

HIDDEN GEM

DESIGNER
OLIVIA BOTRIE
REINVIGORATES
A CENTURY
HOME IN
TORONTO FOR
HER FAMILY.

Olivia and husband
Tim Dawson.



LAST YEAR, OLIVIA BOTRIE and her husband, Tim Dawson, spontaneously purchased a house. The deal, as breezy as buying a latte, was sealed within 24 hours. “I’m a fast mover,” says Olivia, principal designer of Toronto’s Dart Studio. She and Tim, a video editor and producer, weren’t exactly shopping for new digs. “We knew we had to make a move because our little guy was sleeping in a glorified closet,” says Olivia, with a laugh.

The couple’s new, semidetached brick house is on the same street as their old one in a desirable west end pocket — Olivia just couldn’t resist the For Sale sign. When she first saw the house, she was immediately smitten. Buying it would mean that their daughter, Louisa, wouldn’t have to switch schools (bonus!), son Toby would have a larger bedroom and moving would be a cinch (almost). First, the family relocated to a rental while Olivia, with

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Sentimental accessories liven up the ledge at the coffee and toast station; the silver bunny moulds were Olivia's grandfather's. "He was a chocolatemaker who moved here from Lebanon and had a chocolate shop on Gerrard," says Olivia. The playful sketch of the family is modelled after characters in Maurice Sendak's children's book, *Where the Wild Things Are*.

BY THE NUMBERS

- Renovated: **2022**
- Construction time: **6 months**
- Size: **2,100 sq.ft.**
- Number of drafted kitchen layouts: **9**
- Total trim colours tested: **13**
- Number of times the foyer beadboard was painted: **2**
- **54** cabinet knobs
- Only **2** pot lights in the entire house. "I used flush-mounts instead of recessed lighting to create a more historical vibe," says Olivia.



BELOW: Cooking utensils are charmingly at the ready on the range wall. “I love the rail; it’s very useful,” says Olivia, who likes the ease of grabbing implements while making meals. **Art print, Home Smith.**



the help of Cornerbrook Construction, worked her magic to transform the house into a dreamy dwelling that was polished but retained its century-old charm. “I like it when houses are updated but look original and feel historical,” says Olivia of the six-month-long renovation. “The character was there, including all the original trim and moulding, and we liked the configuration — it had two fireplaces!”

At 2,100 square feet, it was larger than their old place. The rear addition, double-car garage, full-height basement, three bedrooms and a third floor meant the family could stretch out. Plus, the couple could save money since most of the pricey bits were already done. But the explosion of lacklustre finishes had to go. “The same family had lived here forever and the top two floors were apartments,” says Olivia. “My son’s room used to be a kitchen.” There was also a wall running the length of the main floor that was demolished, creating a hallway.

Making the house beautiful — the best part of every redesign — was next. “As you do this job longer, you get more bold, risky and adventurous,” says Olivia, who’s been a successful designer for nearly 18 years. Because her former home had a more neutral palette, she decided to shake things up in this one. “I have this

A wood island base, painted cabinets and two counter surfaces bring casual contrast to the kitchen. Dark Caesarstone counters on the perimeter add depth, while white marble lends lightness.

Pendants, Etsy; **hardware**, Myoh.

OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT: Olivia created a cheery foyer with patterned wallpaper and heated checkered floors. **Wallpaper**, Sandberg Wallpaper; **armoire**, Somerset Kitchens; **tile**, Deco-Tile.

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM LEFT: Architectural panelling lends depth to the stair wall, where a hidden door (*far right*), leads to the basement.

KITCHEN: KEY COSTS*

- Cabinets: **\$25,000**
- Contractor fee (flooring installation, framing, insulation, drywall, electrical, plumbing, masonry, window installation, painting and trim): **\$20,000**
- Appliances: **\$15,000**
 - Counters and backsplash: **\$15,000**
- Lighting: **\$2,000**
- Faucet: **\$1,200**
- Sink: **\$950**
- Hardware: **\$700**

*Costs are from 2022 and do not include tax



thing about my kids growing up with memories of patterns and colour,” says Olivia. “I want them to remember the wallpaper in the powder room.” To that end, blues, pinks and printed wallpaper energize rooms while deep wood tones, moulding and panelling reinforce the home’s vintage.

