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Living BIG in a very small space

By QMI AGENCY

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At the 640-square-foot home of designer Yanic Simard. Supplied photo

You want style, sophistication and comfort — it's a big challenge in a small space. Yanic Simard, principal of the Toronto interior design group and regular guest expert on CityLine, moved into a 640-square-foot two-bedroom Victorian home in Toronto's Bloor West Village and set out to prove that it could be done.

He lets us inside and tells us about his design challenges — and his creative solutions.

Location, location, allocation

"Choosing a house with a good frame is key when you want to design a space that feels bigger than it actually is," Simard says.

His compact Victorian boasts 10- and 11-foot vaulted ceilings, proportionate eight-foot doors and oversized baseboards, which kick-started the design project.

Multi-task

Simard fused the functions of living room and dining room by positioning a custom sofa next to a round Saarinen marble table. The den doubles as a guestroom, thanks to a custom-made sofa bed.

Apply magic

The main hallway, at approximately three feet wide and 20 feet long (fondly referred to as "the tunnel") was one of Simard's biggest challenges.

He created artificial depth with graphic wallpaper applied on both walls and a light fixture that provides illumination both upwards and downwards.

The final touch: three shapely gold mirrors mounted on one wall artificially widen the hallway.

"The tunnel" then becomes a warm invitation to and from the heart of the apartment.

Get creative with cramped space

"A good and well-planned furniture layout is key to a sophisticated environment," says Simard.

Finding creative solutions and maximizing space are top priorities.

For instance, the stainless-steel IKEA trolley rests in the kitchen, storing various items, but can easily be trundled to the living room and used as serving centre.

A cramped closet in the bedroom is remedied by the ingenious use of foldaway storage techniques: ironing board, tie rack, shoe storage and seasonal storage whip into action only when needed.

Storage in every room is the way to reduce clutter and keep a chic abode chic: an armoire in the den/guestroom; a French antique chest and hidden storage under the sofa in the living room; baskets within the ceiling-high cabinets in the kitchen; a closed vanity and a stainless steel cart in the bathroom.

Finish strong

"To make the space feel comfortable and luxurious, various types of fabric have been used, sometimes unusually," says Simard. Linen, silk, velvet, chenille, suede and sheers provide the visual and tactile finale to the project.

Chairs "are an easy way to make a strong and unique statement without too much commitment," says the designer, who will furnish with at least six different styles of chair at any given time.

Finally, Simard likes to create drama and style by mixing old and new: mid-century mixed with antique, Art Deco and '70s, unique light fixtures and understated pieces of all sorts dot the apartment for a personalized look.