

# LASTING IMPRESSION



A SUBSTANTIAL RENEWAL  
PROCESS LEAVES A CONDO  
WITH AN ELEGANT,  
TIMELESS STYLE.

*Text by Jennifer Hughes  
Photography by Mark Berstyn*

**It was a knowledge of** good design, not just happenstance, that led Sharon Lokash to her serenely elegant condominium. A Toronto real estate agent, Sharon had been familiar with the 1970s, 20-storey building for years and was drawn to its spacious, open-concept floor plans and floor-to-ceiling windows. "I had always had my eye on it and wanted to rent here, so when I found out it was being converted to condos, I was one of the first ones through



**ABOVE:** The living room's neutral palette ties together the eclectic mix of furnishings. French country bergere chairs (one shown), upholstered in grey chenille, were refinished to match the contemporary burled walnut coffee table. The window shutters are the same colour as the wall for a seamless look. Beacon Hill fabric (on sofas), Robert Allen; toss pillow fabric, Brunswick & Fil; wall colour, Cubist Gray (1022), Sherwin-Williams. **LEFT:** Designer Tara Fingold (left) and homeowner Sharon Lokash.





In the dining area, the honed white Carrara marble tabletop, surrounded by ultrasuede-covered chairs, coordinates with the marble countertops and tiles in the adjacent kitchen. A crystal chandelier and sconces lend elegance. Square dishes, Homefront; ultrasuede (on chairs) Kravet Canada.

“The kitchen’s most striking feature is the backsplash of one-by-two-inch Carrara marble tiles”



**TOP LEFT:** The antique English pine hutch is flanked by contemporary chairs and mirror-backed reproduction coach house lanterns to create a symmetrical focal point in the living room. Sharon’s silver collection adds sparkle to the scene.

Hutch colour, Neutral Ground (1130), Sherwin-Williams; lantern sconces, Angus & Company.

**LEFT:** In the kitchen, Fingold carried the Carrara marble backsplash up the wall for a luxurious Art Deco feel. The honed Carrara marble countertop enhances the kitchen’s streamlined look. Tiles, Forest Hill Marble.

the door,” she says.

When Sharon purchased the midtown condo three years ago, it was a 1,750-square-foot bare concrete box, and before moving from her city townhouse into the new space, she enlisted the help of designer Tara Fingold to oversee every step from the condo’s renovation to its finishing touches. Aside from a minor edit, she hoped to reuse much of the furniture she’d collected over several decades.

Fingold rejiggered as much of the space as possible while working with the condo’s structural elements like concrete pillars and windows. “This was a unique situation,” says Fingold. “The builder was flexible and willing to facilitate and implement my designs. We weren’t restricted to ‘builder’s updates,’ but were allowed to go in our own direction.”

While most walls remained intact, the two-bedroom apartment was converted into a one-bedroom-plus-study to better suit Sharon’s empty-nester lifestyle. Consequently, access from a two-door bathroom to the former bedroom was closed off so it now only leads to the hallway, acting more like a powder room; and the





**ABOVE:** Recessed-panel wainscoting installed in the study has a library-like effect. Down-filled furnishings and soft textures, like chocolate chenille sofa upholstery and an ivory wool chenille area rug, create inviting warmth. Hung on the wall in an interesting pattern, Sharon's formal china acts as art. Area rug: Dominion Rug; checked pillow fabric, Lee Jofa; armchair fabric, Primavera Interior Furnishings. **TOP RIGHT:** Fingold softened the look of the contemporary wood vanity in the master bathroom by installing a limestone counter with a double-ogee edge. The limestone on the floor continues into the glass-enclosed shower for a seamless look.

new study's closet is used to house files and office supplies next to Sharon's desk. While the original building plans called for prefinished hardwood throughout the space, Fingold incorporated a custom finish in a contrasting darker brown stain, and elegant 12-by-24-inch limestone tiles were laid in a brick pattern in the entryway, kitchen and bathrooms.

The kitchen was completely reworked. While its galley-style layout remained the same, creamy Shaker-style cabinetry, brushed nickel hardware and an extra-thick slab of Carrara marble for the countertops create a "streamlined traditional" look. The kitchen's most striking feature, however, is the backsplash of one-by-two-inch Carrara marble tiles laid in a subway pattern that continues up over the door frame and across the entire wall. "That wall is a focal point upon entering the condo, so we really wanted to make it a feature," says Fingold. "The tiled wall and backsplash turn the kitchen into a masterpiece," adds Sharon.

