

RADICAL TRAD

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The glamorous entryway is enhanced by a floor of glossy black octagonal marble slabs infilled with white marble. "I was originally going to do a classic checkerboard floor, then I thought, Why be so boring?" says designer James Davie. **Chair**, Alfonso Marina; **Nero Marquina and Sivec marble slabs**, Crystal Tile & Marble.

"I always think millwork needs to go floor to ceiling, even if the ceiling is unusually high," says James (pictured). "This painted-wood library corner creates a separate, smaller space within a larger room." High-gloss walnut flooring adds a sleek contrast to the pale goatskin-covered desk, steel-accented wooden chairs and Asian brass and aluminum gardening stool. Gardening stool, eBay; pendant, Charles Edwards; desk, Christie's.



CLASSIC ROOMS TAKE AN UNCONVENTIONAL TURN WITH BOLD PATTERNS AND SURPRISING JUXTAPOSITIONS. IN TORONTO, AN ELEGANT TOWNHOUSE REVEALS ITS REBEL SPIRIT.

• THE TREND •

The desire for a lavish, maximalist approach to decorating never really went away. But after years of Scandi-style minimalism and austere practicality — we're looking at you, mid-century modern — people are choosing exuberance over restraint. The trend is in full stride at Gucci Décor, where creative director Alessandro Michele is turning out fringed armchairs and porcelain vases stamped with '80s-style logos. It's also swinging from the chandeliers at Annabel's famous London nightclub, where soft floral murals meet extravagant jungle scenes, and even breakfast in the garden courtyard

is laid with mismatched silverware. And more-is-more decorating also underscores designer James Davie's design of this Toronto townhouse, which brings together a heady mix of traditional Georgian, Egyptian Revival and Asian influences, all against a foundation of neoclassical and Art Deco styles. "I wanted to create something luxe and layered, but the owners wanted it to be classic," says James. He proved they could have it all. "I didn't want it to feel too 'period,' so I infused the space with an air of elegant modernity," he says. "I like mixing styles that haven't been blended before."



BELOW: In the large, multipurpose living room, James created small tableaux to enrich the space. This corner beside the fireplace is perfectly suited for cosy conversations. **Armchairs**, Baker; **metallic ottoman**, James M. Davie Design; **metallic ottoman leather**, Keleen Leathers; **drapery fabric**, Larsen; **plinth**, Braem and Minnetti Antiques.



— THE HOME —

The 3,500-square-foot townhouse condo, with its mezzanine-level living room with extra-high ceilings, gave James just the scope he needed to create surprising contrasts and dramatic moments in every room. The original floor plans included a private elevator that James replaced with a neoclassical curved staircase to open up the foyer and add an air of grandeur. He'd initially intended to use Art Deco style as his dominant influence, but as he found pieces from other periods, he couldn't resist creating something more unexpected. In the living room, a Biedermeier secretary shares space with Asian-inspired coffee tables and vintage Murano lamps and, in the library, a two-tone sofa wrapped in cheetah-look upholstery sits next to traditional wood panelling and a Dutch book press. The effect is expressive and joyful, yet refined. "For me, good design is about making connections and finding the unifying relationship between different elements," says James. To link the spaces in the home, he used a pared-down palette of grey, black and imperial yellow. Recurring octagonal and bold square motifs also create harmony. "You can blend as many styles as you want if you just pay attention to colour, shape and form," he adds.



James anchored the mezzanine-level living room with a wool and silk rug featuring his favourite octagonal motif. The coffee tables are shortened silver-leaf side tables, which tie in nicely with the recess in the ceiling, also finished in silver leaf. For balance, James designed a window seat between two structural columns and upholstered it in the same yellow fabric as the facing sofa. **Yellow sofa fabric**, Pierre Frey; **patterned sofa fabric**, Stark Fabric; **throw pillow fabric**, Fortuny; **wallcovering**, Phillip Jeffries.

OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT: "I want people to open the door and feel like they're walking into the classic grandeur of an old New York-style apartment building," says James. Banquette seating strikes a classic note. **Banquette fabric**, Roma; **mirror**, Blackman Cruz; **table lamp**, eBay; **ceiling fixture**, The Urban Electric Co.; **ceiling colour**, Chantilly Lace (OC-65), Benjamin Moore.

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: James played up Art Deco influences in the dining room with a vintage sideboard, bar cabinet and light fixture from the era and a staggered geometric step pattern on the chairs. He repeated the pattern of the glass fixture in the rug below to generate a sense of play between the floor and ceiling. **Dining chair fabric**, Zoffany; **sconce**, The Urban Electric Co.; **bar cabinet**, Alfonso Marina.



