

Favourite Room: A family comes together to transform a dining room

KRISTINA LJUBANOVIC

SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL



Andrea Gelinas is a stickler when it comes to aesthetics. “I see every imperfection down to the millimetre,” the Toronto-based dentist says. Gelinas’s Dundas Street West practice is rather unusual in its interior design – rather than a fluorescent-lit, fluoride-scented waiting space stacked with last year’s mags, the look is closer to chic living room. And that eye for detail and good taste came into play big time in the redesign of the late-1800s Toronto home she and husband Wayne Alexander purchased six years ago.

Gelinas took on the task of sanding all the baseboards and installing the mouldings in the home’s dining room. “No one is going to pay attention to those details like you are,” she says. After painstakingly levelling and installing the wall trim, Gelinas and Alexander stepped back to realize it looked crooked against the backdrop of not-straight walls and floors (to be expected in a house that vintage). “That was the perfect way to get into an argument on a Sunday,” Gelinas says with a laugh. “We put it back up and just eyeballed it.”

All in all, it was a labour of love – the dining room especially. “Out of all of the rooms in the house, this is my absolute favourite. I feel like it represents me the most,” Gelinas says. She resisted contractors’ repeated recommendations to take down walls to create an open-concept ground floor. She wanted a more formal space for entertaining, as per family custom. “Growing up, we’d always have family dinners. We were always the house that had parties and people over.”

Gelinas enlisted the help of her family – as well as designer Shauna Walton – for the final stages of building out and designing the space (she was six months pregnant with son Nico at the time). Alexander consulted on key items, such as the dining-room chairs, purchased from Restoration Hardware. Her brother, Chris Gelinas, a fashion designer in New York, contributed textile for reupholstering those same chairs. And an uncle helped with a pair of mirror and copper-pipe cabinets for the display of spirits, family photos and old-fashioned alarm clocks (the latter a nod to Alexander’s predilections).

“It was an all-family affair. My dad’s putting up drywall with Wayne in another room and my uncle and I are cutting pipe! It’s nice to have everyone over in that room now. I look around and there’s really a piece of everyone here,” Gelinas says.

A couple things she insisted upon: the dining table, from Commute Design Studio, and the wall colour, Hague Blue by Farrow & Ball. The dining table had been “earmarked for many years,” she says. Its size made it a fitting choice for the space. “I wanted it to feel really grand. Think of the key people in your life and put them all in one room. Suddenly a six-person table isn’t enough. I didn’t ever want to feel like we outgrew the space,” she says. “I want to make many memories at this table.”

The wall colour, on the other hand, was a more spontaneous choice (that said, a swatch of the blue-green hue had been applied to the wall for eight months before she finally pulled the trigger). “I wanted to create this dark, moody dining room,” Gelinas says. “And if I was going to do it, it was going to be floor to ceiling.”

In fact, there’s no white paint in the room at all (Gelinas didn’t want a “nautical vibe”). She opted to vary finishes instead, going high-gloss for the ceilings and baseboards, and matte for the walls.

Artworks, with artist-selected antique frames, are by Toronto-based painter Gordon Shadrach, a favourite of Gelinas and Alexander. The portrait above the fireplace, titled *Patience*, came first, installed by Shadrach himself. The two leaning atop the art-deco credenza joined later, a Father’s Day gift from Gelinas.

“I feel like they’re all having a conversation in the dining room,” Gelinas says of the pictures, in the social space she’s created. “They need to be together, the three of them.”

Get the Look



Reformed (edition of 25) by Gordon Shadrach, \$400 at Gordon Shadrach (gordonshadrach.com).

HANDOUT

1 of 5

Get the Look



Vivien bar cabinet, \$1,119 at West Elm (westelm.ca).

HANDOUT

2 of 5



Get the Look



19th-century French empire crystal chandelier 21 inch, \$4,195 at Restoration Hardware (restorationhardware.com).

3 of 5

HANDOUT

Get the Look



Pack 2 Sardines Archipelagos, €52 at Bordallo Pinheiro (international.bordallopinheiro.com).

4 of 5

HANDOUT

Get the Look



Farrow & Ball Hague Blue No. 30, starting at \$110/gallon at Farrow & Ball (farrow-ball.com).

HANDOUT