



◀◀ Charming stained glass was the jumping-off point for the palette. The designers pulled the paint colours blues, greens and greys – directly from it. Painting the original wood panelling might be controversial for some, but even at the house-hunting stage, the homeowners knew a coat of white on the wainscoting would brighten up the dark house. ▶▶ Two tufted chairs were custom-made to fit the cozy bay window nook in the living area. Low arms keep sightlines clear, while pale neutral-colour upholstery maintains a light look.

New built-ins transformed the small space. To the left of the fireplace, screened doors hide electronic equipment yet allow the signals from the remotes to be transmitted. To the right (not shown), a big-screen TV is concealed behind identical-looking doors. By converting the wood-burning fireplace to gas, the couple ran up the comfort factor at the touch of a button. Bosley relaxes on the sofa. ▶

# beach living

With their house hunt over, Robyn Stremmer and Jason Goncalves were anxious to hunt again – this time to find a designer to decorate their new Beach-area Toronto home. “We knew what colours and style we liked, but we needed help pulling things together,” says Robyn. An Internet search led her to Liz Watkinson and Susan Pollock’s company, 5th Business Associates. “We all met and hit it off,” says Robyn, who loved the comfy yet classy feel of their work. The hunt was over, but the adventure was just beginning. Here’s what Liz and Susan did to give Jason and Robyn a personalized, polished space.

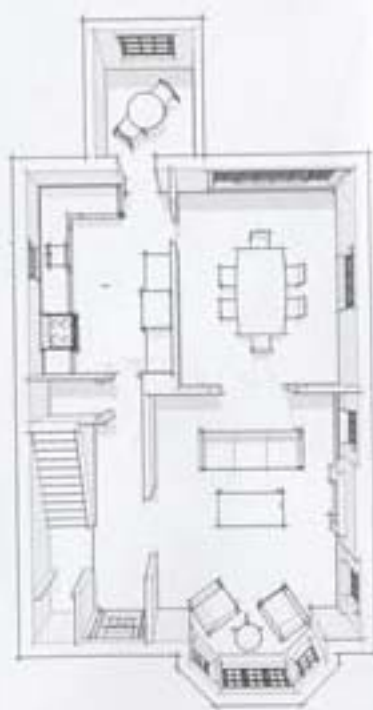
Written by Kathleen Dore | Photography by Virginia Macdonald



"We used lots of **glass, crystal and mirrored accessories** because those reflective materials add light and a sense of airiness" SUSAN POLLACK, INTERIOR DESIGNER



◀ The dining room embodies the transitional spirit that both the designers and the homeowners were striving for – definitely more traditional than Robyn and Jason's old place, and respectful of the Arts and Crafts pedigree of the architecture, but also of today. ▶ Robyn and Jason love the tiny, bright sunroom off the kitchen. "We have a birdfeeder right outside the window, so on weekends we have long breakfasts, read the paper and watch birds," says Robyn. Her collection of yellowware bowls made the move from the old house. They fit well with the golden colour scheme and look great behind glass doors on this side of the kitchen. On the sink wall, there are no upper cabinets. "It really opens up the space," says Liz. ▶

