



**BELOW:** DUO created space behind the kitchen for a spacious mudroom. Roth Design built the bench. **BOTTOM:** A handy beverage centre tucks into an alcove beside the fridge. **RIGHT:** New cabinetry and finishes are a serious nod to the era of the home. **OPPOSITE:** The reconfiguration of space delivered a stylish and functional layout.



***COLLIN JOHNSTONE HAS BEEN READING INTERIOR DESIGN MAGAZINES SINCE HE WAS 12 YEARS OLD.***



So when his father, Ian Johnstone, purchased a stately home close to campus for Collin and his sister to live in while they attended Western University, it was only a matter of time before he put his stamp on the space.

“I wanted to renovate immediately,” says the younger Johnstone. “It was something I’d been thinking about for years.”

First came school, followed by three years in Ottawa working as a staffer in the Office of the Prime Minister. When he got back to London, Collin says the time was finally right to bring his vision for the Old North beauty to life.

Ian Johnstone, who works between the Toronto and London offices of his law firm Johnstone & Cowling, agreed and put his son in charge of the project. *Continued on page 40*

# A YOUNG MAN’S VISION

STORY **NICOLE LAIDLER**  
PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON HARTOG**





Collin says his family loves to entertain, which was part of the property's original appeal. Built in 1919 for the Catholic Diocese of London, the 7,400 sq. ft. house retains the grandeur of years gone by with its expansive main floor living room and sun room, formal dining room and a sweeping staircase that leads upstairs.

Original wood flooring, leaded windows, tall baseboards and pocket doors add to the home's understated elegance.

"I appreciate all styles of design," Collin comments. "But I thought the renovations here needed to respect the home. I felt that going too modern would not work."

Like many home renovation projects, this one started with a single room – the kitchen – and grew from there. "Since we had to open up walls and change plumbing we decided to do the upstairs bathroom as well," Collin explains. "Then we continued into the rear stairway and powder room."



One of north London's most venerated homes has always been a head turner, its gracious covered porch providing shady respite from the summer heat.

***"I APPRECIATE ALL STYLES OF DESIGN, BUT I THOUGHT THE RENOVATIONS HERE NEEDED TO RESPECT THE HOME."***



**DUO Building Ltd.** was brought in to oversee the kitchen and bathroom renovations, while Collin worked with **Sylvie Roth** of **Sylvie's Interior Design** on lighting and some wall colour choices.

Collin believes the home's kitchen had not been touched for several decades. The dated space featured a dropped ceiling, tiled flooring and a layout that simply didn't work as a gathering spot for family and friends.

After gutting the existing kitchen, **Atchison Plumbing & Heating Ltd.** and **Goris Electric Ltd.** came in to update the pipes and wiring throughout.

Relocating the refrigerator and removing the upper cabinetry from along the back wall facilitated the creation of a stylish bar area complete with an icemaker and beverage fridge (all appliances from **Appliance Canada**) and round copper sink by Native Trails from **The Ensuite Bath & Kitchen Showroom**.

*Continued on page 42*

**LEFT:** The dining room opens from the home's centre hall. A bold new chandelier and angle iron mirror (Roth Design) work beautifully with the traditional dining suite. **TOP:** Collin Johnstone, DUO Building Ltd.'s Gayle White-Malloy and Ian Johnstone.





A custom steel range hood with copper nail accents designed and built by **Andy Roth** of **Roth Design Inc.** provides a striking focal point and sits above a six-burner gas Viking range.

Custom face-frame cabinetry by **G&S Woodworking** gives the kitchen a contemporary feel while maintaining the integrity of the home's traditional style. Face framing is a visual feature typical to homes of a certain era. It adds strength to the cabinetry because the frame provides a place to attach doors and hardware.

Black soapstone counters from **Progressive Countertop** are offset by a grey quartz backsplash that continues right up the walls. The kitchen's large centre island, painted a surprising shade of navy blue (Old Navy by **Benjamin Moore**) and topped with an ice white leathered granite countertop (Progressive Countertop), provides plenty of space for prep work, as well as a comfortable spot for casual dining.

The cast-iron farmhouse Kohler sink (The Ensuite) and porcelain herringbone flooring (**Alfred's Carpet One Floor & Home**) complete the room's vintage vibe. "Some people thought the kitchen would have too many design elements, but when they see it now they are quite impressed," Collin says.

