If you start with something you love, you can build a palette from it and add the corresponding elements to make your home a reflection of your personality.

#### COLOUR PLUNGE

Hart's home had a beautiful floor plan and great bones but the interior was really a blank slate. Considering her love of colour, impact was important for her, while remaining tasteful at the same time.

Although the recent trend in design has been soft greys with neutrals and light surroundings, it was exciting to work with Hart because her love for colour was reflected in her personality. As a gentle backdrop to the colourful furnishings, artwork and fabrics, I opted to use Benjamin Moore's Chantilly Lace OC-65.

As we approached the end of the project, a pop of paint colour was added by pulling out the teal found in the canvas and the accent cushions on the sofa. Benjamin Moore's Avalon Teal CSP-645 did the trick.

In the breakfast nook, Benjamin Moore's Spa Day CSP-635 gave the all-white kitchen a dramatic uplift, which was exactly what Hart wanted.



#### FOR THE COLOUR-SHY

Toss pillows (and the occasional throw) are a favourite noncommittal way to add a variety of colours to a space. They're easy to mix and match and rearrange or replace at any time.

Bringing in some playful patterns is another way to add a sense of drama even where very little colour is actually present. Look to bold geometrics (like a chunky chevron or stripe), animal prints and bold wood grains to add visual variety without clashing.

Combining patterned pieces with those in a combination of neutral tones can create a space that suggests colour, but with very little colour at all.

Most clients are afraid of using too much colour because they worry they will tire of the decor, especially with more permanent pieces. In order to get a unique design, sometimes a designer has to help the homeowner to step out of the box.

#### NOTHING VENTURED, NOTHING GAINED

When I first brought Hart the hot pink chevron fabric for the chairs and suggested having the legs painted white, I thought for sure she would be hesitant to commit to such a bold choice. Although she had to keep the fabric book for several weeks to mull it over, she called me up one day and said, "Go for it, Sarah!" When the chairs arrived she was thrilled.

The designer's job is not only to bring the look together but to keep the project moving along and to manage all aspects so everything is cohesive. I enjoy the process because it also establishes a relationship with the homeowner.

Subsequently, Hart's family room became the next project we're working on together. Dubbed "The Hart Lounge," I know I will enjoy this design experience every step of the way. ♦



**SOURCES:** LIVING ROOM PAINT: benjaminmoore.com; CHEVRON CHAIRS AND SOFAS: Gresham House (trade only); COFFEE TABLE, LAMPS AND BUFFET CABINET: elte.com; ARTWORK: custom trade only supplier; AREA CARPET: Minster Interiors (trade only); ACCESSORIES: cobistyle.com, Canflooyd; FLOWERS: La Petite Fleur; petitefleur.com; KITCHEN LUCITE CHAIRS: ikea.com; TABLE: custom through Sarah St. Amand Interior Design

Designer Sarah St. Amand, principal/owner of GTA-based Sarah St. Amand Interior Design, specializes in residential and commercial design projects of all sizes and scope. She has made appearances on Citytv's CityLine and has gained national recognition for her design work. For more information, visit [stamanddesign.com](http://stamanddesign.com).





BY SARAH ST. AMANT

# Laying Down THE RULES

Beyond style, type and budget, size is the most important factor to consider when purchasing an area rug

**M**any consumers make the mistake of selecting a carpet that is much too small for their space. As a designer, I remind clients that area rugs are meant to define a space, by way of placement and by the statement they make.

I often encounter clients who are skeptical of using an area carpet in their room, considering their investment in hardwood. However, in most cases, a vast space needs a rug to anchor the furniture arrangement and define a conversation area. Area carpets serve to provide a sense of warmth and comfort that a hard-surfaced floor, alone, cannot.

*“If your table is round, consider having a piece of broadloom cut into a round area rug.”*



## SIZING IT UP

There are many important guidelines to consider when selecting the size for your area carpet. In a dining room, for example, it should be long and wide enough on all sides to allow for chairs to slide in and out easily. A good rule of thumb is approximately 24 to 30 inches, all the way around your table. For a standard dining table (42x64 inches) that seats four to six people, a rug measuring 8x10 feet is a good starting point.

When using an area rug in a dining room, it is always a good idea to consider the furniture arrangement in the room before determining the rug size. You should measure

where the area rug will end so the rug does not get caught under the front of your server, sideboard or other pieces of furniture.

## THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Custom is not always synonymous with expensive. I have assisted many clients who have been on the hunt for the perfect area rug, later to find that a piece of broadloom cut to size and serged, or bound with a decorative tape, has saved the day. This allows you to create an area carpet that fits your space perfectly, fitting the room's measurements and matching colour preferences with beautiful

results. So think outside the box: If your table is round, consider having a piece of broadloom cut into a round area rug.