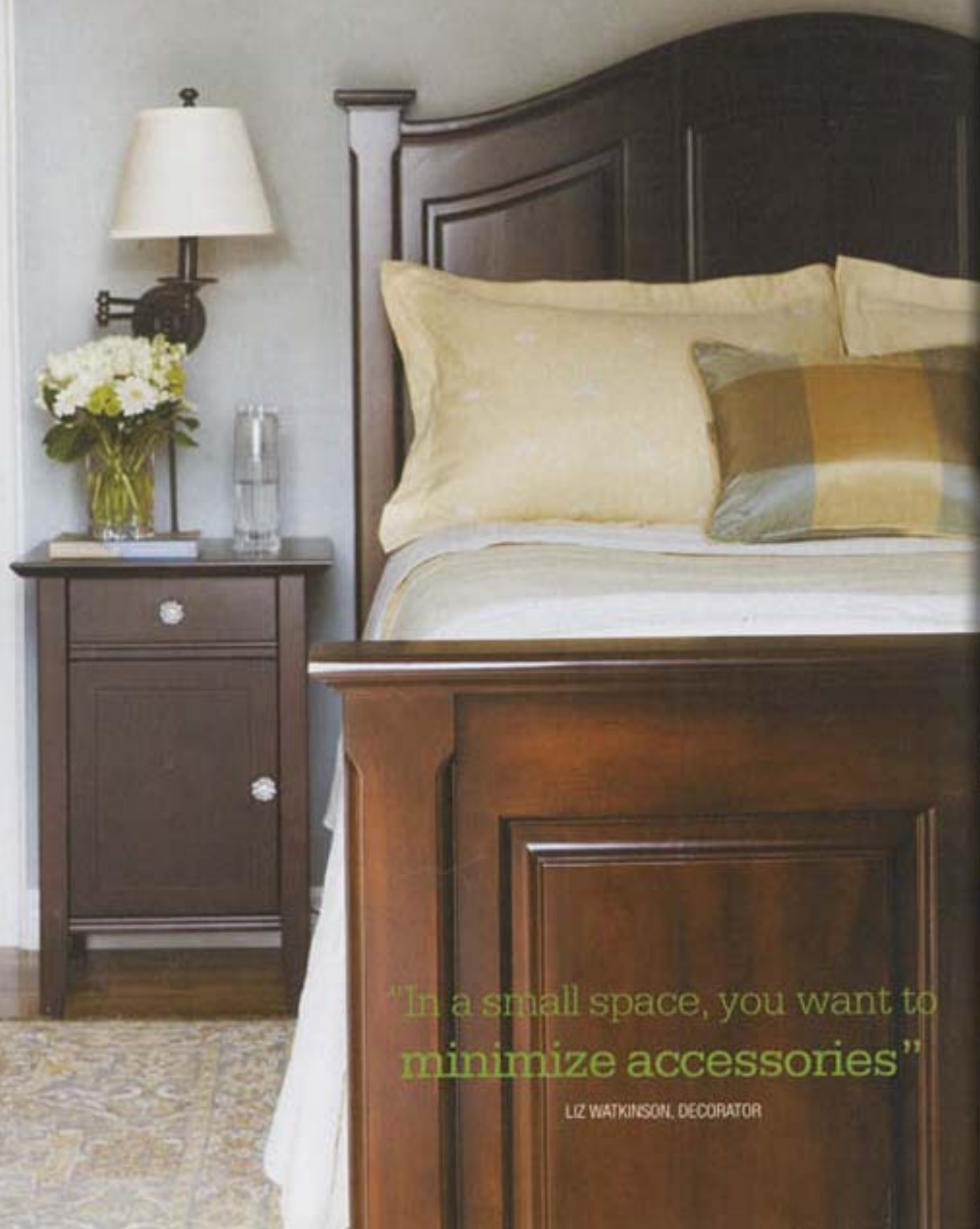


*We love this because ...*

The arch elongates the door opening and echoes the round curves of the bistro table.

## keep it simple

Swing-arm sconces free up bedside tables for other things you want to keep at hand, as well as pretty touches like floral arrangements.



"In a small space, you want to minimize accessories"

LIZ WATKINSON, DECORATOR

**SoH** Liz and Susan, what was the scope of the project?

**Liz Watkinson** The kitchen and bathroom were pretty much done – that's one reason why Robyn and Jason bought the house – but the first floor was dark. There was too much dark wood, so we painted the window and door frames, and the dining room wainscoting, but left the doors and handrail on the stairs. We put in new hardwood flooring, replastered heavily textured areas like the ceilings in the living and dining rooms for a smooth finish, and added pot lights to brighten the place.

**SoH** Robyn says she and Jason love their living room and use it all the time. What makes it work so well?

**LW** Their living room is also a family room, but they didn't want the TV to be obvious because they entertain a lot. Still, they both wanted to be able to stretch out and watch it. The furniture arrangement had to address that, but the challenge was that the space was small, narrow and had a number of doors and windows and a fireplace that ate up wall space.

**Susan Pollock** The built-ins we designed really made the difference. To the right of the fireplace is a flat-screen TV that pulls out and articulates so it's visible from the sofa and chairs. Also, an upholstered bench

serves as a coffee table, extra seating for guests and storage for throws.

**SoH** After creating a functional layout and adding space-smart furniture, how did you give the house the polish Robyn and Jason wanted?

**LW** To integrate the design with the architecture, we added a few Arts and Crafts touches like the dining room lights, and we pulled the colour scheme from the stained glass windows. We used seafoam green in the living and dining rooms, gold in the hall, a deeper shade of gold in the kitchen, which works with the tumbled-marble backsplash, and blue in the bedroom and bathroom. Everything is fresh and open.

**SP** Robyn and Jason wanted to move away from the country look of their old house but avoid modern. For furniture, we reused some existing pieces, staining the dining table and china cabinet darker for an updated look. We did the same in the bedroom with the bed and dresser, and just bought new lamps, night tables and accessories. We reupholstered their sofa, but the chairs and ottoman are new.

**LW** The upholstery is in light and airy colours but durable fabrics, like the microfibre on the dining chairs, which is easy to clean. The fabrics are almost monochromatic and all soft colours, which is good for a small space.



▲ A renovated bathroom in the period style of the house was a big attraction when Robyn and Jason bought it. The designers spruced it up with new paint in sky blue and white. ◀ Robyn loves blues and feels they fit in with the Beach neighbourhood. She and Jason were happy to keep their old bed and are thrilled with the more refined look it took on after being stained darker. The designers added elegant swing-arm lamps and new night tables. WHERE TO FIND IT, PAGE 116

## Liz & Susan's 5 tricks for living large in a small space

- 1 Incorporate **storage**. Built-ins reduce the number of separate pieces of furniture you need, and multi-purpose items save space.
- 2 Use monochromatic **colour** to some degree, or at least use soft shades.
- 3 Carefully select **accessories** – you need only a few.
- 4 Install good **lighting**. Eliminate dark corners and ensure there's a wash of light on the walls. And use dimmers everywhere.
- 5 Simplify **window treatments**. Keep them plain and light, like sheers; forgo them altogether where privacy isn't an issue.