The renovated space flows seamlessly into the home's formal dining room thanks to the removal of a dividing wall, which has been replaced by pocket doors. *Continued on page 44*



The sunroom overlooks the back garden, providing access from french doors. Contemporary furnishings, a coffee table by Roth Design and a leggy metal ceiling fixture are surprise elements. **OPPOSITE, TOP:** The home's original architectural features enhance the living room. **BOTTOM:** A large cosy sectional sofa in the living room has modernized the room's purpose, making it a welcoming place to relax or watch TV. With the living room and sunroom open to each other, light streams through the house all day.





Collin's love of texture and contrast is on full display in the nearby powder room. The small space makes a big impact thanks to bold geometric wallpaper from **Clancy's Rainbow**. Roth Design Inc. created a custom vanity using a clever mix of concrete, teak and galvanized steel. It provides the perfect pedestal for another Native Trails copper sink.

Upstairs, DUO expanded the existing bathroom by removing a closet from an adjoining room and stealing space from the large second-floor landing. This clever solution provides plenty of room for a double vanity (G&S Woodworking), claw-foot tub and large walk-in shower. *Continued on page 46*

**LEFT:** The tiny powder room involves a sophisticated interplay of geometric wallpaper, herringbone floors and a custom teak, steal and concrete vanity. **BELOW:** The centre stairwell, with original leaded windows and bench seat, rises to the third floor where round two of renovations is about to begin.



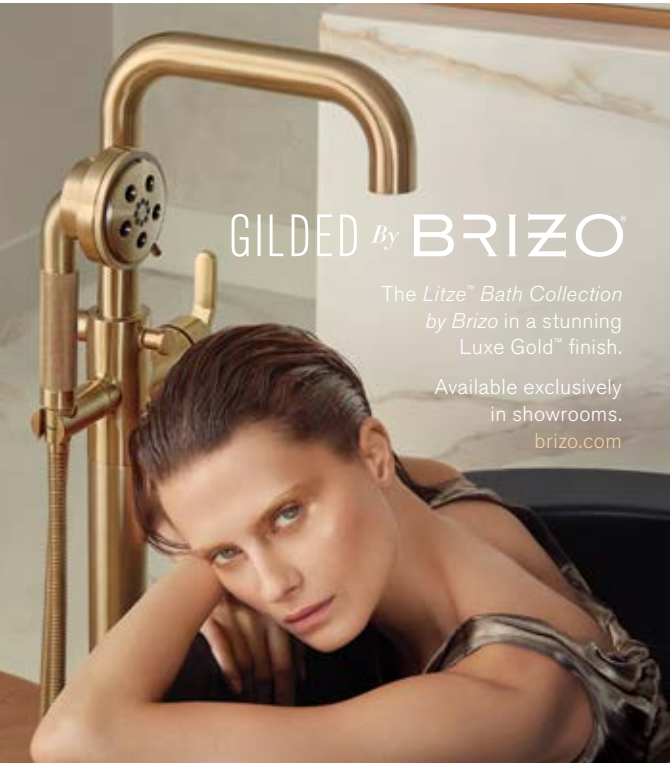
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The second floor required some reconfiguring on DUO's part to allow space for a generous, luxuriously appointed bathroom. **BELOW:** As in the kitchen, Collin wanted the up-to-the-minute spa bathroom, with features like a claw-foot tub and period faucets, to connect stylistically with the original house.



One of several bedrooms on the second floor gets a sunny update.

Collin was so taken by the powder room wallpaper that he chose a slightly different version for the upstairs bathroom. In combination with Calacatta marble flooring and dark granite countertops (Progressive), it makes a dramatic statement.

"This bathroom has a masculine, mid-century modern feel that I really like," he says.

With the kitchen and bathroom renovations complete, Collin is turning his attention to the home's third floor where DUO will oversee the transformation of the former servants' quarters into a private master retreat.

"We're going to take down all the walls to completely open up the space," he says.

He is keen to get these future plans underway, and it's no wonder given the vote of confidence from his father. "My father knows and trusts my tastes," Collin adds. "He's comfortable letting me take the reins." **OH**



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