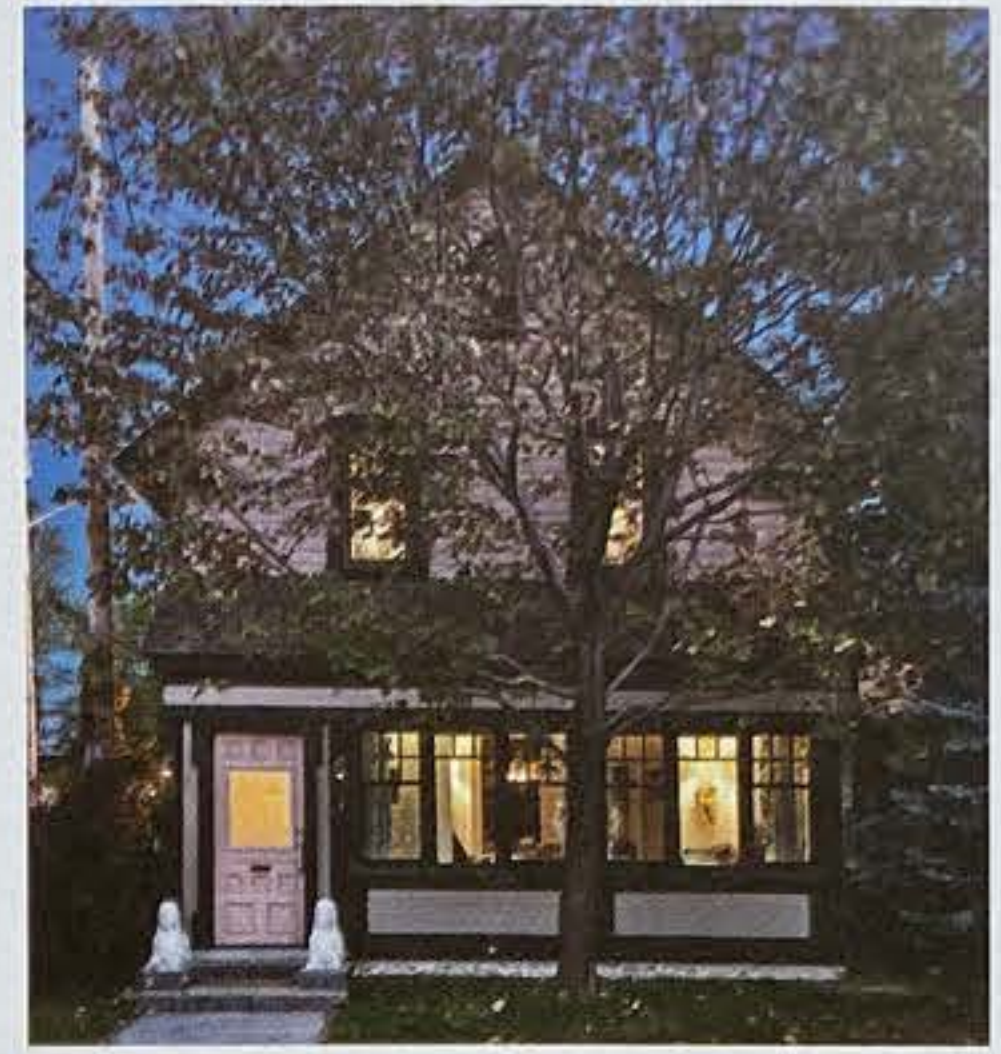




Henrietta used her sense of humour in her small entryway, juxtaposing high and low, antique and modern. Cole & Son wallpaper from the U.K. serves as the backdrop to an antique French clock and trumeau mirror. A white porcelain Jason Miller chandelier toys with the woodland theme, also referenced in the rustic console table and chairs



LIVING HISTORY

When designer Henrietta Southam took on a fixer-upper of a Victorian home, she was determined to add personality as she modernized, creating intimate spaces that simultaneously stand out and stand the test of time

BY HATTIE KLOTZ
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARC FOWLER



■ **Above** Henrietta designed the library, which was then built by Zeke Hagar

IN 2013 WHEN DESIGNER Henrietta Southam bought her detached Victorian house, only an imagination as vivid as hers could have envisaged its potential. While its proportions were good, the New Edinburgh fixer-upper had not been properly refurbished in 130 years. All the windows needed replacing, the kitchen was “blessed” with terra-cotta tiles and pine cupboards, and the bathrooms showcased a Tex-Mex style. Looking down, she noticed that the floorboards downstairs ran across the house instead of longitudinally, missing an opportunity to create flow from front to back. And so she quickly set to work changing things.



