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Home & Style

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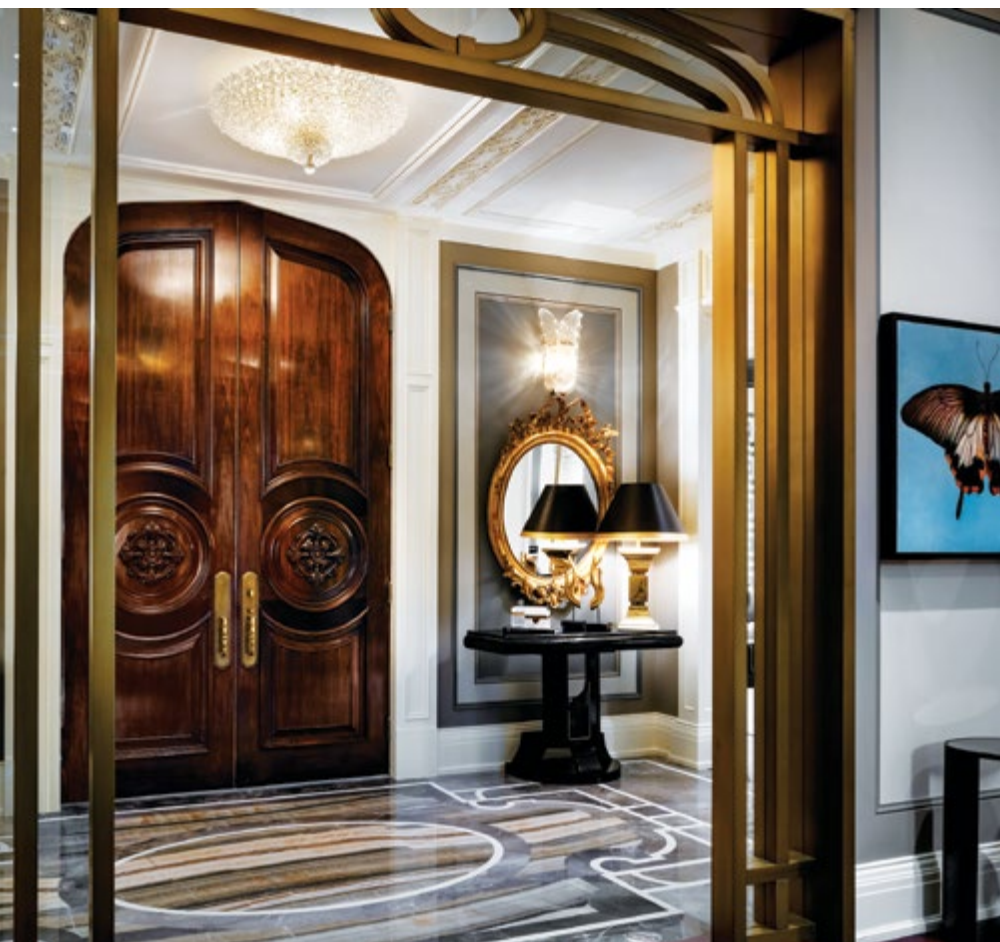
Classically Now

By JORGE S. ARANGO Photography by BRANDON BARRE

Thanks to the ingenuity of interior designer Lori Morris and architect Lorne Rose, a newly built English-style manor house in Toronto feels simultaneously grounded in old-world tradition and steeped in modern interpretations of glamour and comfort—a combination so winning that the editors have anointed the residence Robb Report Home & Style's Ultimate Home 2016.

A FRENCH-STYLE MANSE for himself, his wife, and their 5-year-old twin boys—that is what Joe Montesano, the 47-year-old principal of the Ontario-based residential-subdivision developer Primont Homes, had in mind when he purchased this property in Toronto in 2011. “But the house evolved in an English way,” says its architect, Lorne Rose, who looked to the turn-of-the-century British architect Edwin Lutyens for inspiration. Rose’s mix of Lutyens signatures—smooth limestone and ashlar, leaded-glass windows, neo-Gothic arches, hand-carved quatrefoil details—gave rise to a recently completed English manor house with contemporary appeal. The Tudor-style low roofline accommodates the residence’s 14,000 square feet without having it sprawl ostentatiously across the 2-acre lot. “There’s a lot of house under that roof,” says Rose.





The Right Mix

"STYLISTICALLY," notes Montesano, "we have always been fans of classic architecture and design. We wanted the interior architecture to be an extension of the exterior design. It feels like an updated classic." Further updating came from Toronto designer Lori Morris. "I love old-world architecture, particularly French," says Morris. "But we design with a modern edge. It's very important that every house have a balance of the two." So she mixed aesthetic periods with a liberty and confidence that are consummately contemporary, ushering the classical architectural envelope into the 21st century.

In the entry hall (above), 1940s Murano-glass sconces and a floor of marble and black onyx provide art deco flair, but also present are Italian 1950s black-lacquer consoles from Stanley Wagman & Son Antiques and a Louis XV gilt mirror from Trianon. Doorways are framed in brass fretwork reminiscent of the belle époque, but more streamlined. In the dining room (right), classical doorways and French-style paneled walls ground the space with traditional continental details. Morris layered these, however, with Christian Lacroix wallpaper in the panels and a contemporary cut-pile rug. Above an ornate 18th-century French console with ormolu mounts is a contemporary deco-style mirror, and beneath the console is Elte's hide-covered Celine ottoman with brass banding. On the other side of the door, a contemporary painting by the Toronto artist Neil Young hangs above an art deco-era commode.





