

CANADIAN

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# HOUSE & HOME

THE MAGAZINE OF HOME & STYLE

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# FROM PARIS WITH LOVE

THE WORLD'S STYLE CAPITAL INSPIRES FASHION EXEC BONNIE BROOKS TO MAKE OVER A CLASSIC VICTORIAN WITH FRENCH FLAIR.

Text by AMY VERNER | Photography by ANGUS FERGUSSON

White oak herringbone floors, pairs of French doors and classic mouldings evoke the architectural elements of luxury apartments in Paris. Full-length silk drapes in a deep petrol blue anchor the space. "With the volume created by the high ceilings, I wanted to ensure the house didn't feel cold," says homeowner Bonnie Brooks. "I added the deepest jewel tones of teal, indigo and wine which, it turns out, are easy to live with all year long." **Armchairs** by Jean Royère, 1stdibs; **sofas, coffee table, rug, throw pillows, Minotti; floral arrangements** (throughout), Fiori Floral Designs.



Produced by Meg Crossley and Sally Armstrong



**THOSE WHO REPEATEDLY BUY**, fix up and sell houses often admit to a version of wanderlust, or the irresistible desire to seize on real estate opportunities. Bonnie Brooks, however, is a serial renovator for a more surprising reason: she uses her homes for creative exercise. "It's similar to the spirit of fashion, where you get a glimpse of the next collection and your mind starts to wander," says Bonnie. "You want to keep some of the classic pieces but, at the same time, you want to move forward."

Bonnie rose to the top by readying fashion retailers for the future. Her legacy includes repositioning department and specialty stores such as Holt Renfrew in Canada and Lane Crawford in Asia, and reinventing Hudson's Bay Company, where she served as CEO and vice-chair. "The fashion industry is about being a promoter of what's next," she says, "and that's probably a bigger part of my soul than I realize."

Bonnie's latest home is a Victorian townhouse in midtown Toronto, and its style pivots just enough from her previous property to reflect a more romantic mind-set. Her last city home (featured in *House & Home* in 2013) drew on the Belgian country style of designer Axel Vervoordt. In her new place, upon finding white marble flooring in the entry, plus the volume of space — particularly the high ceilings — she easily conjured up a chic Parisian apartment. Having spent time in the French capital throughout her career, the reference was familiar.

**ABOVE:** Bonnie is an avid collector of contemporary art. She took advantage of her home's spacious foyer by punctuating it with a series of abstracted, silvery dancing elephants. **White vases** (on mantel), Hollace Cluny.

Before purchasing the house, she consulted her longtime friend Lynda Reeves, who immediately saw the potential and put the

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***“YOU WANT TO KEEP SOME OF THE CLASSIC PIECES BUT, AT THE SAME TIME, YOU WANT TO MOVE FORWARD”***

Bonnie brought her dining table and chairs from a previous home but gave the arrangement new life with a blown-glass 28.37 Cluster chandelier by Vancouver-based Bucci. **Table base** by Rodolfo Dordoni, **Minotti**; **bowl** by Martha Sturdy; **artwork** by Kerry Skarbakka; **bar cart**, L'Atelier.



**Cocktail tables**, Tendex; **artwork** by Yu Chen, Schoeni Art Gallery.



Every room is a study in stylish counterpoints. Near the living room fireplace, the patina of a 1930s Italian Deco bar enriches the appeal of two curvy, mid-century pedestal chairs reupholstered in shearing. **Bar cabinet**, Stanley Wagman Antiques. **RIGHT**: The powder room feels larger when completely repanelled in mirror for a *mise en abyme* effect. A custom vanity with glass legs and a starburst pendant by Aerin Lauder give the room added lustre. **Sink**, Duravit.



The notion of creating a space that was more romantic than her previous homes motivated Bonnie to think about subtlety in arrangements of objects, both large and small. **Golden bowl**, Elte; **blue and white bowl**, Hollace Cluny.







The same greige paint chosen for the kitchen reappears in the second-floor den. Chartreuse accents brighten the space, while a variety of textures and styles contribute to the room's relaxed attitude. An early Ming dynasty Buddha head on a bronze pedestal overlooks the room from the corner. **Photograph** by Erwin Wurm; **sofa, chair**, Poliform; **throw pillows** (far right), Hermès; **throw**, Hudson's Bay; **white and black bowl** (on back table), Hollace Cluny; **desk**, Stanley Wagman Antiques.

FLASHBACK

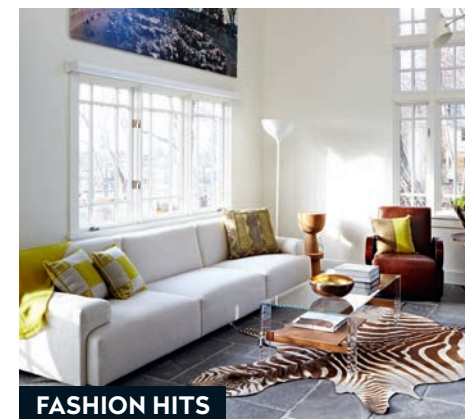
The Homes of BONNIE BROOKS

THREE SIGNATURE MOVES THAT STILL DEFINE HER STYLE



MODERN CHANDELIERS

A cluster of bulbs hung over the dining table in Bonnie's former loft (H&H Nov. 2011). Time in Asia influenced her preference for pared-down spaces punctuated by statement pieces.