## PROPER PLACEMENT

Living rooms present many issues when placing an area carpet. A common mistake I encounter when I first visit a client's home is seeing a lone coffee table sitting on an area carpet. In doing this, all attention is drawn to the coffee table rather than the entire furniture arrangement in the room.

For living rooms, the rug should be large enough to slide under the front legs of sofas and chairs in a seating arrangement, unifying the furniture. Alternatively, depending on the size of the room, it looks equally nice to have all the furniture placed on the area rug. A good guideline, is to allow

approximately 9 to 12 inches of exposed floor between the rug edge and the perimeter walls of the room.

## COLOUR COORDINATION

When decorating your home from scratch, a good tip is to buy your accent rug first, and then pull colours from it to use on the walls, furniture, pillows, and other decor. This approach will create a consistent colour scheme, bringing your whole room together. It is far easier to buy furniture and accessories to complement your rug than the other way around!

With some careful consideration of personal needs, precise measurements and an incorporation of personal tastes, everyone can find an area carpet that suits their style and needs. It will serve as a beautiful addition to any room.



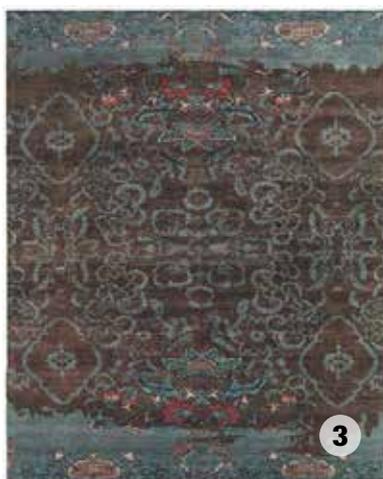
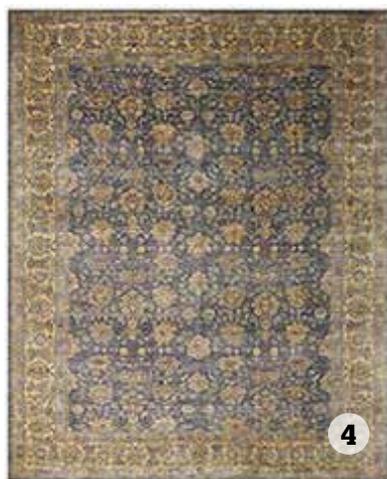
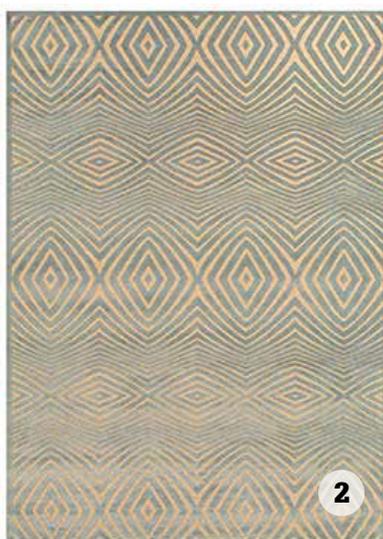
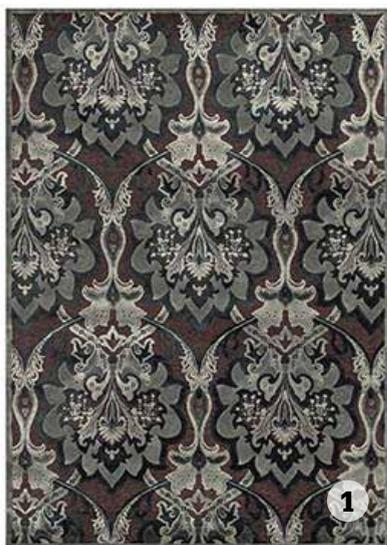
*the rug should be large enough to slide under the front legs of sofas and chairs in a seating arrangement*



BOTTOM LEFT: ASCOT CARPET BY STANTON CARPET; AVAILABLE THROUGH DESIGNERS ACROSS CANADA

LARRY ARNAL PHOTOGRAPHY

*“When decorating your home from scratch, a good tip is to buy your accent rug first, and then pull colours from it to use on the walls, furniture, pillows, and other decor.”*



## { RUG CARE }

- Sweeping your rug with a broom or carpet sweeper on a weekly basis is highly recommended, and every other week, use a vacuum. This is a fast and efficient way to remove the grit that might cut into rug fibres. When vacuuming, it is advisable to do so with the nap. Vacuuming against the nap can press dirt back into the rug's pile. Vacuuming a shag rug with a long pile is never recommended.
- Care should be taken never to vacuum the fringe of a rug, especially with hand-knotted pieces. In hand-knotted rugs, the fringes are truly pieces of the rug's foundation. If damaged, the entire rug may be at risk of unravelling.
- To ensure that your rug wears evenly, you may want to rotate it 180° annually.
- If the rug is not in an unusually high-traffic area, you should only have to cope with major cleaning once every three to five years. Only a qualified and reputable cleaning company with good references and insurance should undertake the cleaning of an Oriental rug, as techniques are different from those used to clean wall-to-wall carpeting.
- Accidents happen – always have a bottle of plain soda water available. The bubbles in soda water dilute and lift the stain; it works well on most stains if applied immediately. Make sure that your cleaning cloth is only lightly dampened though, as excessive moisture can damage your rug.

