





INTERIOR DESIGNER LORI MORRIS LENDS HER EXUBERANT AESTHETIC TO AN OPULENT FAMILY RETREAT IN TORONTO.

A Canadian Château as Canvas

BY VICTORIA VEILLEUX PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRANDON BARRÉ

“The world is but a canvas

to our imagination,” said Henry David Thoreau. Providing such a canvas are the interiors of this 15,000-square-foot French-style château in Toronto. Passing through the dramatic arched threshold, one is greeted by unexpected combinations of design motifs of past eras—from Greek keys to the geometric shapes of Art Deco—that contribute to an opulence and ease that could only be the by-product of imagination unleashed.

While the retired couple who built this six-bedroom, 10-bath home wanted a larger place to comfortably entertain their grown children and grandchildren, they also wanted a larger canvas to showcase their own art and design sensibilities. “I think that we can all understand when something’s gorgeous,” says Canadian interior designer Lori Morris, whom the owners hired to create their residential masterpiece. “To have a true love for art and design really shows in the finished product.” This goes beyond the Marc Chagall originals hanging in the living room and speaks to the exuberant approach for which Morris is renowned, where every item is a showpiece and light fixtures and unique furnishings become focal points.

Accents of amethyst Murano glass and chartreuse textiles punch up the darker tones of the library.







Appropriately, the foyer is the first entrée into the bold edges, geometric shapes, and theatrical contrast characteristic of the Art Deco era that informs much of the owners' design sensibility.

Custom-designed fretwork accents the ceilings throughout the entire residence, furthering the home's Art Deco lexicon. The fireplaces in both the living and great rooms showcase the streamlined style with boxy millwork surrounds—negatives of one another. And alongside the hearth in the living room: a 1960s black-glass and brass console from Italy, grounding the Salvador Dalí and Peter Max paintings above it.

The kitchen adds a French flavor to the château's design. A black metal hood outlined in brass becomes an artful centerpiece over a brass-knobbed Lacanche French range. Christian Lacroix fabric dotted with colorful butterflies on the stools lends a playful note. White Crema Delicata marble tops the waterfall-edged island, framed with black lacquer detailing. Vanilla Noir Caesarstone countertops, brass-plated Richelieu pulls on the midnight-black built-in millwork, and Currey & Co. Grand Lotus chandeliers give the room's form a golden touch. Top-of-the-line appliances by Miele and Dacor round out the stylish, functional space.

Perhaps the room in the house that best speaks

Opposite page: Seating niches flank the fireplace in the plush great room.

This page: Dramatic light fixtures serve as playful eye-catchers over the bar and dining table.





Black framework around the mirror and strong geometric lines bring Art Deco motifs into the master bath.

“A true love for art and design really shows in the finished product.”

—LORI MORRIS, INTERIOR DESIGNER

to the owners’ artistic edge is the library, steeped in black, which takes the color thread running through nearly all of the rooms and paints it large. Surprisingly, the black sheers, wall panels, lacquered cocktail table, and velvet furnishings hardly feel dark. Chartreuse-streaked chairs, cloaked in Harlequin’s Amazilia Velvet, add an upbeat note, and an antiqued brass drum table by Oly Studio accentuates the hues in the Weavers Art broadleaf silk and wool rug beneath. Amethyst Murano-glass lighting—including the stacked-ball bases of the midcentury Italian table lamps—and green accents throughout soften the room’s palette.

Morris enjoys infusing her designs with a seductive sophistication as well as pushing the boundaries of how a room “should” be put together. One of the myths Morris hopes the library helps to debunk is that dark colors close up a room. “Actually it’s the exact opposite of that, as long as you pick the right depth of the color palette. What you end up creating is a feeling that hugs you or makes you feel warm,” Morris says. The right textiles also help create that cozy feeling throughout the residence, culled from the fabric bolts of Schumacher, Donghia, and Ralph Lauren.

As much as the owners enjoy the Art sensibility, they also wanted a sense of whimsy to pervade the home. Among the amusing touches are the hand-painted butterflies Morris added to custom-made lampshades in the living room and

hallway and throw pillows printed with human faces that accessorize the great room. The 1940s vintage brass Sputnik Italian chandelier in the living room adds its playful jacks-like form as an eye-catching centerpiece.

“Lighting is one of those elements that is very important to me to add to the layers of design that we’ve put together,” explains Morris. Beyond function, which she says is foremost, she considers lighting as an artistic focal point. For example, the pièce de résistance hangs above the wine bar, which serves as a nucleus for the principal entertainment areas of the house: Swaths of chain mail create a swooping and fluid work of art, with a backdrop of a glass wall that shows off the owners’ extensive wine collection. Other light fixtures that draw the eye include a vintage Murano glass-looped rod piece in the foyer, a runway of custom-designed Greek-key banded pendants in the hallway, and a firework display in the dining room—a reproduction of a Sputnik crystal pendant with 18-karat gold finish. In the bar area downstairs, Viso gold ice-cube pendants from Union Lighting and Furnishings light the club-like room.

On the lower level, a 30-seat theater takes center stage for family movie nights, with three rows of custom seating covered in a micro velvet, which, Morris says, will withstand the popcorn-butter touch of the couple’s many grandchildren. “We opted for sofa seating and floating ottomans over that of theater-style chairs because it’s all about the

The master bedroom feels like a soft sanctuary, with Scottish lace sofa surrounds, Bella Notte linens, and a faux chinchilla headboard.





The designer enjoys pushing the boundaries of how a room “should” be put together.

horizontal when it comes to watching movies,” says Morris. The adjacent candy bar with an under-counter Sub-Zero fridge and antique-style popcorn machine makes “concessions” convenient.

While the owners mostly adhered to a color scheme of saturated gem tones, they did decide to take a risk in the master bedroom to create their own peaceful sanctuary away from the shared spaces of the lower levels. After perusing Morris’s portfolio, full of rooms in springtime pastels, and taking a field trip to Morris’s home, which revealed a powder-blue hue in her master, the owners opted for a similar shade in the bedroom. Morris solved the challenge of harmoniously linking it with the

rest of the rooms through some black-and-white detailing. The dressing room and en-suite bathroom’s white cabinetry, mirrors, and Bianco Rhino marble floors are all trimmed in black, with powder-blue accessories sprinkled throughout. Despite its lighter wheat and blue tones, the bedroom’s interplay of textures and fabrics—from the faux chinchilla and cream velvet headboard to the Nina Campbell decorative pillow—continue Morris’s hallmark of indulgent layering. The wrought-iron and hand-carved wood chandelier from Currey & Co. hanging from the dramatic dome lends a regal air singular to the master suite.

That opulence is also expressed in the master bath, where Art Deco flair informed the design once again. The Murano-glass leaf sconces, a Venini-style chandelier, and the custom-designed vanity by Lori Morris Designs add flourish borne of style and imagination. **R**

Lori Morris Designs, lorimorris.com

The marble-topped island is at the nexus of the home’s first-floor entertaining spaces.





A Baccarat crystal box and a slab coffee table finished in bronze lend glamorous touches to the living room.