

SUBURBAN RETREAT

# Modern Romance



HOUSE & HOME HAMPTONS GARDENS

INTERIOR DESIGNER THERESA CASEY TRANSFORMS A YOUNG COUPLE'S TIRED SUBURBAN HOME INTO A SOPHISTICATED, CHARACTER-FILLED SPACE.

Text by **BARBARA SGROI** | Photography by **DONNA GRIFFITH**

Instead of going to the expense of replacing the floor, interior designer Theresa Casey warmed up the kitchen's dining area by layering a boldly patterned Madeline Weinrib rug over the existing tiles. The tufted settee works here because it's cosy like a sofa, but also high and firm — perfect for the BoConcept table. Gauzy drapes don't distract from romantic views of the flowering fruit orchard homeowners Rick and Ariel Zhu planted outside.



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RIGHT: In the family room, Casey removed heavy crown moulding, then coated the panelling and built-in oak bookcases in a contemporary blue-grey shade. A 9'-long custom sofa and lipstick-red Womb chair by Eero Saarinen make it a welcoming retreat. OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT: Small changes made a big difference in the kitchen. Contractors Kings Haven Construction added a horizontal panel and crown moulding above the existing cabinets and painted them a warm cream colour. To freshen up the island, end panels were added to eliminate the overhangs, and it was painted steel grey. A new cubby over the sink displays vintage tins. TOP RIGHT: Refacing the fireplace in Cipollino marble added an unexpected shot of pattern in the principal suite's sitting area. Drapes in a Kravet floral are hung at the ceiling to make the room feel higher. BOTTOM: A rustic wooden rack in the entry gives Ariel a spot to create playful vignettes with beloved vintage objets.



In the main-floor family room, Theresa Casey brought the expansive built-ins to life by filling them with a rainbow of colour-blocked books and eye-catching accessories.

It was the ultimate wedding present: a five-bedroom house in Maple, Ont., a leafy suburb where backyards are huge and you almost need binoculars to see your neighbours. So two years ago, when Ariel and Rick Zhu found out her parents had bought the house for them, they could hardly believe their luck. "We're from China, where you really don't have this kind of space," says Rick, an MBA student at the Schulich School of Business in Toronto. The busy expats originally met in Scotland in 2007, while she was studying music at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, before moving to Canada in 2010.

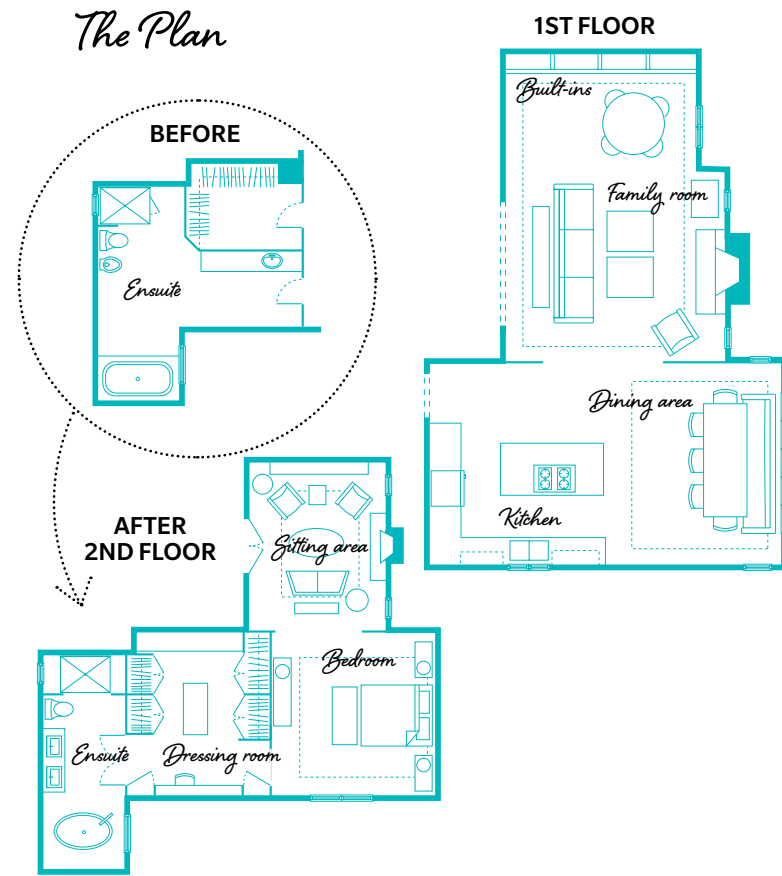
But when they laid eyes on the interior of the 20-year-old house, the couple were somewhat disappointed — it wasn't exactly what they had in mind. Honey-coloured oak panelling and bookcases paired with cherry floors stained orange dominated the family room, while dated cabinets and a dingy backsplash loomed in the kitchen.

The pair called in Toronto interior designer Theresa Casey. "Her designs really appealed to us because they feel very European. They remind me of Paris," says Ariel. They tasked Casey with adding warmth and style to the cavernous house and creating living areas that reflected the couple's youth and sophistication (including a new walk-in closet for Ariel). They also wanted the decor to embrace their Chinese heritage — something Casey achieved in unique ways.