1. Saphir Callo Collection (3259F Dark Grey) 2. Saphir Callo Collection (3261F Cream/Silver) 3. Vivendi Collection (6401F Brown/Teal) 4. Ouray Collection (Ouray 6133 Blue/Ivory); available at Minster Interiors (minster.ca) through your designer.

## { AREA RUGS 101 }

When it comes to area carpets, consumers are faced with many choices – hand-knotted, hand-tufted, power-loomed, oriental, and machine-made. When you also factor in size, pattern, style and budget, the options seem limitless. Therefore, with so many choices available, it is important to educate yourself about the characteristics of area carpets before making your purchase to suit your lifestyle and your budget.

Generally speaking, hand-knotted rugs are the most durable, however, there are different levels of quality based on the type of wool used as well as the number of knots required to create the rug. Depending on the quality

of the rug, this is definitely an investment piece and can last for generations. A 5x8-foot rug can take up to six months to make, larger sizes – years! So, it is understandable why the price point can be in the thousands.

Hand-tufted rugs, while handmade in quality, are not actually knotted by hand, but rather are made with the assistance of a tufting gun, and not as high-priced as hand knotted.

In the case of accent rugs, the price point is actually a good indicator of the quality of an area carpet, especially when the tag indicates 100 per cent wool. It is characteristic of all synthetic and wool pile rugs to lose short

fibers, but the amount of shedding will vary based on the quality of wool. So, the quality of the wool is important to consider – lesser quality wools will shed, while higher quality wools such as New Zealand wool will exhibit minimal shedding. Keep in mind, you get what you pay for!

Not everyone wishes to utilize a wool rug in their space, though. Alternatively, there are area rugs for the budget-conscious consumer, such as machine-made pieces or utilizing broadloom cut to a desired size. The look of machine-made rugs can be equally pleasing to the overall room decor, but they have a different look and feel.

Sarah St. Amand is a freelance designer based in the GTA. For more information, visit [stamanddesign.com](http://stamanddesign.com)

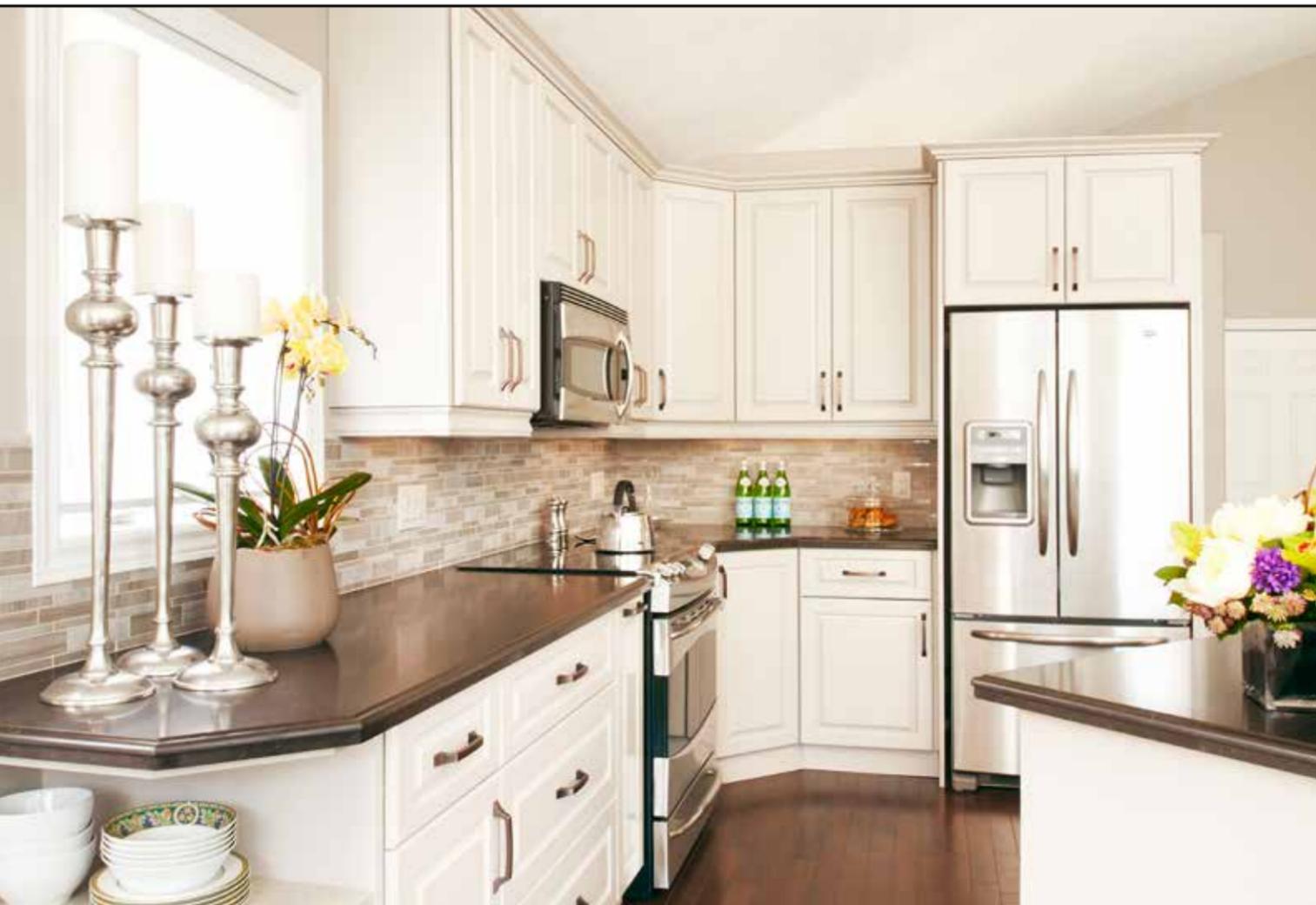
# *kitchen* CONFIDENTIAL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TAE PHOTOGRAPHY