A Dutch book press, bought at an auction and strategically placed in front of the library window, serves as both a conversation piece and an artistic complement to the room's subtle safari vibe. "The book press gave me the taller piece I needed to break the 30-inch-high visual line created by the sofas, chairs and tables," says James. **Chair, A.H. Wilkens Auctions & Appraisals.**

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James' clients opted for a casual kitchen, defined by cerused natural white oak cabinetry. Still, there are moments of flash with raw brass detailing and '50s-inspired glass icicle light fixtures. A custom octagonal table repeats a motif found throughout the house. **Cabinetry**, Marana; **backsplash, countertop**, Crystal Tile & Marble; **bench fabric**, Osborne & Little; **drapery fabric**, Dedar; **throw pillows**, Theo Decor; **tray**, eBay.



BELOW: James felt the home needed a luxurious, classical library anchored by panelled walls in a darker finish. "It's an extravagant, one-off room, so I was able to bring in deep, rich brown, scarlet red and cobalt blue," he says. A nod to safari style is reflected in the cheetah-print fabric on the sofa and recurring lions' heads, featured most prominently on the whale-oil chandelier that draws the eye to the textured cork ceiling. **Cheetah-print sofa fabric**, Schumacher; **red sofa fabric** by Great Plains, Primavera; **pillow fabrics**, Robert Allen, Créations Métaphores and Scalamandré.

"This quiet reading nook is where you can just reach up, grab a book and relax," says James. He covered the plush armchair and matching ottoman in a handsome fabric from Osborne & Little. **Armchair**, Baker.



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TREND *in focus*

Designer James Davie shares how to give refined rooms a rakish twist.

- 1. REPEAT YOURSELF** Build the decor around a shape that appears regularly and unexpectedly, from flooring and furniture to lighting and lampshades. This repetition unifies eclectic rooms.
- 2. CREATE STRIKING CONTRASTS** Mix elements from different periods or simply finish a sofa in two different fabrics. Unexpected combinations instantly make a room more dynamic and interesting.
- 3. GO BIG IN BIG SPACES** Choose oversized furniture for large open spaces to make them feel cosy, not cavernous. Balance big furniture with a division of patterns, incorporating both large- and small-scale patterned fabrics and textured solids.
- 4. ARRANGE FURNITURE CASUALLY** Position a pair of sofas so they're not directly opposite one another and place chairs and desks on angles — it will feel less structured, more random and relaxed.
- 5. MIX UP MATERIALS** Don't be afraid of unusual things. Choose outside-the-box materials, whether it's incorporating goatskin or cowhide on furniture pieces or adding flash with stone and metal furnishings and accessories.

ABOVE: The Deco-style terrazzo flooring in the second-floor gallery, which connects the living and dining spaces at the front of the house with the library and bedrooms at the back, was poured in stone aggregate — perfect for a high-traffic thoroughfare. The coffered ceiling, artfully adorned with octagonal lanterns, relates to the square patterns on the floor. “You have squares at your feet and octagons above you as you travel down the hall,” says James. A coat closet distinguished by floor-to-ceiling millwork further embraces the square motif with églomisé panel insets. **Lanterns**, Charles Edwards; **panels**, Creators of Objects.

RIGHT: The principal bathroom features Venetian plaster walls and a crisp blue-grey palette punctuated by polished nickel fixtures and trim. **Cabinetry**, Marana; **ceiling fixture**, Jamb; **faucets**, THG Paris; Bardiglio **marble flooring**, Crystal Tile & Marble; **antique mirror** (on vanity doors), Bradley.





• THE OUTCOME •

Despite its opulence, the townhouse doesn't feel over the top or extreme. "The homeowners love the warmth and richness of the home and refer to it as a sanctuary," says James. Although the interior is defined by large open areas, oversized furnishings and energizing patterns, there are small, intimate moments scattered throughout that make it cosy. But for James, it's the go-for-it decorating that's responsible for the feeling of a warm embrace. It takes a sense of adventure to comfortably mix so many styles and periods in a home but, he says, the unconventional combinations make for a cohesive environment. "Components that relate but aren't necessarily from the same place or time create a serene experience without appearing contrived," he says. Put another way, it's a house that isn't trying too hard — it's simply designed for the owners who live there. The result is luxurious in all the right ways.

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ABOVE: James opted for a more feminine feel in the 1930s-inspired principal bedroom. Dimensional panelling adds interest while the silver, pink and dark purple hues in the drapery fabric set a glamorous tone — one that's heightened by a vintage chandelier from Christie's and glints of silver on the furnishings. **Light grey panelling colour**, Cornforth White (228), Farrow & Ball; **pink panelling fabric**, Élitis; **darkest panelling colour**, Dark Walnut (1358), Benjamin Moore; **headboard, accent pillow fabric**, Dedar; **linens**, Au Lit Fine Linens; **table lamps**, eBay; **drapery fabric**, Donghia; **armchair**, Baker; **armchair fabric**, Romo.