Dining in Style

LAVISH ENTERTAINING happens in the dining room (above). “Our desire was a design that felt both livable and comfortable, with an emphasis on entertaining, including large family holidays and outdoor hosting,” says Montesano. Understanding those needs, the design team delivered elegance by incorporating ornate ceiling plasterwork; a massive, circa-1900 Louis XVI–style gilt-bronze chandelier from Ribbehege & Azevedo; and the amply decorated fireplace. Morris also considered practicality: The setbacks flanking the mantel open to reveal copious storage. The chairs, taken from Montesano’s previous home, are now fresh with cream lacquer and embroidered damask upholstery. More 20th-century touches include bold patterns that make a graphic statement (the oversized Greek-key trim on the drapes), custom deco-style seating around a curvaceous Orca cocktail table from Holly Hunt, and a pop-art painting of Marlon Brando by artist Russell Young.

The kitchen (left) also balances yesterday and today. Elements that recall bygone eras include the stepped ceiling and what appears to be a needlepoint carpet runner; closer inspection, however, reveals the latter to be a design in marble mosaic tile. The backsplashes are traditional white marble, but the island countertop is more-contemporary quartzite. Brass inlay work and cream lacquer also impart a glossy glamour to the space, and the two Grand Lotus chandeliers from Currey & Company offer a flash of gold.

“Though the elements of classicism are apparent, the layering and details have a more modern feeling to them.”

—Interior designer Lori Morris



Easy Elegance

INSTEAD OF A formal living room, the owners opted for a capacious, softly cushioned family room (left and above). Nevertheless, it lacks for nothing in the spectacular department, beginning with the double-height walnut fireplace, which is flanked by two seating niches with built-in shelves. There are also impressive wood trusses, gilded decorative panels set into the fireplace, and gold trim and ovals over the niches. Because, as Montesano says, “we did not want to restrict our children from being children,” Morris used washable fabrics on all seating, many of them—like the cut chenille of the ottoman—boasting patterns that are forgiving of spills. “If there’s a stunning fabric I want to use to make a statement,” she says, “I’d use it in a secondary place, such as drapery, pillows, or walls.” To the same end, a sisal rug banded in brown leather underlies the room. The brass fretwork door leads to the wine room. Morris provided “a shot of color” with Jay Hodgins’s painting *Riak #6*.



Crème de la Crème

THE MASTER BATHROOM (above) and master bedroom (left) are rhapsodies in cream and ivory. The palette, says Morris, elicits tranquility; it also serves as a backdrop for sumptuous materials. The bath has a large window that perfectly frames a pewter cupola located just outside. Over the generously sized tub, which is encased in custom millwork and features Watermark's Venetian-series gold and crystal fixtures, hangs a bespoke chandelier of bronzed chain mail. Next to the tub, Elte's sculptural Helix bench offers a perch for towelng off, and a French-style chair provides a seat before the vanity. All around is custom cream-lacquer cabinetry ornamented with brass metalwork designed by Morris and finished by Make it Metal, of St. Catharines, Ontario. The metalwork perpetuates the home's fretwork thread. In the bedroom, the grandly vaulted ceiling allowed for another statement piece: a colossal French-style crystal chandelier. The onyx fireplace, which teems with highly decorative carvings, is Morris's design. Above the mantel is a painting by another Toronto artist, Samantha Sandbrook, and at the foot of the bed is a plush seating area boasting a custom sofa and a pair of art deco-style cushioned metal ottomans.



Glow in the Dark

JUST THE RIGHT amount of shine emanates from the library lounge, a rich space enveloped in black suede walls with chocolate-brown suede strap detailing. The room's stately double-sided fireplace (shown to the left and partially out of view) is an amalgam of dramatically veined Michelangelo marble and white marble. The seating arrangement shown here—four armless chairs upholstered in a striped black velvet and gathered around a Phillips Collection tree-stump-like cocktail table made of gold-leafed resin—occupies the

area to one side of the fireplace (a desk is on the other). By the leaded-glass window, Morris placed a brass-accented black-lacquer waterfall console of her design. Again her penchant for oversize lighting manifests itself, this time in the form of the high-impact, strikingly proportioned pendant that hangs over the seating area. Morris discovered the mid-20th-century Italian fixture of glass rods and brass at Stanley Wagman & Son Antiques. It suspends from a painted fretwork design on the ceiling.

“I see automobiles as art on wheels. In a way, I would rather park [art] in my garage than hang it on my walls.”

—Homeowner Joe Montesano



Park Place

WHAT LOOKS LIKE a two-car garage from the outside (see facade, page 18) is actually a clever ruse. While the door to the right is a ground-level garage where the family might unload groceries, the left door leads to a ramp that descends to a separate 4,000-square-foot garage (above). The subterranean space allowed the house to sidestep grandiosity and retain a livable scale, and it eliminated the need for a separate structure that would have interrupted the family's view to a neighboring conservation area. The black-and-white scheme featuring epoxied floors with racing stripes is neutral enough to avoid clashing with multicolored cars, and it is also said to represent the colors of the open road. "We made it black and high-gloss white rather than a particular color," says Morris, "because who knows what his collection will be in a few years."

Montesano owns seven cars now, but there's space for 11 automobiles in this gallery-style garage, where, as throughout the rest of the home, tradition and the present masterfully intertwine. "I'm a fan of modern cars," he says, "and tend to look for tomorrow's classics as part of my collection, which I plan to grow with my two boys." **H&S**

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