STORY BY SARAH ST. AMAND

Whether you are renovating or simply refreshing a kitchen, hiring a professional will help facilitate the journey to kitchen fabulousness





entertain their guests was also on the wish list. Low-maintenance surface materials was also vital so I was able to recommend products like quartz for the countertop and a Blanco Silgranit drop-in sink as it is both durable and scratch-resistant.

The homeowners wanted an understated kitchen so I recommended paint-grade cabinetry in a neutral colour creating a more customized, timeless look. A neutral kitchen is always an excellent choice because it allows for colourful accents or trendy details in the drapery, backsplash or small accessories; offering the ability to transform the look without changing the cabinetry. The esthetic of the kitchen is a reflection of the homeowners' personality and lifestyle. It's my privilege on every design project, kitchens and beyond, to tailor the final result to the people who live, laugh and love in their home and that includes a fabulous kitchen to entertain in, cook, dine and enjoy, stress-free.



Easily transform a neutral space with colourful accents. Check out Sarah St. Amand's ideas on the next page!

**D**

Did you know that renovating a kitchen is one of the most stressful home improvement projects for a homeowner? This is because the choices involved are endless, and oftentimes people don't have any idea where to start. Such was the case with these clients, who realized that in order to eliminate the stress of the many decisions involved and to avoid the pitfalls of making expensive mistakes, that they would need to bring in a designer for direction. As a design professional, I love the challenge of coming up with a unique solution to suit the needs and function for each client.

When a client is overwhelmed with the remodelling of their dated kitchen, my job as a designer is to make the process as painless as possible. In this case, the clients wanted their kitchen to be a comfortable and functional space that would coordinate well with their adjoining

living area in their open-concept space. The right kitchen cabinetry can make or break your kitchen's functionality and style—not to mention the cost can easily go over the budget, so I carefully consider all these factors. And there are so many choices when it comes to the details; from shaker to flat-panel doors, corbels to aprons, glass knobs or recessed pulls—are you confused already?

Hiring a designer and a team of professionals will definitely help with the process of narrowing down choices and provide insight into some features and finish options that you may not have considered or even knew existed. It's essential to think about the elements of the design that are most important, and in this kitchen it was key for the homeowner to have a raised island that would conceal any mess to the open-concept living space beyond. Comfortable seating to



PB Classic Linen Napkins (monogramming available; set of 4 from \$47), potterybarn.com



Martillo Square Dinnerware in Sage (sold separately; from \$7), Pier 1 Imports, pier1.ca



Fire Woven Placemat (\$5.95); Pier 1 Imports, pier1.ca



KitchenAid Stand Mixer in Aqua Sky (\$499.99), kitchenaid.com



## INSTANT UPDATES

When I design interiors, especially kitchens, I like to think in terms of longevity. When homeowners tire of their original choices, it's typically not in their budget to make significant changes to the layout and cabinets. Some simple, budget-friendly solutions to switch up the look could include a fresh coat of paint, reupholstered seating in a different fabric, and the addition of some colourful, new accessories.



