

NEST WITH Style



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FLOWERS FASCINATION FLOWERS

ABOVE: Colour and texture together create an eclectic yet cohesive living room. A rock wall by Patene Building Supplies is a striking focal point. **OPPOSITE TOP:** A chair from Lofty Ambitions blends seamlessly and allows Marina's artwork to shine. **RIGHT:** Mary Cath Altobelli guided sister Marina in designing a space that suited her unique tastes.

Marina Randazzo doesn't live for her house. The 30-something professional works in the medical field, has a seven-year-old daughter, and is a successful artist.

When she decided to buy a place of her own – an Ancaster townhome by **Toscani Developments Ltd.** – she enlisted her interior decorator sister, **Mary Cath Altobelli** of **Alto Interiors**, to help her strike the right balance, ensuring her home reflected her values and tastes, without borrowing too heavily from her travel and entertaining budgets.

For Marina, the most important thing was to fill her home with character. "If it's in my house, it has to move me," she says. "It has to make me feel."

"She told me, it's got to have soul," says Mary Cath.

Part of that soul was found through thoughtful layout changes, creating a flow that makes sense for Marina's lifestyle. "The kitchen was already framed when we found the condo and we said, 'Oh no, we don't want that kitchen,'" says Mary Cath. The original floor plan included a wall between the kitchen and the living area that would have blocked the natural light and prevented Marina from seeing and speaking with her daughter if they were in different rooms on the main floor. Removing the wall meant a more open-concept space, perfect for both parenting and entertaining.

Mary Cath also cautioned Marina against putting a sink in the oversize peninsula between the kitchen and dining areas, pointing out how much prime counter space she would lose.

"She was right," says Marina, who uses the Caesarstone-topped peninsula (**Granite Plus Inc.**) for serving drinks and food when guests come by. "Where on earth would I put the brie, if the sink was here?" she laughs.

"Now, the whole feel of the kitchen caters to me," says Marina. "My parents may not like this kitchen. They may not appreciate the way

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the island is great for mixing a dirty martini. But I will, and my friends and colleagues will."

Open shelves just above the sink – home to a collection of meaningful keepsakes, including vintage glass from **Décor on a Dime** – were another construction tweak.

"I don't think a lot of people realize they have the option to take away cabinetry when they're building," says Mary Cath. While kitchen storage is crucial to some, sacrificing a few square feet of closed cabinet space made sense for Marina.

The colours in the display echo the focal-point painting in the middle of the living room (by Marina). Storied pieces – end tables from her Nonna, a glass coffee table from her mother – add personality and ensure the room is anything but cookie-cutter. Pieces from **The Millionaire's Daughter** add to the eclectic feel throughout the home. Amidst all of the finds and bargains are a couple of splurges, too.

"This sofa was one of my extravagances," says Marina, of the stately grey sofa that anchors the living room. "I love this couch. JFK could have sat on this couch!"



TOP: The open-concept main living space allows for easy entertaining. **ABOVE:** A dining table by Expressions in Wood tucked in the corner blends gracefully into its surroundings. **LEFT:** Open shelving in the kitchen displays lovely keepsakes.



RIGHT: Marina's home studio allows her to get creative whenever inspiration arises. **FAR RIGHT:** A blend of old and new creates a cosy bedroom. **BOTTOM:** The bathroom is made beautiful with a backsplash, soothing grey walls and a marble countertop. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Pops of colour create a bright and cheery bedroom.



The other splurge is the natural walnut flooring (**Via Roma Marble and Tile Ltd.**) throughout most of the first floor. "We were just going to do it in the living room," says Mary Cath, "But I was fiddling around with the drawing, and I said, 'look what happens when I erase this division,' it looks so much larger and so much more cohesive."

Other small touches made big impacts on the main floor, too. What is now a discreet floor vent under a bench in the dining area was originally meant to be a wall vent, which would have meant losing three or four square feet.

For Marina, that bit of reclaimed space means more room for friends



and family. "See this bench?" she asks, pointing to the vintage find, carefully placed over the floor vent. "That's three or four more people I can have at my party!"

Downstairs has been personalized, too. Marina and her daughter enjoy an art studio in one portion of the unfinished lower level, where Mary Cath has employed a little shoestring creativity, using a staple gun and fabric. "This is where the magic happens," says Marina, gesturing to the collection of in-progress paintings on easels (both hers and her daughter's), next to an oversize sofa and a jumble of recently played-with toys. "I like the convenience of painting at home," says Marina. "If I have to get dressed, pack my car and get downtown to

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RIGHT: Hints of yellow add warmth to the master bedroom. **BELOW:** A tranquil grey and white palette was used in the en suite. **BOTTOM:** A charming hallway table from Antiques Unlocked adds vintage style.



paint, the inspiration is diffused and gone by the time I'm at King and James." Much of Marina's framing and canvas comes from **Creations Art Gallery and Framing**.

Upstairs, the master bedroom and bathroom reflect Marina's priorities and Mary Cath's resourcefulness, as well.

There's a desk from a hotel liquidator's store and a reupholstered vintage bench (**Decor Restore Inc.**) at the end of the bed. An old school chandelier (**Avenue Lighting**) with a modern twist lends a little glam, and casts shifting patterns on the ceiling, too. "It looks like my Nonna's chandelier, just jacked up," says Marina.

In the master bath, Mary Cath negotiated with the builder to get rid of the planned bathtub and instead installed a stately shower with a feature wall of deep-grey hexagonal tiles (Centura Tile) accented with upgraded plumbing fixtures.

Surprises like this are more or less the theme of Marina's condo, with repurposed and character-filled finds, quirky touches and the odd splurge here and there. Every detail is carefully considered, and in line with what matters most to Marina.

"I think a lot of people have this perception that using a decorator is lavish," says Marina. "But even just an initial consultation for a few hundred dollars can help get you started, help you to translate your space."

That up-front investment can mean a savings down the road. "It's about making sure you're not missing opportunities," says Mary Cath. In Marina's case, that also means the chance to nest – stylishly – doesn't interfere with the chance to save cash for other priorities. Thanks to Mary Cath's ingenuity, Marina can now have her personalized space and her ticket to France. **OH**



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