



STORY **HEATHER WRIGHT**
PHOTOGRAPHY **JUSTIN VAN LEEUWEN**

MAKING A HOUSE *a home*

There are houses and then there are homes; the former is decidedly more utilitarian, while the latter promotes an undeniable sense of warmth, personality and individual charisma, all made visible by very deliberate design choices.

ABOVE: The kitchen went through a total renovation four years ago. Everything was replaced and redesigned to suit the needs of Shirley and Rob Griffioen.

RIGHT: The dining area is now open to the kitchen. Before the renovation a dividing wall separated the two. **BELOW:** Shirley enjoys time with Lando the Westie in her stylish living space.

That's what you'll find in Shirley Griffioen's modest but stylish Barrhaven home, where she has lived for nearly three decades with her husband Rob. As years pass, décor often gets dated, but in Shirley's case, the passing years gave her a unique perspective as well as a platform from which to redesign and reinvent her space, bit by bit, over the last 10 years.

Home renovation projects proclaim "makeover," whereas this home has gently ridden the hands of time, incorporating designs and updates along the way. It is a design evolution in the truest sense of the word. This 70s-era Holitzner home layers cool retro features like a funky, red-brick fireplace with suburban chic; also, Shirley has incorporated a number of deeply personal accent pieces that not only complement the visual that the design provides, but also lend an elegant intimacy. It's how you signal that shift from a "house" to a "home."

This evolution began 10 years ago, in Shirley and Rob's lovely backyard. It's an area that Shirley adores. "I love my garden. It just comes to life. I just love being out here." With only 1,700 square feet inside the house, Shirley says that they felt that they "needed more room to play outside." They redid the cement stairs and fixed up the lovely in-ground pool. Shirley took care of the entire lush landscaping herself. There is a real sense that they have effectively increased their living space with this outdoor retreat.

Moving in from outside, next stop is the kitchen they tackled four years ago. Shirley and Rob started by removing a half wall, which later made way for the spectacular eat-in island that is a study in complex colour, helped by the abundant sunshine that frequently floods the now open space.

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RIGHT: The kitchen island houses unique elements, including a beverage fridge for entertaining. **BELOW:** The large sink is located with a view over the landscaped garden. **BELOW MIDDLE:** A built-in stove top sits at the end of the large island. **BOTTOM:** The kitchen uses all the space with specially designed cupboards and built in oven and microwave.



A spice rack pulls out of a corner of the island.

Home design and destiny don't always intersect, but you get a sense that they did for Shirley. During an outing, she bought her appliances (Jenn-Air, Prestige) at a sale. On the way home from the sale, she drove by **Deslaurier Custom Cabinets** rather by chance and felt compelled to stop. It was a fortuitous visit that introduced her to what would be the force behind her kitchen remodel (and later bathrooms): designer **Patti Gillespie**. They set to work designing a kitchen that was as pleasurable to use as it was to look at. Patti provided Shirley and Rob with

a number of different samples, and they decided on a timeless look, which leverages the hint of blue in the quartz countertops (Urban Quarry) and backsplash (Deslaurier). The same criteria applied when choosing their classic, neutrally-coloured cabinetry and hardware (Deslaurier). Even the window coverings (Hudson's Bay) play a role in creating the overall effect. Shirley's contractor, **Bob Kirk of Kirk Builders Ltd.** played a major role in the renovation's success. She credits his forward, functional thinking with real-life tools to

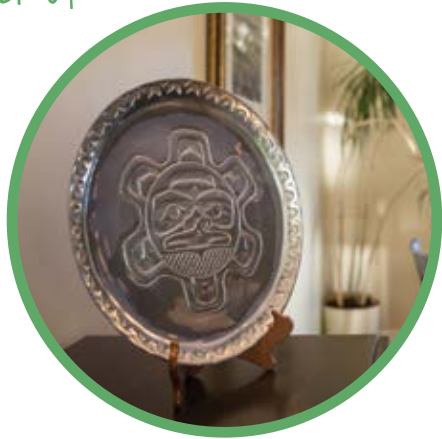
simplify her life, backed by a solid team of contractors who helped transform her ideas to reality. "I love the simplicity of it," says Shirley, of the overall visual that this kitchen provides. There are several features that really make sense for Shirley and Rob to match their lifestyle and maximize space, like a small pantry under the counter. Another pragmatic touch is a mini fridge under the island, near the back door for a handy spot to keep cool drinks in the summertime while in and out from the backyard. *Continued on page 40*



ABOVE: The couple renovated the two bathrooms in their house in 2015. The downstairs powder room is fresh and vibrant. **RIGHT:** The living area is bright and spacious.



This plate was picked up from the couple's travels, as is much of their art.



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They tackled bathrooms next. Connecting the design between floors, the cabinetry in the bathrooms matches those in the kitchen (Deslaurier). The downstairs bathroom features a heated floor (Kirk Builders Ltd.) with stately grey tile (Céragrès) and sophisticated sink with sharp angled hardware (**Mondeau; Paradise Bath and Kitchen**).

Upstairs in the master bathroom, Shirley and Rob made some major changes, replacing the tub with an oversize shower from Mondeau and fixtures from **Preston Hardware**. This shower is pleasing to the eye as they elected to have no tile on the sides of the shower, instead using

a full piece of granite (**Urban Quarry**), creating a smooth surface without grout lines. The quartz countertops (Urban Quarry) are a nice touch, as is a chic under-mount sink (Paradise Bath) matched with an understated light fixture (**Living Lighting Ottawa**).

Throughout the home, Shirley's treasures adorn the walls and tables. In the living room hangs framed medals that belonged to her father. "These medals are very meaningful to me because my father died when he was 42 and I was 11. The bottom medal is for his honourable discharge from the military. The top medal is the Governor General's award that he received for the highest marks in his degree." *Continued on page 42*



TOP: The brick fireplace provides a retro element to the home. **LEFT:** The couple's bedroom features art given to Shirley as a retirement gift. **ABOVE:** The medals, once belonging to Shirley's father, hang with pride in the couple's living area.



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The bright, airy bathroom is complete with a sheet of granite, personalised towels and a mirror surround.



Also in the living room is a fascinating piece of table art comprised of star-shaped, wooden dishes from **Ten Thousand Villages** in Westboro where Shirley volunteers. “Ten Thousand Villages features artisans from developing countries who repurpose things like metal drums or cardamom seeds or pods,” she says. “It’s all fair trade.”

In one of the bathrooms, Shirley has hung a stylish print of a bison, a nod to her Manitoba roots. In her bedroom, she displays a colourful print by A.Y. Jackson, a gift to mark her retirement after years of working at A.Y. Jackson Secondary School in Kanata.

One of the intangible elements that make a house “home” is that it is a place where you can truly express yourself. Design, then, is the manifestation of that expression. It’s a remarkable thing when design and décor not only please the eye, but reveal the past and personality of the homeowner. **OH**



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