For walls, try Palladian Blue (HC-144) Benjamin Moore, benjaminmoore.ca

For trim, Cloud White (OC-130) Benjamin Moore, benjaminmoore.ca

Le Creuset Classic Whistling Kettle in Cherry (\$100), lecreuset.ca



Customize this Banquette stool by Gresham House Furniture (available through a designer, greshamhousefurniture.com) with a combination of coordinating fabrics by Robert Allen: Courtyard Vine in Blossom; Merona in Alpine; Kyle James in Cloud, robertalldesign.com

Designer Sarah St. Amand, principal/owner of GTA-based Sarah St. Amand Interior Design, specializes in residential and commercial design projects of all sizes and scope. She has made appearances on Citytv's CityLine and has gained national recognition for her design work. For more information, visit [stamanddesign.com](http://stamanddesign.com)



# COMFORT & joy

BY SARAH ST AMAND • PHOTOGRAPHY BY KELLY HORKOFF

Perfectly designed family room scores big for quality time during the holiday season

One way to defeat the inevitable cold and dark of the winter months is to nestle indoors with cosy winter textures in a room that offers relaxation and comfort. Homeowners Kyle and Melanie Richie approached my firm to turn their walk-out basement family room into a space just like that. But there was one stipulation: the room must be ready for the 2014 hockey season so they could hunker down and enjoy the game on a chilly night.

## THE GAME PLAN

For clients and designers, it's helpful to start with a source or a jumping-off point when creating a fabulous interior. In this case, it was the rustic brick wall that inspired the welcoming atmosphere for this family retreat.

I began sourcing fabric swatches with a relaxed organic feel, and also took into consideration fabrics that could take the wear-and-tear of everyday living. From there, I began to build my colour scheme and decided on a navy blue linen sectional sofa with toss cushions in a geometric pattern to give it some interest and contrast.

Good design doesn't always have a ton of pattern, paint or wow-factor wallpaper. Sometimes, it's just about the way the eye moves around a room and the interesting elements that go into the space. It's found in the marriage of materials and the combination of finishes and textures.



## THE FACE OFF

I sat down with the couple to determine their wants and needs. Kyle, a successful investment entrepreneur, and Melanie, a busy stay-at-home mom, needed a space where they could spend downtime relaxing, playing games and watching TV with their three children.

They wanted their family room to feel cosy and inviting, somewhere they could also entertain friends and family. A space that could withstand just about anything kids can dish out.

Kyle and Melanie gave me free reign to tackle their basement renovation project and allowed me carte blanche to let my creative juices flow. And through thoughtful design choices, we created a room that has become their personal escape from a hectic lifestyle.



**THE LINEUP**

It's important to think about the function of the room before considering the other elements. Once the everyday use of the living space is determined, a floor plan is essential so the type of furniture and the scale of the space can be taken into consideration prior to sourcing new items.

This room was no exception. In order to fill the large area with ample seating, this required larger scale items, which meant some customization. The sectional sofa was made to my specifications so it would take up a large amount of the living space and be able to accommodate any number of guests.

On a shopping excursion to my favourite Toronto furniture boutique, I found this fabulous coffee table. The scale and the finish fit the bill for the space as well as the "kid factor." It's indestructible and meets the wear-and-tear-of-everyday-living criterion.

**IN THE ZONE**

Even during together time, not everyone may want to be doing the same thing. To keep everyone in the same room, and happy, I created several action zones. This room has a "together space" centred around the sofa, a separate chair where someone can sit and read, and a table where someone else can play games, draw, craft or do a puzzle.

Since storage was also necessary, the rustic leaning bookshelves were a perfect solution as they harmonized with the relaxed esthetic; they also store games and crafts, and they're ideal for highlighting special treasures.



"One way to embrace the cold and dark is to just go with it like a hibernating animal and nestle indoors with cosy winter textures in a room that offers relaxation and comfort."

paint colours



**SOURCES**

The custom upholstered furniture, chandelier over the games table, and custom artwork are from Sarah St. Amand Interior Design. **ACCESSORIES:** homesense.ca; **BOOKSHELVES, COFFEE TABLE, SIDE TABLE:** elte.com; **PAINT:** Walls, Dufferin Terrace CC-456; Trim, Cloud White OC-130; Games Room, Grey Shower 2125-30; benjaminmoore.ca



**TEAM BUILDING**

Mixing old and new elements always adds interest to any space. On a sourcing trip, I found vintage maps from a thrift shop and had them customized in a simple black frame so they would be the perfect backdrop to the sectional sofa. From there, I decided to add a custom feature wall of downtown Toronto street names. Comfy furnishings and accessories such as toss cushions and throws enhance the warm, inviting look.