■ **Above** An English 19th-century room divider, hung as a painting, features Marco Polo within the Chinese walls. Henrietta bought the tassel legs of the table, designed by Phyllis Morris, on 1st Dibs and had the glass top made in Ottawa. A gilded driftwood trunk sconce ties in the gilt highlights

■ **Facing page** The informal sitting room in the centre of the house is adjacent to the kitchen. It boasts a green barnboard ceiling and blue built-in bookshelves on each side of the fireplace, with colours pulled from the 14th-century Last Supper scene over the hearth

What Henrietta did not do was blow through the house like a whirlwind, ripping out walls. “Victorian homes are generally beautifully appointed,” she explains, “and when people make the mistake of taking out walls, the rhythm and coziness are lost.” Instead, she celebrated the home’s compact spaces, creating a series of distinct, jewel-like rooms. She accentuated their separateness by framing each room with super-sized mouldings she designed and had made by Mountain Moulding.

At the back of the house, she managed a clever expansion within the existing walls, turning a former garage into a compact sitting room with a daybed and adding a tiny ensuite bathroom with shower. As an occasional guest room, it’s perfect; as a day-to-day sitting room, it is cozy and benefits from French doors to the outdoor courtyard.

That courtyard, modelled on the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, is a dream to behold. Here, Henrietta designed a wooden pergola with a series of arches, each lit from above and enclosing mini standard hydrangeas in urns. The pergola is painted dark green to create an intimate feeling and is juxtaposed with the grey limestone patio, dark wood patio furniture with white cushions, and a Phillips silver river-rock table. It’s an elegant entertaining space that offers privacy even though neighbours are extremely close by.







■ **Facing page** A former garage, now a compact sitting room and occasional guest bedroom, benefits from access to the courtyard garden and plenty of light. Throw pillows are by Ottawa designer bootsiedecor

■ **Above left** The carpet and curtains in the dining room both came from Henrietta's late father, Hamilton Southam

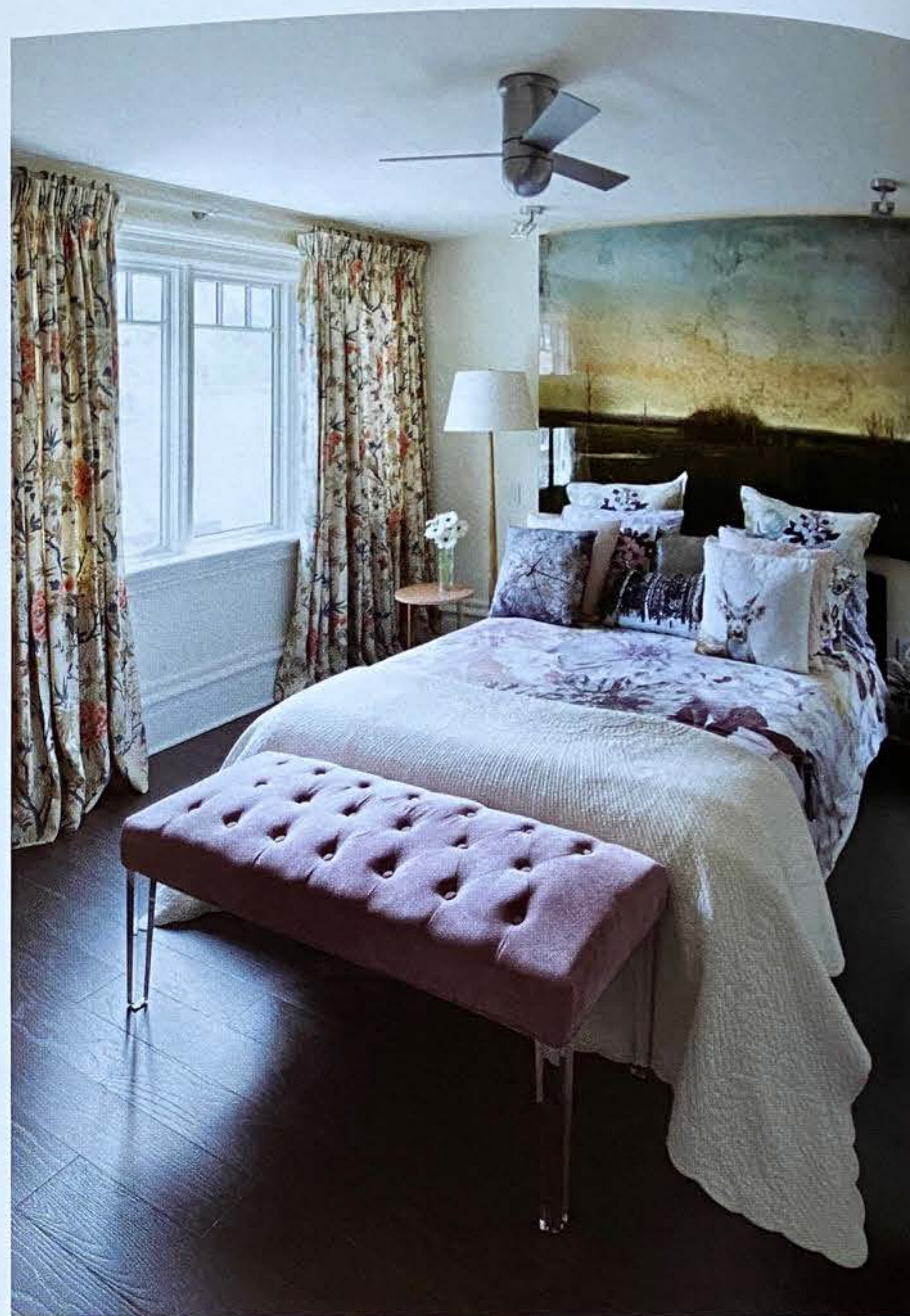
■ **Above right** A Brothers Dressler of Toronto chandelier hangs over the mixed-pressed-metal dining table from Anthropologie, dressed with chairs by Billy Gaylord

