



The painting above the Bahamian armoire is by renowned Uruguayan artist Carlos Paez Vilaró. It is inscribed to the homeowner. The drawer pulls on the custom console could be rock climbers. The homeowner loves them because they "tell a story." **TOP LEFT:** Evelyn, Zsa Zsa and Fritz relax in front of the roaring fire. **BOTTOM LEFT:** The sculpture of the tree in front of the house is by local artist Bill Hodgson, who also created the tree sculptures throughout the London Core.

The sweeping views, the grand driveway, the classic Southwestern Ontario yellow brick and the country access road are all hallmarks of a different century. It was these very qualities that the homeowner wasn't looking for. "I never had a desire to live in the country," she says. "I never planned to move." Never say never.

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REINVENTING THE *past*

BY NANCY BELGUE // PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON HARTOG



The kitchen offers great views inside and out. **BELOW LEFT:** The eat-in area is where many craft projects take place. **BELOW RIGHT:** Evelyn creates a masterpiece. **RIGHT:** In keeping with the flowing lines of the home, each stair is curved.



Four years ago a friend took the homeowner for a drive to show her the 1850 brick home in London's west end that was a far cry from her contemporary 4,500 sq. ft. house in the suburbs. Despite her lack of interest in moving, country life, or older homes, something compelled her to bring her husband back to see the property. He stood on the stone terrace with its commanding vista of 18 acres and two ponds bordered by the Thames River and said, without even going inside, "Buy it."

With those two little words, the homeowners changed their lives and the destiny of one very traditional home. They purchased the property in 2007 and began a renovation project that would fill their lives for three more years.

"The home was in total disrepair," the homeowner says. "I didn't sleep for two years!" The heating, electrical and plumbing systems were replaced by **The Hayter Group**, **Wade Electric** and **London Bath Centre**, respectively. The owners also replaced the roof before tackling the fun stuff.

"I drink a lot of red wine," laughs the homeowner as she describes how she arrived at the home's interior design and décor. "I also spend a lot of

time going through magazines and poking around stores. You may see an idea you love in one store, but what you saw may not be what you end up purchasing. But that idea may end up taking you to another source."

Even though the homeowner emphasizes that the home is "still a work in progress," it is evident that each and every detail is a reflection of her artistic and eclectic personality.

Originally, the completely reconfigured kitchen was the home's formal living room, but with the views offered from the east-facing windows it was clear this is where the kitchen needed to be. "It was the starting point of the house," says the homeowner. "I wanted to stand at the stove and be inspired by the view. I stand here and go zen. None of the chaos is around me anymore." The amazing view aside, the kitchen is the home's focal point. The homeowner loves to cook and her passion is reflected in her choice of kitchen details and high-end appliances like the sub-zero fridge and the unique La Cornue range available through **Belle Vie**. "It's Mom's BMW," she laughs. *Continued on page 24*



The white cuckoo clock in the dining room is from Kingsmill's Department Store. **LEFT:** The front entryway is rich in art. The coral sculpture adds organic texture and colour. The painting above the antique chest is "Spring Growth" by London artist Jane Kerwin. **BELOW LEFT:** The white pendant light makes a dramatic statement in the bay window. **BELOW MIDDLE:** The hallway leading to the side entrance is decorated with primitive art. **BELOW RIGHT:** The fun watering can wallpaper in the laundry room is from Benjamin Moore in Hyde Park.

The granite countertops installed by **Bernardo Group Ltd.** are an unusual colour called blue macaw. "You can spend hours in the granite store," says the homeowner about her unique choice, "then when you see 'it' across the room you get excited." She spent a lot of time with Bernardo tradesmen finding creative design solutions. "I drew curves on the wall and told the granite guys to cut here," she says with a smile.

This is no cookie cutter kitchen. The cabinets are natural, varnished cherry that deepens with age. There are flowing lines everywhere. Sharp edges are banished.

Visitors to the home enter through a stained glass door that is a work of art, custom designed by **Victoria Balva** of **Artistic Line Studio**. "I envisioned a tree," says the homeowner. "The artist and I arrived at the design together."

The herringbone pattern in the wooden floor of the entryway was conceived by the homeowner as well. The wood was reclaimed from an

old house that was being torn down in Waterloo. It suits the front hall so perfectly it looks like it was part of the original home.

In the dining room, the décor started with the chairs. "I love those chairs," says the homeowner. The esthetic is distinctly modern with the long, white pendant light in the bay window and the modern art on the walls (**Jonathon Bancroft-Snell Gallery**).

The kitchen/great room is open concept, separated only by a free-standing staircase that leads to the second floor bedrooms. The great room floor was one of the home's few original features that made it through the renovation. It was stripped and stained to match the colour scheme throughout the main floor. "I wanted one visual look from one end to the other," says the homeowner.

Everywhere you look there is a blend of design features that is as unique as the family itself. "I wanted modern and my husband wanted traditional," she says. "In my mind this is a very modern design." *Continued on page 26*



feature



TOP LEFT: The red and black makes a dramatic vignette at the top of the staircase. **LEFT:** The main floor study with its hand written notes offers ever-changing sentiments. **ABOVE:** The guest bedroom has a whimsical flair. **RIGHT:** The master en suite shower is tiled in granite that glows with iridescence. It's like being underwater.

The couple has a blended family comprising two cultures, six children (ranging in age from five to 28), two dogs, Fritz (a Dachshund), Zsa Zsa (a Chinese Crested) and a cat. It is a home filled with art, originality and the homeowner's distinct and very personal design choices.

That this is a busy family home is evident everywhere. The laundry room overflows with rubber boots and shoes, while colourful pom-poms, crafted by five-year-old Evelyn cover the kitchen table. The unique light fixture in the main-floor study contains hand-written sentiments, penned by each member of the family. One of the artfully written sayings, "I love my friends, family and Fritz," sums it up.

Great family memories preserved in a burst of light. It's what this reinvented traditional, yet very modern home is all about. **OH**

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