

# EYE FOR DESIGN

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When prolific Ottawa restaurateur, Ion Aimers, decided to leave his 140-year-old, country farm house in Navan after nearly a quarter century, he wasn't sure that "once in a lifetime feeling of home" could be duplicated in a smaller urban abode. *Continued on page 48*

**ABOVE:** Ion's living area boasts unique pieces of art and décor. The window seat with the Queen of Hearts is a talking point. **TOP RIGHT:** This bust of a childhood friend was sculpted by Ion's father. **RIGHT:** Ion's love of art is evident in every room. This staircase is beautifully decorated with photographs and paintings.







**LEFT:** Ion and his dog Towser sit comfortably on the unique window seat. **BELOW:** The heart of the home. As a restaurateur, the kitchen had to be perfect for Ion.



After only a few months of living in his newly renovated three-storey, 1,000 sq. ft. home in New Edinburgh/Lindenlea, Ion happily admits that he was completely wrong about his first impression. “I feel at home here just as I did in my big sprawling farm house,” he smiles. “Maybe more so because of the size. It’s cosy and extremely welcoming.”

With the small footprint, Ion says there was a lot of consternation over the walls and lack of good communication between rooms. “Not just for people, but for light and sound to move freely throughout the space.”

Like most Victorian houses of the time, the rooms were tight with walls, creating dark, cramped quarters unsuitable for today’s modern living. However, you’ll find no dark mahogany parlours here. After Ion worked with an architect/designer, he partnered with **Mark Kranenburg** of **Greenmark Builders Inc.**, to strip away everything, including the old plaster and lathe, so he could have a clean palette to work with.

While Ion had never designed or built a house before, he is no stranger to envisioning cosy, creative places. His restaurants The Works Gourmet Burger Bistro, ZaZaZa Pizza, Fraser Café/Table 40 and his new endeavour, Wilf and Ada’s, serve as testaments to a man with a vibrant eye for design.

“I was so impressed with how Ion pulled abstract items and made them work together,” says Mark. “He really enjoys putting a modern spin on things that so many people would overlook. If you’ve ever been to his restaurants, you’ll know exactly what I’m talking about. I love Ion’s creativity.”

As soon as you walk in, you’re struck by the inviting open space that unites the main living area and the striking Tangerine Orange C2 paint from **Randall’s** in the kitchen. The rest of the room’s neutral walls allow for his family heirlooms, unique art finds and fascinating contemporary artwork.

Mark also constructed the show-stopping, custom, built-in window bench in the living room, accentuated with country flair using architectural trim from **Mountain Moulding Ltd.** Ruling the room, however, is the bust of a fabulous Queen, crafted by local sculptor **Chandler Swain**, owner of gallery **General Fine Craft Art & Design** in Almonte. Juxtaposition is one of Ion’s favourite design elements and he uses it in such powerful, but subtle ways that it effortlessly makes his home feel light and mischievous.



**TOP:** The dining area, with a 50-year-old family harvest table, is just off the kitchen. The old grandfather clock that Ion’s parents brought over from Dublin sits in the corner. **ABOVE:** The unique lighting is made of repurposed household pipe and painted stark black from Architectural Antique Lighting.

With his dog, Towser, and sons; Parker, 15 and Ryan, 20, Ion knew he needed flooring that could take a lot of wear, so he opted for a durable wide-plank country-inspired laminate from **Orleans Carpet**. Its rich colour grounds the room and provides smart and attractive functionality.

The rest of the room is anchored thanks to two contrasting pieces. The gas fireplace from **Hubert’s Fireplace Consultation + Design**, has a fieldstone appearance and is adorned with a natural wood mantel with live edging, cut from the original log cabin that made up Ion’s old farmhouse. On the other side of the room, a muted blood-orange sofa from **Urban Barn** adds just the right amount of sheen and punch that gives the room vivacious life. The minimalist, rustic coffee table is from **Details Home Apparel**.

In the dining room, a welcoming glow emits from a one-of-a-kind industrial chandelier made of repurposed household pipe and painted stark black from **Architectural Antique Lighting**. What complements Ion’s family heirlooms so exquisitely are the antique-inspired Edison filament light bulbs that run in rows of threes, and perfectly centered over the large 50-year-old family harvest table. “That table has been through so many milestones in my family. It’s one of those pieces I can never part with.”