The reno budget wouldn't stretch to the whole house, so Rick and Ariel focused on the kitchen and family room downstairs, and the principal suite upstairs. In the process, they got something that hadn't been on their wish list: an array of nooks and shelving for Ariel to display her beloved vintage curios and collectibles — a much-needed touch of character for the home.

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### The Plan



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## Designer's Notebook

HOW TO ADD CHARACTER TO A BIG, BOXY HOME.

**Beef up the architecture** Enhance drywalled walls and doorways with new mouldings or panelling, and swap out uninspired mantels for classic wooden ones or chic marble installations.

**Create showstopping focal points** Paint out bookshelves or kitchen cabinets in an unusual hue for drama, and install a mural or eye-catching wallpaper to create a feature wall.

**Tailor spaces to your interests** Tap into a big home's wealth of square footage and create a dream room customized to your needs. It could be a spa-like ensuite, bespoke dressing room or a space for gardening.



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IPAD-EXCLUSIVE VIDEO  
Theresa Casey shares the inspiration behind the design of her clients' home.



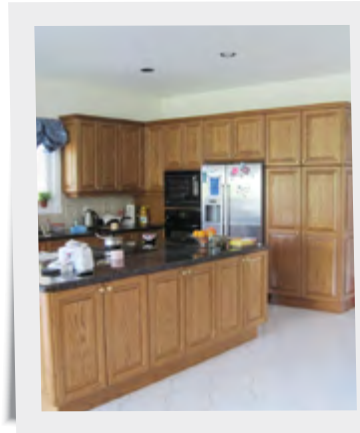
A pretty spot custom-made for displaying personal objets too fun to hide away, the dressing room's open shelves were backed in pale blue to make them stand out as the room's focal point. Linen-covered boxes hold shoes and sweaters, doors hide hanging closet areas, and the marble-topped island features drawers on both sides. To enhance the room's vintage appeal, Casey accessorized with antique-look knobs and pulls from The Door Store. A delicate 1930s chandelier adds glamour. OPPOSITE: To create a sense of serenity, Casey used softer colours throughout the second floor and combined subtle Asian accents with flower motifs for a romantic yet worldly feel. She divided the huge principal bedroom into two sections with a character-building panelled archway. A delicate, bamboo-look brass bed from South Hill Home adds height.

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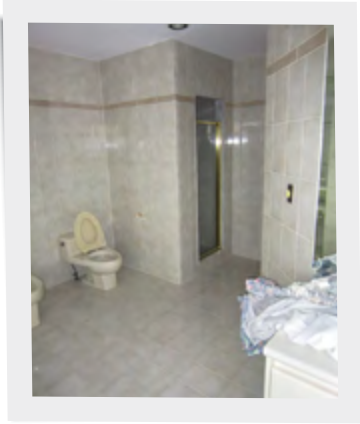
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## BIG CHANGES



### the Kitchen

**PROBLEM:** The cabinets were dated and heavy, and made the floor look stark.  
**SOLUTION:** For a more classic and slightly unfitted look, cabinets along the walls were lightened and brightened with a coat of warm white, and the island was dressed up in a dark grey hue (page 77).



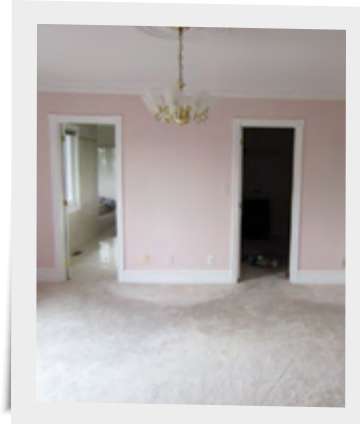
### the Ensuite

**PROBLEM:** It was spacious, but clinical and truly uninspired.  
**SOLUTION:** Every surface was redone, and the room is now one of the most elegant thanks to a dark-wood vanity, stone counters, muted brass taps and a dramatic mural (opposite).



### the Family Room

**PROBLEM:** Handsome built-ins and panelling were finished in a drab tone that clashed with the floor.  
**SOLUTION:** Cosmetic changes transformed the room (page 76). Walls and shelving in soft grey-blue create a colonial mood that's balanced by modern furniture perfect for a young family.



### the Principal Bedroom

**PROBLEM:** It was enormous, echo-y and undecorated — with bitsy mouldings.  
**SOLUTION:** The space was divided — thanks to a hefty, character-boosting panelled doorway — into a cosy sleeping area and a chic, airy sitting room (page 78).



A streamlined makeup table is built in at one end of the new dressing room. The panelling in the doorway opens to reveal hidden storage areas, and pocket doors slide open to a handsome view of the principal bedroom.

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The pièce de résistance in the bathroom is a hand-painted silver- and gold-leafed cherry blossom mural by Peter Costello, which was inspired by the delicate floral paintings of ancient Chinese artist Huang Gongwang. The sculptural freestanding tub is filled by a floor-mounted brass faucet in a warm gold hue.

with pattern, Casey used a wallpaper from Télio behind the bed where it would make the most impact. Ariel loves the marble-topped 1940s Parisian dresser Casey found at Ribbehege & Azevedo. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Lining the back of the simple bookcase with wallpaper transformed it into a pretty display space for family mementoes and books.



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