After many months of renovations, and just in time for the 2014/15 hockey season, the Richie family can finally enjoy all the comforts of their cosy retreat.

When the family room was completed, Kyle came into the room, said nothing, and gave me a thumbs-up! As a designer, I made my goal. Let's see how the hockey season plays out. ♦

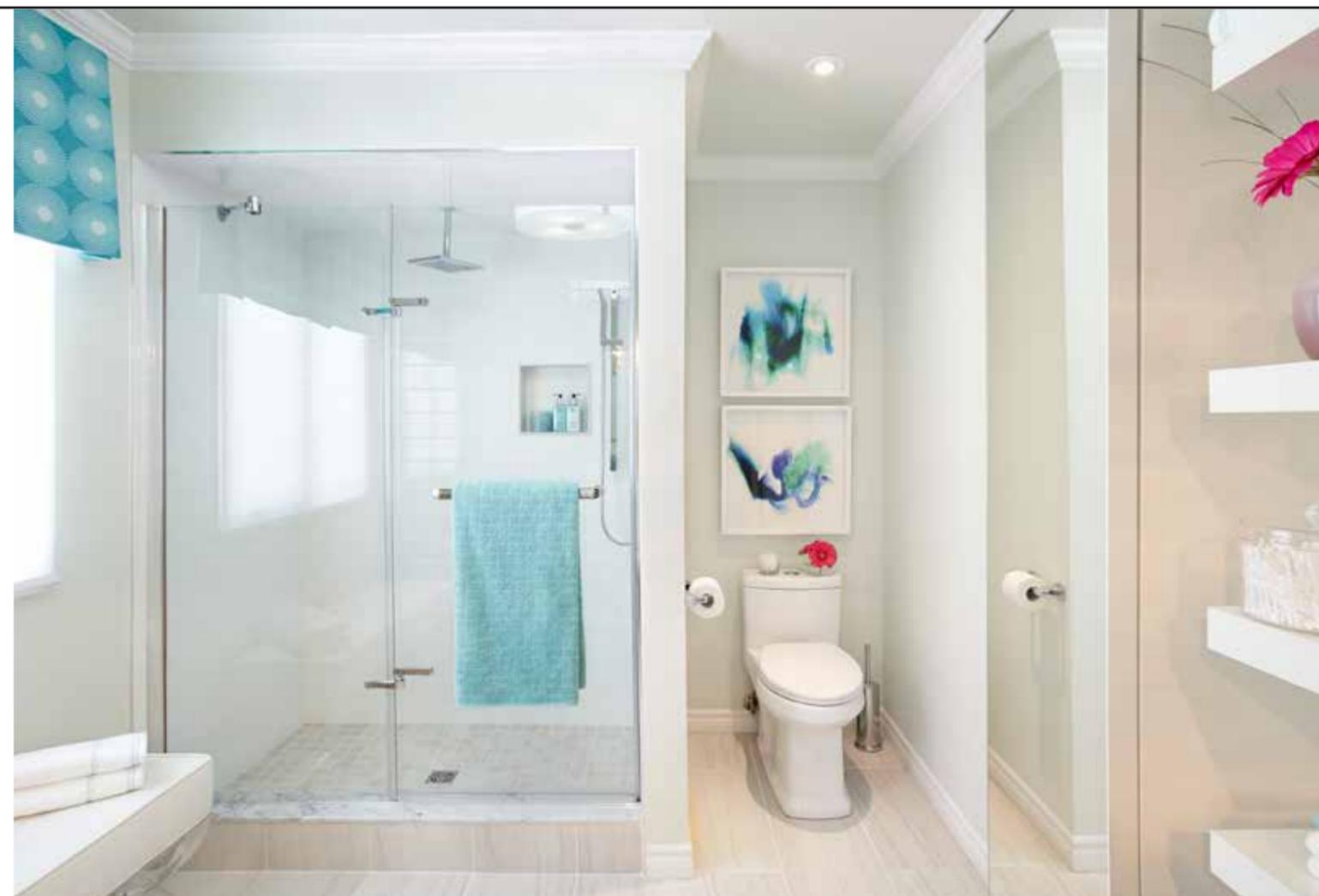


Designer Sarah St. Amand is principal/owner of GTA-based Sarah St. Amand Interior Design, specializing in residential and commercial design projects. [stamanddesign.com](http://stamanddesign.com)

BY SARAH ST. AMAND  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TAE PHOTOGRAPHY

# PRIMP & PRIME

A teen bathroom gets a fresh-faced makeover that is perfectly poised for the growing needs of two young adults



**W**hen you have two teenage girls attempting to share a bathroom with a small sink,

limited storage, the walls painted in a bright blue hue and decorated with *Finding Nemo* decals, there comes a time when you have to throw in the towel—no pun intended—and renovate.

