



LEAP of Faith

Design by GILLIAN GILLIES

Text by AMANDA ROSS

Photography by VIRGINIA MACDONALD







TWO DESIGN-SAVVY HOMEOWNERS
PASS THE DECORATING TORCH—
AND THE KEYS TO THEIR TOWNHOUSE

TO GILLIAN GILLIES.





Rising STAR

In 2018, Gillian Gillies was named H&H's One to Watch. "I felt very honoured," says the Scottish-born designer. "There are so many great designers in Canada, and House & Home sets the bar very high." Since then, she's certainly been busy. After four years of searching for a larger office in Toronto, she recently landed a perfect — but completely raw — space, which she renovated in short order. "The new office allows me to showcase what I can do with colour, and what I do best — mixing patterns and textures," says Gillian. The designer has also just launched Gillian Gillies Heritage Blankets, a line of Scottish throws. Created at a mill in Ayrshire, Scotland, the blankets come in four different designs. "I've always wanted to design a collection that speaks to my Scottish heritage," she says. "We use a lot of blankets and throws in our design schemes, so this was a natural fit."

Gillian if she wanted to see photos of her favourite designs, but Gillian replied reassuringly, "Don't worry — I'll get your style by our second meeting!" Aly bravely handed over the reins, and without realizing it, immediately communicated a mixed message. "I said I wanted a classic New York or European brownstone feel, but I didn't know exactly how to describe my vision," says Aly. "Every time Gillian saw me, I was wearing black and white, so I guess I wasn't hard to read!"

Gillian also intuitively understood the house; it made her recall elegant old townhouses she admired in Edinburgh as a child. Originally from Scotland and later an interior designer in Edinburgh, Gillian has been well-versed in homes with good bones. "It was just beautiful," she says. "I loved the newel post and original stairs that gently turned at the bottom, the plaster crown mouldings and the deliciously high baseboards. So it was about taking what had been there for almost 100 years and really letting it shine whilst adding in modern touches."

Over a six-month period, Gillian deftly revamped the interiors. New French oak floors laid in a herringbone pattern bring old world elegance to rooms, and original plaster walls are wallpapered — with an ulterior motive. "It makes sense," says Alf. "Wallpaper hides a lot of plaster's imperfections." There were other practical



SEE COURCE CHIRE





Aly worried the Graffito wallpaper was too bold for a bedroom, but Gillian reassured her that it wouldn't feel too "bossy" when all the elements came together. "When something is right, your eye isn't automatically drawn to it because it just feels in harmony," says Gillian. Wallpaper by Kelly Worstler, Krovet Canada; table lamp, Elte Mit; stool, Snob.

OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT AND BOTTOM LEFT: Clad in natural quartz, the principal bathroom's counter and shower bench complement the geometric black and white floor tile and classic white tile on the walls. Tile, Soltillo Imports; counter, shower bench cladding, Combria; shower fixtures, Kohler; cabinet colour, Black Beauty (2128-10), Berijmin Moore.

OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT: Lighting is one of Gillian's design signatures: the hallway's three-tier wooden chandelier delivers understated drama. Chandelier, Currey & Company.

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM RIGHT: Alf asked for a space to put all his "stuff," so the designer built a small drawer

into the radiator cover in the principal bedroom. **Bowl, sculpture,** Snob.

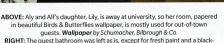




solutions, too: Gillian loves playing with texture but so, too, do cats, and the couple has both a cat and a dog. With that in mind, the designer clad the backs of chairs with fabrics like velvet so claws wouldn't be able to hook into them. The living room sofa, a plum-coloured mohair sectional, is similarly difficult for the cat to scratch. "I never dreamed I'd have a large purple sofa," says Aly with a laugh, "but it's become a real hallmark of the house."

The overall effect is graceful and contemporary, a seamless dovetailing of the home's classic features with a modern aesthetic, all against a black and white palette punctuated by hits of rich colour. "I love a mix of pattern and texture, so there's not a time stamp for when rooms were designed," says Gillian.

And that design planning and process that Aly and Alf have grown accustomed to over years of moving from one city to another, creating bespoke homes along the way? With Alf's retirement nearing, the plan has now changed. "We're finally staying put," he says. "But Aly had so much fun during this project, she'd do it all again in a heartbeat."



framed mirror. Mirror, Elte Mkt; art by Anthony Monaco, Willoughby Galleries.

"IT WAS ABOUT TAKING WHAT HAD BEEN THERE FOR ALMOST 100 YEARS AND LETTING IT SHINE WHILST ADDING IN MODERN TOUCHES" — Gillian Gillies, designer