FASHION HITS

Like the crisp white shirts she favours, the pale sofa and white walls in her previous house (H&H Aug. 2013) offered a neutral base to accessorize.



LARGE-SCALE ART

Art that is "very moving and thought-provoking" travels with her from home to home, where it brings nearly every room to life, as seen in her 2013 house.

WEB To see Bonnie Brooks's former home on H&H TV, visit [houseandhome.com](http://houseandhome.com) and click on the current issue





**TOP LEFT:** The galley kitchen was updated with new marble countertops and flooring. Hardware was replaced with glass and antiqued brass knobs as a finishing touch. **Pitcher, tea towels, Hopson Grace.** **BELOW:** To balance the principal bedroom's generous dimensions and spare details, Bonnie gave it warm, tactile accents. **Accent pillows, Shop House & Home;**

**glasses, Hopson Grace; wall colour, White Tie (2002), Farrow & Ball; trim colour, Cloud White (CC-40), Benjamin Moore.** **RIGHT:** Parisian-inspired moulding frames Canadian artist Douglas Coupland's *Ode to Andy Warhol* in the second-floor hallway. **Wall colour, Cloud White (CC-40), trim colour, Oxford White (CC-30), Benjamin Moore.**

This vignette, which includes a table made from antlers and hammered metal, adds history, colour and character to the otherwise streamlined principal bedroom. **Artwork by Chen Yu, Schoeni Art Gallery; bowl, Hollace Cluny.**



# HOUSE & HOME

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# FROM PARIS WITH LOVE

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wheels in motion to reimagine the home's traditional English elements with Haussmannian flair. "Bonnie has a certain edge that never changes, but it adapts," says Lynda.

After spending five months carefully planning, sourcing and finessing the details, the actual work began and ended within an efficient 10-week schedule. Though Bonnie brought a fair amount of furniture from her previous homes, as well as her striking collection of contemporary art, she gave the interiors a new spin with furniture choices like the new curved Minotti sofas in the living room, which redefined the interiors as effectively as any major refurbishment. She also paid attention to key elements such as brass hardware, dressed-up bathroom fixtures and lighting that doubles as art.

With assistance from LRDS associate designer Jenna Cadieux, Bonnie and Lynda had white oak herringbone floors

## WHAT LOOKS LIKE A SINGLE SNOWY SHADE IS, IN FACT, 22 DIFFERENT TONES AND FINISHES

and moulding installed throughout; the result is contemporary but not minimalist. Removing decorative faux marble columns gave the main rooms more space, and all four working fireplaces — including one in the foyer, a unique feature — received new surrounds in keeping with a sleeker, Parisian aesthetic. For softness, full-length petrol-coloured silk drapes lined in flannel frame new French doors and transom windows in the living room, which overlook the private garden.

For the narrow kitchen, Lynda proposed a custom greige paint and a mirrored backsplash. "It turns sweet into hip and sophisticated," she says. The same colour gives the second-floor den an inviting warmth that's

especially enticing on icy winter days. In both rooms, four paint finishes were used, from high-gloss on the trim to more noticeably matte walls. Nearly everywhere else in the house, the walls were painted variations of white. What looks like a single snowy shade is, in fact, 22 different tones and finishes that calibrate the lighting imbalances that naturally occur from room to room. "We considered the way natural light hits various rooms — the abundance of natural light versus less natural light," says Bonnie. "Ultimately, it really benefited the space."

Lynda says that Bonnie's latest design impulse reads as both livable and relevant. "Her approach feels contemporary even though the house maintains its Victorian character — and that's an important trend," she says. "Personally, I'm not a big fan of taking really old houses and making them architecturally contemporary. I prefer the statement be made with furniture, and I think Bonnie did it very well."

Bonnie credits her design confidence to her experience working with luxury brands, and to collaborating with Toronto designers George Yabu and Glenn Pushelberg of Yabu Pushelberg

on the designs for elevated department stores such as Lane Crawford and The Room at Hudson's Bay Company. For her private space, though, Bonnie takes a more personal approach instead of transposing a boutique template onto her home. Unlike the here-today-gone-tomorrow cycle of fashion, she doesn't erase what she's left behind. "You have to use some of the things you have — you keep the things that have good memories," she says. She points to her white dining table, which she reimaged beneath a mod new Bocci chandelier of colourful glass orbs. "It's kind of like accessorizing an old gown with a new necklace." Naturally, a fashion analogy feels most fitting. **H&H**