Since teenager does not mean adult (regardless of their argument), the goal for this bathroom was to keep the vibe youthful yet refined and fresh while adhering to a budget.

That's when homeowners Dave and Michelle Gowling realized they needed assistance and called me to work on a design that functions efficiently and meets the needs of their daughters' busy lifestyle.

## MUST-HAVES

The first basic need was storage. It was necessary for their daughters Laura and Alannah to have enough space to house their extensive makeup, perfume, hair products and jewelry collection, as well as a place to store towels, toiletries and other bathroom necessities.

The bathroom needed to have enough compartments and storage options to keep it organized and free of clutter, and it also needed a functional, efficient space to accommodate two very active young ladies. There was no longer a need for a bathtub so the space was transformed to accommodate a walk-in shower.

Since the bathroom is one of two on the upper floor, and renovations to the master bath were also on the horizon,

it was necessary to work within a tight budget and accommodate both the design esthetic and functional needs of the space.

## COST ANALYSIS

Bathroom renovations can be expensive propositions. With such a huge spread in pricing on tile and plumbing fixtures, it's hard for many homeowners to know where to start. There are \$200 faucets and there are \$1,200 faucets. The same goes for tile; it can range from 90 cents to 450 dollars a square foot. And the overall price range of a bathroom remodel can vary just as greatly. If you're on a budget—and not the kind that includes \$400-per-square-foot-tile—there are some tricks of the trade to keep the look high-end and the budget in check.



Bathrooms are a great area in your home to use ordinary, less expensive products and use them in an unexpected way to create visual interest. A white bathroom is a timeless and popular choice, and basic white tile, whether it's a 4" by 4" or 3" by 6", can really be affordable. Subway tile can be a clean and inexpensive option and now comes in a variety of colours. I wanted to add a feature wall behind the vanity to add interest, so I used a 4" by 16" bottle-green glass tile and

positioned it vertically rather than a typical horizontal configuration. The look is unique and creates a more contemporary feel and adds a subtle contrast of colour to the space.

### DESIGN TRICKS

The wall colour, (Benjamin Moore Dewdrop CC-608) coordinates with the glass wall tile and gives the bathroom a soothing spa-like feel. Using stock items is a great way to keep costs at a minimum; however, there are some design

tricks of the trade to elevate the look.

Readily available stock items can easily be transformed from ordinary to extraordinary just by making subtle changes to offer a unique customized look. It may be something as simple as adding trim work, spray-painting the doors or changing out the hardware to create a designer style.

To keep the timeline and budget on target, I chose a stock vanity and storage cabinetry, like this one from IKEA, but splurged a little within the

budget on great faucets for the entire space.

Pops of colour were added in a custom roman blind, which gives the bathroom a more youthful teenage vibe, along with colourful artwork and accessories. When renovating a bathroom, it is important to consider a neutral colour when selecting the bigger ticket items like the vanity and tiles. That way, other design elements like paint, artwork and fabric can easily be updated as colour trends and styles change over time.

This space creates a distinct serene vibe and captures my signature design esthetic perfectly—an unfussy approach to decorating, which is clean and refined. Most importantly, the end result was an age-appropriate bathroom renovation that met the needs of my clients, both on budget and style sense. ♦



#### SOURCES:

**Roman blind fabric:** Jonathan Adler through Kravet.  
**Pattern:** Super Nova, **Colour:** 13 (through designers)  
**Wall Colour:** Benjamin Moore Dew Drop CC-608  
**Acrylic Bench:** Through Sarah St. Amand Interior Design  
**Vanity:** IKEA – Godmorgan Series



"Faucets, lighting and hardware, are like the jewelry on a little black dress, they instantly transform the look from dull to dramatic!" says Sarah.



Designer Sarah St. Amand, principal/owner of GTA-based Sarah St. Amand Interior Design, specializes in residential and commercial design projects of all sizes and scope. She has made appearances on Citytv's CityLine and has gained national recognition for her design work. For more information, visit [stamanddesign.com](http://stamanddesign.com).

“

FROM BUILDER'S GRADE BLAND TO BEAMING DESIGN DARLING, THIS RURAL HOME IS A SHINING EXAMPLE OF HOW TO MIX DRAMA WITH TRANQUILITY AND TRADITIONAL WITH NEW IN AN OPEN-CONCEPT LAYOUT THAT BRINGS THE OUTDOORS IN, ALLOWING YOUR GAZE TO LINGER AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE.





# Magnificent MONOCHROME

By Kelly Putter | photos by Mike Chajeki





Humdrum might have best described the past vibe of this 2,200-square-foot ranch that sits on five acres of rural property in the quaint and tiny community of Scotland, Ontario.