Ion’s country influence is perhaps most prevalent in the brilliant bead board kitchen cabinetry and ceiling lined with white country planks by Greg Kenny at **Canadditions**. Ion notes that the kitchen was gutted and completely rebuilt by hand. “When I showed people the tangerine

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**RIGHT:** Ion smiles when he talks about his bathroom, complete with a waterfall shower-head. **BELOW:** Even the bathroom boasts unique décor showcasing his eye for design throughout the home.



orange paint from Randall's, they were polite, but skeptical, asking if I was sure about the colour," he laughs. "It was a nice way of saying they hated it." No laughing matter now, the kitchen is a radiant space. The Ikea butcher-block counters complete the homespun look, while the stainless steal appliances from **Universal Appliances** gives it an infused dose of contrasting glamour.

The kitchen holds many marvels, including the original sign from his father's architectural business, an old grandfather clock Ion's parents brought over from Dublin, and a bust, sculpted by his father of a long ago childhood friend. "I'm a history buff and inspired by beautiful things," Ion says of his style. *Continued on page 52*

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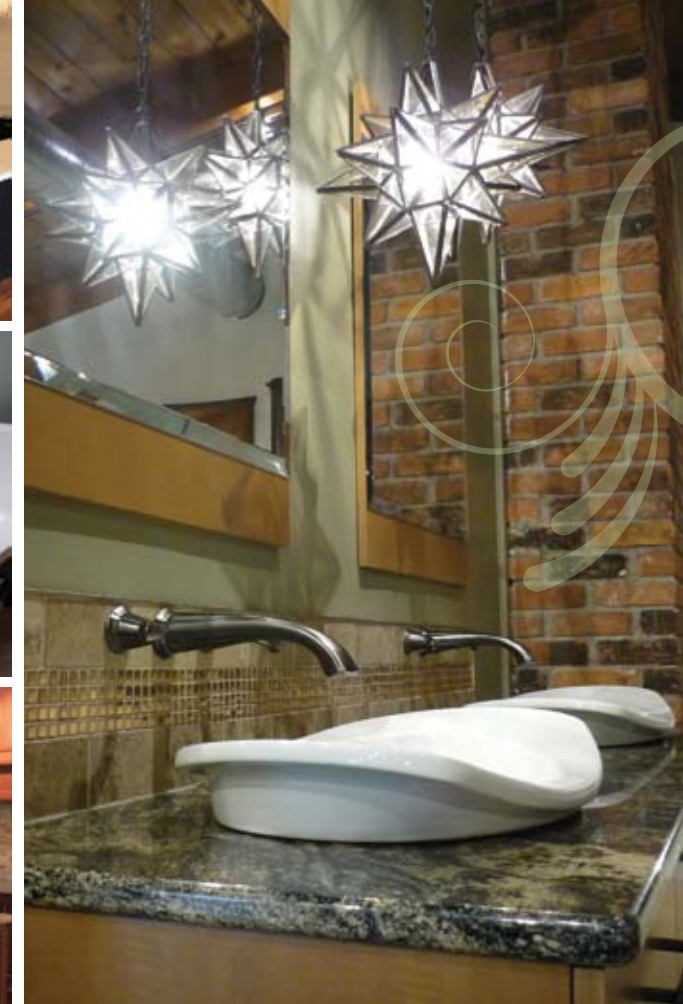
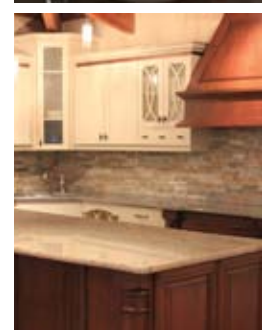


**ABOVE:** Ion's bedroom is situated across the hall from his dream bathroom. **RIGHT:** This delicate chair sits in the corner of Ion's bedroom surrounded by art.

One of the reasons Ion enthusiastically jumps out of bed every morning likely has to do with the spa-meets-country bathroom, with its vast glass-shower door, wide barn-board interior ceramic tile, and giant waterfall showerhead. "I wake up every day with a smile on my face knowing I get to shower in here," he says. A skylight gives the room an exceptional open-air natural beauty.

Ion explains that he was very hands-on with the design and construction of his renovation. "To me it was an evolutionary process and I was willing to change my mind to get it right," he says. "I bought the house, but hadn't lived in it. As the seasons changed during the renovation, I would see new opportunities and possibilities."

He admits it did add to the timeline and cost, but says it was all worth it. "Like life, I think you're more likely to have regrets if you're not open to change." **OH**



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