With the condo's hard elements in place, Fingold set to reinventing nearly every piece of furniture Sharon owned. "I didn't want to buy all new furniture," says Sharon. "All my existing pieces were high quality pieces that I'd collected over decades for my previous homes in Toronto." Details like leg

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An upholstered headboard in soft tone-on-tone floral liner and quilted white bedding provide cozy texture in the bedroom. Bedding, Au Lit Fine Linens; etching by Claude Weisbuch, Art Interiors.



## CITY LIVING

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styles and arm proportions were changed, and Fingold pulled the look together by implementing a cohesive colour palette in soft neutrals for walls, upholstery fabrics and accents. It successfully ties together an eclectic mix of styles — from contemporary, straight-lined pieces to curvy antiques. “It’s an easy palette to live with,” says Fingold. “There are some current elements that also won’t date easily, like the nubby charcoal grey wool on the living room sofas. And using the same fabrics on different pieces of furniture allows the eye to read everything as one cohesive unit.”

It was important to both Sharon and Fingold that they incorporate all of Sharon’s antiques, though in a refreshing take on traditional. For example, the living room’s 18th-century English pine hutch, which Sharon has owned for 25 years, boasts elegant lines and offers plenty of storage, but the original pine finish and brass hardware stood out as too “country” in the new setting. With a new coat of creamy white paint and its original hardware finished in matte black, it now acts as a refined focal point that works alongside modern chrome armchairs that flank the piece.

Punctuating the serene, sophisticated backdrop are elegant accents like a glittering crystal chandelier and sconces, also brought from Sharon’s previous home to grace the dining area, and a pair of reproduction coach house lanterns flanking the antique hutch in the living room. A sparkling Venetian glass mirror, hung over an ornate bow-front chest, adds glamour. Sharon’s silver collection, on display rather than tucked away, provides further polish. Avoiding trendy accessories — or limiting them to small hits — will allow the decor to remain fresh. The result of the eight-month-long project is a timeless take on traditional, updated yet classic. Fingold believes the look is a lasting one. “It’s a fabulous space,” says Sharon. “I love that Tara has given all my pieces new life.” **H&H**

## GROWTH MANAGEMENT

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gardens here,” she says. “There’s the part you can see and the part you have to venture into to see: the woodland garden is there to draw you in.” The woodland area, which wraps around the main garden, is anchored with a variety of hostas and other shade-tolerant plants: lungwort, bugleweed, periwinkle, violas and Solomon’s seal.

Barbara and Andrew have been conscious of creating a garden that offers up successive waves of bloom throughout the season. “One principle I try to follow is to use colours to make major statements,” Barbara says. “I have lady’s mantle going off at the same time as a hardy purple geranium. Or I’ll team a redbud with an orange azalea at its feet.”

A linear garden flanked by a backbone of cedars at one end of the garden sports a gutsier colour scheme than those in the subtler central area. “This garden is a transition into the meadow, so it’s a not-so-polite look. In fact, it stops a whisper short of being garish,” Barbara laughs. Here, alliums and prairie mallow vie for attention with fuchsia bee balm, pink carpet roses, spikes of deep blue sage, yellow tickseed, lavender, lemon thyme, cream and pink yarrows and various shades of carnations. “There’s purple aster here that will bloom at the same time as the anemone,” she says. At the top of this border, a rustic willow arbour opens a door to the adjacent meadow. “We wanted something that would create structure,” Barbara says. “Everything is about directing the eye, framing the view.”

Although they enjoy swimming, Barbara and Andrew didn’t want to install a traditional aqua-coloured pool. “I was thinking of reflecting pools I had seen in old gardens in Europe,” Barbara says. “There was to be no metal or plastic.” The ink-blue colour of the pool comes from marble ground into the concrete. A border surrounding the pool includes hostas,

hydrangea, lilies and foxglove, with little surprises here and there such as a twig chair and an antique metal birdcage nesting nearby.


Mindful of incorporating bones into the landscape, Barbara and Andrew punctuated the superb backdrop of mature trees with additions such as a lovely willow-leaved pear tree and a witch hazel in the main garden, as well as lilacs and cedars. They’re watching to see how three redbuds they planted last year will fare.

The casual, cottagey nature of the garden extends naturally to the meadows flanking two sides of the house, where Barbara has sown flax, gayfeather, blanket flower, bachelor’s buttons and bee balm into the meadow grass where wild turkeys congregate. To separate the wild meadow from the sloping grass, she and Andrew have sown a band of Shirley poppies in a colour palette that spans white, pink, red and orange. Once again, that busy mind is questioning if the poppies work well in the landscape. “Does it look a little naive or vulgar?” Barbara asks. Hardly, but it’s this kind of constant evaluation that results in such a dynamic space. **H&H**

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