The standout is the English-style kitchen, a tea-sipping, pie-making charmer, where Shaker-style doors and historical green cabinets were inspired by Britain’s deVOL Kitchens. “I fixated on that khaki green early on,” says Olivia, referring to Farrow & Ball’s Treron hue. “I love the look of it with the medium brown floors and the brass.” Her overall design goal was to create a kitchen that felt lived in and warm. “Like it had been here forever,” she says.

Perfection takes time, and Olivia notes that she created several versions of the layout for the kitchen. “I’m typically against an island with a sink, but this layout offered the most storage,” she says. “I had to get my husband to agree to never pile dishes on it — part of why I don’t usually like an island sink.”

Today, the house has proven to be the perfect switch-up: it’s cosy, colourful and big enough for the whole family. One thing’s for sure: it’s always smart to pop in to an open house — you never know what gem awaits. **H&H**



Olivia converted the coal fireplace to gas and had the mantelpiece rebuilt out of poured limestone. "I love the curve," she says. "I use the fireplace all the time — it's on eight months of the year." **Mantelpiece**, Trumeau Stones; **sofa**, Rowe Furniture; **rug**, Loloi.

LIVING ROOM: KEY COSTS*

- Custom millwork: \$8,500
- Contractor fee (flooring installation, electrical, painting and trim): \$5,000
- Mantelpiece: \$5,000
 - Furniture: \$4,500
 - Rug: \$600
 - Lighting: \$250
 - Mirror: \$150

OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT: A full bathroom was replaced with this quaint powder room that flaunts floral wallpaper, beadboard and a vintage-style sink. **Wallpaper**, Memo Showroom; **mirror**, Etsy; **faucet**, **vanity**, Wayfair Canada.

OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT: The existing pocket doors in the dining room were elevated with a warm taupe. "My long-term plan is to build a banquette in that window," says Olivia. **Dining chairs**, Cornerstone Home Interiors.

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM LEFT: All of the mouldings in the dining room and living room are original.

BUDGET WISE: OLIVIA'S TIPS

PROVIDE DETAILED DRAWINGS. Olivia recommends homeowners get a quote from the contractor based on a thorough drawings-spec package. Missing details can lead to additional costs down the road.

RELEGATE YOUR BUDGET TO THE BUILT-IN ELEMENTS. "You can always add furniture and frills later on, but it's harder to go back and replace cheap floors."

SHOP SECONDHAND. "Facebook Marketplace, Kijiji and Craigslist have great mirrors, vases and furniture."

DON'T BE AFRAID OF COLOUR. Olivia says that paint is the least expensive way to add colour and is simple to change if you come to dislike it. Design your home for yourself, not potential future owners.

Slanted walls wrapped in Schumacher wallpaper bring interest and elegance to the principal bedroom.

Sconce, bed frame, Sconce, bed frame,
Wayfair Canada.





Louisa wanted a red room, to which Olivia joked: "This is not a brothel." The mom-daughter duo settled on a happy-making combo of blue and red. **Nightstand**, Wayfair Canada; **table lamp**, HomeSense.



TOP LEFT: Blue reappears throughout the house, including the vibrant principal ensuite. **Scorece**, *Illuminate Vintage*; **wall tile**, Clot; **faucet**, *shower fixtures*, Roman Bath Centre. **CENTRE LEFT:** A recessed Ikea Pax wardrobe feels custom in Toby's room: it's finished with moulding and sprayed to match the walls. "It looks like an old English wardrobe," says Olivia. **BOTTOM LEFT:** A skylight brightens the mudroom, and heated herringbone floors ensure the area stays dry. **Ceiling fixture**, Light House Co.; **hardware**, Yester Home; **tile**, Centura Tile. **BOTTOM CENTRE:** Like a little surprise, the mudroom cabinet opens to reveal a corkboard, drawers and drop-off zone for mail and keys.