

BEAUTIFULLY SIMPLE

STORY **JOYCE TURNER GIONET**
PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON HARTOG**

White is charismatic. We don't typically think of white this way; often we see it as a sort of non-colour, despite it being made up of all the colours in the spectrum. In colour psychology, white represents spirituality, purity and newness.



White gives rise to possibilities – toss a french blue cushion on a white sofa and the blue pops, beginning an aesthetic conversation. White can hold its own alone; or like an artist's canvas, it can be a starting point, a background upon which to paint thoughts, feelings, desires and, particularly in interior design, atmosphere. In her own home, **Marguerite Harrison**, head designer at Burlington's **Andersons**, uses white as both a beginning and an end, with splashes of colour in between to keep the aesthetic conversation lively. At 1,500 sq. ft., her living space is concentrated, but since white reflects rather than absorbs light, it delivers the illusion of a much larger space.

"I live a busy life," Marguerite says. "When I walk through the door at the end of the day, I want my surroundings to wrap me in a hug. I love to entertain and I want others to feel happy here, but when I'm alone, my surroundings must respond to my need for quiet and contemplation."

She uses colour thoughtfully and textures intentionally. As with the white-on-white window treatments, she often layers her

design. Not just for visual interest, when done properly, layering evokes feelings of warm comfort. She groups accessories in whimsical ways. "The scrumptious, randomness of whimsy appeals to my romantic nature," she laughs.

She characterizes her style as shabby chic. The style grew out of the gentrified shabbiness in the drawing rooms of aging European century estates – chintz or silk sofas where colours had faded, oriental rugs worn by foot traffic, paintwork peeling around doors and windows. One of Marguerite's favourite designers, Rachel Ashwell, is credited with turning shabby chic into a brand more than 20 years ago. The style has evolved to include a range of design elements: painted furniture – sometimes revealing multiple layers of paint and finished with quirky hardware – slipcovers, fabrics in gingham, stripes, florals, checks and plaids, metallic accents and chandeliers. Colours are typically woodsy and rustic or beachy and cottagey, and always soft, never startling. At its heart, shabby chic is about simplicity, understated elegance and comfort. *Continued on page 38*



The open-concept main level includes the kitchen, dining room and family room. The layers of shades and textures within the space allow the details in Marguerite's soft design motif to shine through.

RIGHT: The galley-style kitchen offers plenty of space to prepare and entertain. Marguerite loves to serve the cookies made by Sweet Bakery's owner, Stacey Farrant. **BELOW:** Unique wallpaper from Andersons creates interest in the powder room. Flowers provided by Burlington Blooms add beauty. **BOTTOM:** Marguerite's home is a perfect reflection of her unique sense of design.



Grounded by distressed, dark oak four-inch plank floors, Marguerite's home is shabby chic at its best. Soft greys, hues of blue and shades of beige predominate. At times, soft pinks, reds and fresh evergreen accents make an appearance. Space planning in the great room puts the focus on intimate conversation. Offside, there's a splash of colour in the "X marks the spot" grey armchair. Farrow & Ball's Pointing adds a milky finish to walls. The narrow stripes on the linen sofa offset its clean lines. Flowers provided by **Burlington Blooms** add a finishing touch throughout the space. Throw pillows are matched to the season. For winter, a faux-fur cushion is

paired with cushions lit with a French motif. Accessories, like the vintage porcelain jars grouped on the round, antique side table, add visual interest, but nothing detracts from the setup's main purpose: conversation. Panelling, installed by **Dan Halt Painting and Decorating**, covers three-quarters of the wall. "I just knew it would look right at that height and if I decide to paint the wall above a pastel, it won't dilute the white palette," says Marguerite. The nine-foot, white, wood dining table with pedestal base is from **Andersons'** Canadian-made collection. Marguerite loves the way it fills the space. Antique dining chairs

are a complement, not a match. They were a lucky find; originally dark, she painted them white and reupholstered them in a beige check Dupioni Thai silk. In one corner, a tall, dove-grey armoire by **Van Thiel & Co.**, available through Andersons, is a hand-made reclaimed wood replica of the original, its interior a stunning robin's egg blue. In the galley kitchen, a black and white Mackenzie-Childs' Courtly Check enamel

tea kettle with red knob adds a touch of whimsy. The granite countertop's black and white pebble design reminds Marguerite of beach stones. Why hang one chandelier when you can hang three? As Marguerite says, "there are no rules" and even in a small space, the trio works beautifully. High-grade European crystals deliver extra sparkle. Addicted to atmosphere, Marguerite has eight chandeliers in her home. *Continued on page 40*



LEFT: Marguerite combines organic elements like greenery with a little sparkle to set a beautiful table. **TOP:** Every corner of the home shines with thoughtfully-created vignettes. **ABOVE:** All-white elements in different textures add dimension.

feature



Upstairs, a solid walnut replica of an 18th-century four-poster bed rules the master. Walnut bed steps are a fun feature. It's a feminine space with bird prints and botanical lithographs on the walls. The solid cherry four-drawer Goddard block-and-shell chest is a knockout. Blue and white bed linens feature a toile weave and combine prints with stripes. A chartreuse wingback hugs one corner. "Our moods are strongly influenced by colour, like the rest of the house, I wanted this room to be a place of calm," says Marguerite.

"My home's style suits me, reflects my personality," Marguerite explains. "As a designer, I never impose my style on my clients. My role is to help them express their own style, creating a vision that is theirs alone. Traditional, transitional, contemporary, modern – my clients' tastes run the gamut. Each client is unique. This keeps life interesting and allows me to continue to evolve as a designer. When my two sons were young and I was designing, they would laugh and say: 'Mom's playing again.' Some things never change I guess."

"Simple is beautiful. Good design never goes over the top. It's easily understood when you look at it. It speaks to you."

Simple also means stopping at the point where the beauty of the design is ready to tell its own story. Just like it does in this house. **OH**

ABOVE: The guest room is made pretty with soft bedding and interesting accents. **TOP RIGHT:** The walk-in closet is a dream with plenty of custom storage. **RIGHT:** Hints of blue soften the mood in the elegant master bedroom.

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