The kitchen and informal sitting room form the centre of the house. The colours for this space are drawn from a Romanian painting, a 14th-century Last Supper scene inherited from Henrietta's mother that hangs above the fireplace. A soft blue is found on the high-gloss lacquered bookcases, backed with Cole & Son wallpaper from England and accented with mother-of-pearl handles from Anthropologie. Gold tones resonate, with brass sconces flanking the fireplace, while a vibrant green is found in the wide-plank barnwood ceiling. "I really believe that ceilings have been ignored. This is really the fifth wall," says Henrietta.

In the kitchen, Henrietta opted for very plain Ikea cabinets but dressed them up by changing the handles. She then added further character to the room with signature open shelving and an extended backsplash of pearly tiles from Euro Tile & Stone. An oversized grey pendant by Hay Design out of Denmark illuminates the central crushed white marble island. A large landscape painting of a view of Siena by Robert Constantin dominates one wall. It has resonance for Henrietta, who once spent a night sleeping outside exactly where this scene was painted.

The formal rooms are at the front of the house. A dining room and sitting room sparkle with crystal and the glint of gold and silver. Henrietta added a feminine element to the dining room through a contemporary chandelier by Toronto's Brothers Dressler dressed up with Swarovski crystals. It hangs over a table from Anthropologie, composed of a patchwork of mixed metals that offer soft shimmer, colours picked up elsewhere in the connected rooms by a pair of 18th-century French gilt sconces she found at an antique store in North Gower and the aged-lacquer patina of Billy Gaylord dining chairs.

But it's in the petite entryway that the accomplished designer has really let loose her creativity and sense of mischief, pairing high design with rustic accents. Cole & Son wallpaper with soft golden pears on winter trees adds sparkle to one wall, while a very rustic console table of twigs and birchbark supports an antique French clock and a trumeau mirror that came from her mother. A Jason Miller white porcelain antler chandelier and 1950s vintage Murano pink glass leaf sconces toy with the woodland wallpaper theme, while a painting by contemporary New York artist Jon James



■ **Above** Henrietta chose a soft blue palette for her son's bedroom, left, while in her own bedroom, dusky pink tones give way to a painting by Peter Hoffer over the bed

■ **Facing page** The family dog, Lava, enjoys time in the courtyard garden, which features a complex pergola, designed by Henrietta, to offer privacy from neighbours close by

fills another wall, floor to ceiling. "I love this piece so much," says Henrietta. "I couldn't afford it at the time, so he moved into my New York City bedroom for three months and paid no rent, while I slept in the living room, and I got the painting."

UPSTAIRS, HENRIETTA has created a calm oasis, using a soft rose-pink paint for every door and pale blue and grey tones throughout. In the bedrooms and master bathroom, she has chosen to abide by the maxim that putting large pieces of furniture in a small space actually makes the room appear bigger. In the decadent bathroom, a huge rectangular soaker tub fills one wall, while an oversized linen-and-silk light shade, lined with a woodland scene, dominates the

ceiling. Large driftwood mirrors made in Florida hang over the bath and sink, while Barbara Barry Cuff sconces in a soft brass finish pick up the gold tones of a tree-stump table. Henrietta also carved out enough space for an upstairs laundry room and a second bathroom with a shower.

It's the details of any project that please her, period. "I have a very precise eye for detail," she acknowledges, "and that means that I'm consistent." Henrietta, who has moved many times in her life, says that from a designer's perspective, that's a good thing. "It allows you to refresh, and your eye gets better and more personal each time," she explains. "Now I have a certain language coming through, which I think is 'organic pretty.'" Or simply superbly sophisticated.



MY VISION

My biggest must-have is enough walls for the art I have accumulated along life's way and enough light to see it.

My best piece of design advice is to create a cohesive language between rooms, be it colours, moulding, lighting, or hardware. This will make small spaces look bigger and big spaces breathe. I could not resist being theatrical in the entrance. Juxtaposition and irony are my personal favourite tools in design.

My house reveals that I believe homes are the hearth and heart of a family, so make them warm and welcoming, accessible and comfortable. I am proudest of the simplicity of the bathroom. Life is not simple, but that doesn't mean it can't be pared down to a more natural and organic state. →

I love the green barnboard in the kitchen and family room. It would serve us well to choose more design materials infused with energy and soul from lives past. I find this uplifting as well as embracing. ↘

My favourite space is probably the family room, where the kids and I have pyjama days during winter weekends. ■

