

NIAGARA MAGAZINE'S

INTERIORS

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6 WAYS
TO **LIVEN UP**
YOUR GARDEN

PURPLE REIGNS
HOTTEST COLOUR TRENDS

COUTURE COMFORT
A CHAIR FOR EVERY SEASON

PARADISE FOUND
IN A JORDAN BACKYARD

DESIGNER HOME

RENOWNED INTERIOR DESIGNER
LAURA SWALLOW SHARES HER SPACE



Living

RENOWNED INTERIOR DESIGNER LAURA SWALLOW HAS CREATED
A TREASURED HAVEN FOR HER FAMILY AND FRIENDS

By Candice Turner-Smith | Photography By Robert Nowell



There are places in the house where mirrors are not only functionally appropriate but are the focal point of an overall design. Striking, balanced and strong, the house opens onto two large rooms which make the design great for entertaining guests.

Talented local designer

Laura Swallow is responsible for giving a showcase look to countless homes around the world, but it's Woodruff Avenue in downtown St. Catharines that she calls home. And if you've never visited this resplendent neighbourhood, its appeal goes far beyond the tree-lined street overlooking Twelve Mile Creek.

"The bones of this home were solid," Swallow begins, noting she had moved from illustrious Yates Street in the downtown core. Renovations to the 2,200 square feet of (now) open-concept living space, took Swallow and her partner Bud four months to complete.

Upon entry, the home features a distinguished staircase to the second floor with light that seems to cascade in from all sides of the house. This feature highlights the custom designed wallpaper, which shimmers under the light. The main floor also houses a living room, dining room, den and kitchen—a perfect spot for social gatherings: warm, open and conversational.

"Successfully decorated rooms mix several trends," she explains. "I tend to sculpt design by playing with the shapes, the finishes, the textures, the contrast, the lighting, the symmetry and the styles of how everything fits into a room. The goal is to create dimensions in a dappled but harmonious way."

The living room sports a classic gas fireplace and wall-to-wall mirrors. French doors provide exit and entrance to the den, and family treasures lend both a personal style and feelings of comfort, ease and casual elegance. There's a signature chair and ottoman with upholstered animal fabric that make for a stylish sitting area. The furniture placement, colour palette and textures all work together to create a striking look.

"The layout of the house was set up in a fashion that friends and family could enjoy the space," she says. "We can have large gatherings, yet the footprint of the interior allows for

space



Above: This fur-covered chair offers ultimate comfort after any type of day.

Left: An original martini bar shows off the quality craftsmanship from the 1930s.



private conversations and reading. When we are around in the winter months reading is a passion." A long-time favourite: *Long Walk to Freedom*, by Nelson Mandela.

During the remodel, the gourmet kitchen and breakfast area were opened up to make an airy space. End windows overlook the tailored gardens, while cherrywood cabinets, neutral granite countertops and heated marble floors make the space feel light and open. It all combines perfectly to meet their needs when they're home alone or entertaining family and friends.

"The kitchen is laid out for the true cooks to get in and show their love for the kitchen; for the rest of us there is plenty of room to gather, sip wine and watch."

The large adjacent dining room is right of the centre-hall plan, and displays a modern glass-top dining table. Again, the neutral colours found in nature are being embraced: stones, sand and wood. The ceiling-mounted light fixture is an exciting focal point as are the classic family heirlooms throughout the room.

A setting seemingly meant for all kinds of entertaining, the backyard features a sparkling



Top: The block-patterned wallpaper is hand constructed with mica chips and ground crystal, and shimmers in the light. The print is a mirror image of the hallway flooring pattern.

Right: This hand-rubbed chair is covered in a vanilla borg fur, with hand-oiled suede. Below: This distinctive home's use of historic-looking paint colour is far from ordinary.







Cherrywood cabinets, neutral granite countertops and heated marble floors are found in the kitchen. A grand European island offers architectural motifs.

Opposite page: the dining room displays a modern glass-top table and is complemented by a Toller Cranston original painting on the wall. A work desk assumes the best place in the home: overlooking a grand and inviting backyard.

pool and patio as its centerpiece. There's an outdoor grill that gets a workout during the warm weather, and the backyard dining areas have been arranged to provide both for sun worshippers and those who enjoy the shade. Both Laura and Bud are avid golfers, so there's even provision for some small-scale golfing competitions at poolside.

The finely manicured gardens have been created not only as a point of interest, but with intellect and Old World charm. Like the interior of this home, the garden reflects the owner's personality. Eye-popping perennials and annual offerings adorn the grounds throughout the year.

Nothing has been spared in this show-stopping renovation. As for the good bones, they have all been resuscitated and reinvigorated. It is for Swallow a treasured haven from her extensive travelling across Canada and the U.S. "Bud, our friends, and myself have endless joy of time shared here," she says.

She draws on a quotation from Lao-tze, the revered figure from Chinese culture, to best describe the attraction felt for her St. Catharines home base: "The reality of the building does not consist in roof and walls but in the space within to be lived in." NMI