Built in the early 2000s in the heart of Ontario's old tobacco belt outside Brantford, the home is situated amidst a pastoral paradise that features a steady parade of farm animals, wildlife and nature in all its tamed and rugged glory. Sadly, the home's interior did little to honour its picture-postcard setting, so the owners decided the time was right to pitch its builder's grade feel — dated and dark wooden kitchen cabinetry, poor lighting and sight lines, popcorn ceiling, lacklustre tiles — in favour of a more luxurious and dramatic transitional design that literally raises this roof from blah to bewitching.

"It was builder's grade... everything," says Sarah St. Amand, an interior designer who works with clients around the Greater Golden Horseshoe. "We reworked the whole main floor. Actually, it went pretty smoothly and I'm proud to say that the kitchen won an auspicious design award and was featured in the *Wall Street Journal*." →





A cornerstone of the renovation saw the removal of a 20-foot-long wall that blocked sight lines from the kitchen to the living room. Once the wall was eliminated, the space almost magically opened up and the whole aura of the home shifted from dreary and uninspired to cheerful, spirited and family-friendly. The clients, who are big foodies and home cooks, could enjoy slicing and dicing even more so now that they could keep an eye on their younger children playing in the adjacent great room. The reworking of the interior space meant its residents could make a smoothie and watch Netflix all at the same time. Or they could sip tea while enjoying the serene bucolic view of surrounding pastures dotted with horses, cows and donkeys in the background while the foreground offered onlookers a large, in-ground, kidney-shaped salt water pool complete with gazebo and outdoor fountains.

The kitchen is clearly the showpiece of the makeover with the dramatic interplay of black and white and grey in everything from upholstery, countertops, millwork and finishes such as grass-cloth wallpaper. The neutral colour scheme is accented with pops of polished brass in hardware, light fixtures, taps and faucets and “jewelry,” as St. Amand calls it, in such items as the custom-made brushed gold pulls and nail heads on the back of the island’s countertop-height chairs. As with most winning designs, subtlety is the key here. For example, the designer used the same quartz marble on the countertops and the backsplash, creating a statement that manages to infuse drama with quiet elegance.

“Sometimes people make the mistake of glogging onto a colour and completely overdoing it,” says St. Amand. “There are ways of mixing it up. What I like about this monochromatic palette is that it allows you to change the pillows in summer to something fresh and cheery, whereas in winter you might want something more rustic such as wool plaid.”

The clients didn’t want their new kitchen spoiled by the amounts of clutter that are so typically inherent in this space, so St. Amand designed an assortment of hideaway spots. A coffee station consolidates various and sundry hot drink accessories and products, while she maximized space underneath the island for storage. Because the clients have a growing family, careful consideration was given to the potential for mess, so countertop chairs are covered in a faux leather to make clean ups easy. A smartly-appointed adjacent dining room with a collage of cog mirrors that serve to →



The neutral colour scheme is accented with pops of polished brass.

reflect the beauty of the outdoor countryside provide a nice focal point. An extra-wide custom dining table with live edge made by a local Mennonite furniture maker completes the room.

The contrast of black and white is carried throughout the main floor, providing the home with a cohesive and organized space that nicely marries aesthetics with functionality. Black (Benjamin Moore's Onyx) millwork in both the kitchen and great room provide a striking contrast to the off-white (Benjamin Moore's Swiss Coffee) millwork of the fireplace and the remaining kitchen cabinetry. The builder's grade oak fireplace was replaced with a significantly larger customized mantle that included a marble tile surround detail. The larger mantle was designed to provide the owners with more display options.

The front foyer is a gorgeous mix of black, white, grey and polished gold. Doors and windows were replaced to add architectural interest and inject the home with a vibe that marries classic design with modern. For privacy and style, the front door was

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outfitted with an opaque reed glass. But the six-by-eight-foot floor mosaic made of Calacatta Italian marble in a herringbone pattern steals the show, while the wallpaper provides a subtle echo of the floor's design. Custom linen side panels with black ribbon trim cover the two new windows that flank the front door.

The guest bathroom makes an impressive statement with its all-black walls, ceiling, trim and sliding barn door. The geometric patterned wallpaper adds a contemporary vibe and nicely complements the polished brass faucet and accessories. The collage of round brass mirrors is a unique focal point and contrasts well with the wallpaper's straight lines.

Sarah St. Amand may be a familiar name to some readers. A regular contributor to Houzz.com as well as Reno & Décor magazine, St. Amand has been designing interiors for 20 years. She was a regular guest on City Line with Marilyn Denis and works for HGTV magazine. Earlier in her career, St. Amand was a lead designer for Benjamin Moore's corporate headquarters. She completed this project in 2017. 🌟



For privacy and style, the front door was outfitted with an opaque reed glass.

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