

Here's how Toronto designer Shirley Meisels skirts tradition when creating a timeless look.

break the rules!

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PHOTOGRAPHY STEPHANI BUCHMAN

For a unified bookended effect, a cascade of chic blush-toned drapery in the dining room at the rear of the house mirrors a similar set hanging in the living room at the front (opposite).

DESIGN, MHouse, mhouseinc.com; CONTRACTING & MILLWORK, Alair Homes Forest Hill; All White 2005 WALL PAINT (throughout), Farrow & Ball.



“TRADITIONAL” DOESN’T HAVE TO MEAN SAFE. IN SHIRLEY MEISELS’S

world, subtly feisty flashes of colour and offbeat furnishings tie traditional rooms together. “My style is firmly modern with an eclectic twist,” says Shirley, the seasoned designer behind Toronto’s MHouse. “I tend to use black and white as neutrals, and then I add pops of colour.” Shirley brought that signature sass to a client’s 2,000-square-foot house in Toronto’s Allenby neighbourhood. The 1940s abode was not only dated (think dowdy taupe rooms), but strangely enough, there was a barrier plunked in the middle of the house: “The staircase to the basement was right in the centre of the kitchen,



The drapery treatments may be traditional, but their fresh pink colour isn't.

ABOVE The entryway seems tight, but it’s filled with a trio of funky flourishes: a quirky mirror with a smoky band at the bottom, a glamorous stool to perch on when removing shoes and a sculptural piece for tossing coats onto. “There simply wasn’t room for the usual console here,” says designer Shirley Meisels, “but this works perfectly.”

MIRROR, Platner **STOOL**, Hollace Cluny.

RIGHT In the long and narrow living room, Shirley created distinct seating zones, using muted base fabrics and added pattern for a little punch. As in the rest of the house, the architectural features are traditional, but the furniture has clean, modern lines that keep the space from feeling too serious.

FLOOR LAMP, Design Within Reach; **SIDE TABLES**, Hollace Cluny; **SOFA**, **STOOLS**, **COFFEE TABLE**, **RUG**, Elte; **ARMCHAIR**, Avenue Road.

rendering the space useless," says Shirley. So the stairs were moved out of the kitchen, the electrical was updated and worn walnut-stained floors were replaced with stunning white oak. Modern furnishings, white paint and an inviting palette of mauve, pale blue and white finished the look. "It now feels light and fresh, and there's improved flow," says Shirley. Here's what lends this timeless look an *au courant* vibe that flirts with tradition.



A warm two-toned walnut overhang is a clever departure from the customary single-material island. The raised ledge lets the piece offer the best of both worlds: a breakfast-bar-height station for eating and a standard island surface for doing prep work.

LEFT & ABOVE With its grey-veined marble composite and clean-lined appeal, the kitchen is a sharp showstopper. It's hard to believe a staircase once ran into the basement from where the new island is situated.

STOOLS, Suite 22 Interiors; **FAUCET**, Taps Bath Centre; **OVEN, STOVETOP**, Caplan's Appliances.