



Two stools are tucked under the table (made by Heron's mother) in the foyer also serve as extra seating at the dining table.

MORE is MORE

Personality, not square footage, drives this design

BY VICKY SANDERSON • PHOTOGRAPHY BY ASA WEINSTEIN

Asked if executing maximalist design in small spaces is particularly challenging, Meredith Heron shrugs.

All it really takes, explains the Toronto-based designer, is extremely close attention to the scale, depth, and height of furniture, an appreciation of architectural constraints, an ability to weave pattern and texture through window treatments, seating, and rugs in a layered tonal palette, and the deft blending of art and accessories into an interesting, personally meaningful, and handsome mix.

Simple, right?

Heron's own economically-sized Victorian home in downtown Toronto, less than 1,000 square feet and with a living/dining area just nine feet wide and 21 feet long, accomplishes all that effortlessly, proving that small spaces are not necessarily best served by unrelenting understatement.

BIG ON CHARACTER

"Of course, there are personality types that thrive in a minimalist environment. Those are not my people," says Heron, who shares the home with life/work partner, Asa Weinstein, and their son Luke, eight.

"I could not put three things in a room—of any size—and call it done. Besides, that's not how people live. Where do guys put their pocket change and keys? A maximalist style makes it easier to disguise clutter, which is always going to happen."

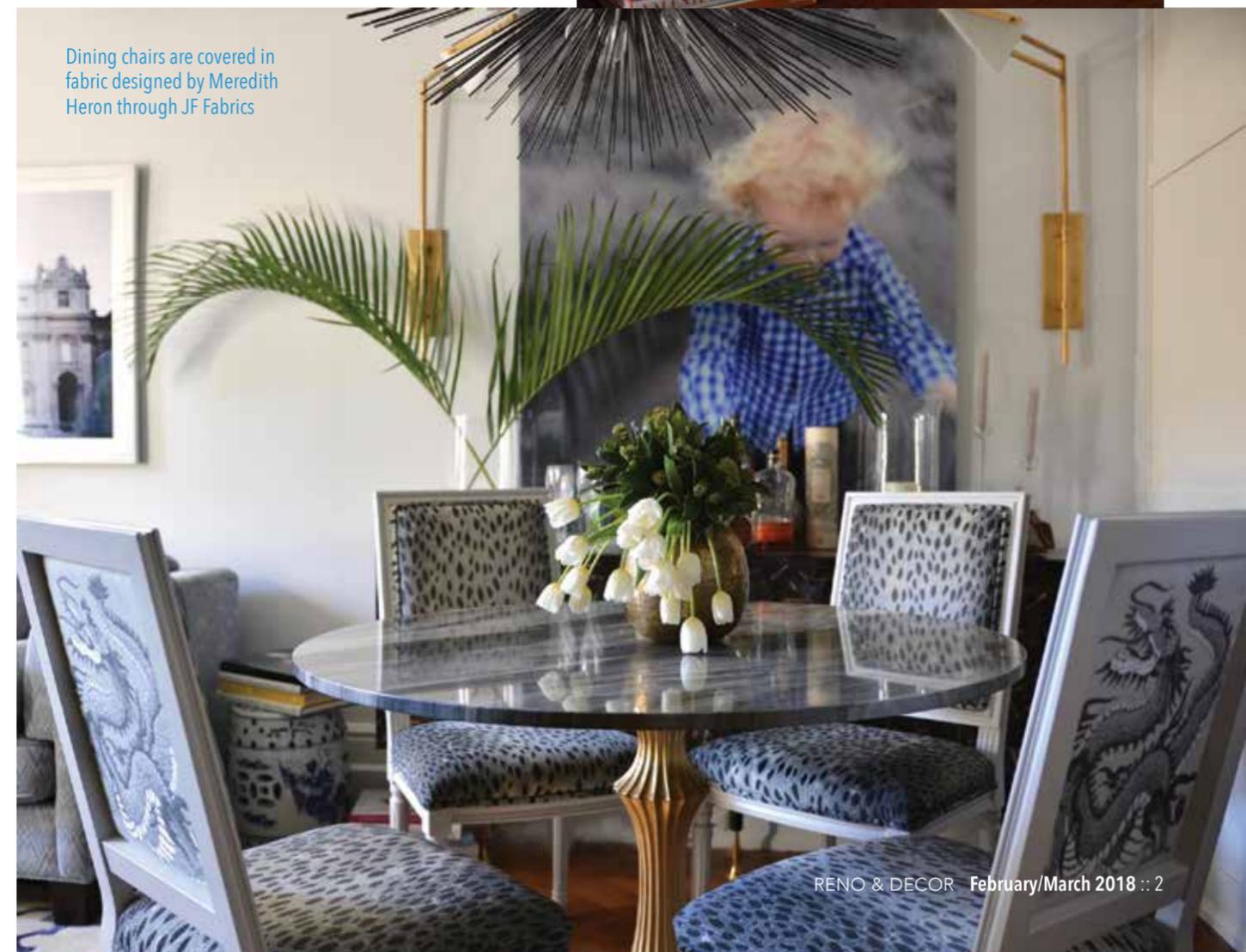
RETURN TO THE CLASSICS

Heron, who bought the house with Weinstein 14 years ago, explains that a clumsy 1970s renovation had, among other things, hidden original mouldings under a drywall ceiling that gobbled up about 12 inches of the room's 11-foot height.

The water-damaged original moulding underneath was completely replaced, except for the original medallion in the foyer. "We liked that it looked old, and wanted to keep that charm and speak to the antiquity of the house." Vinyl floors were replaced with in herringbone oak.



Dining chairs are covered in fabric designed by Meredith Heron through JF Fabrics





A Thomas O'Brien chair from Century Furniture in soft-blue leather provides extra seating.

Decorative boxes hide everything from toothpicks to candles and lighters on a glass coffee table that allows the eye to follow the pattern without interruption.

Plaster mouldings are a more ornate design than would have been seen more frequently in Victorian homes in New York rather than sedate Toronto.



COLOUR SCHEME

The colour conversation for this space starts with walls washed in Benjamin Moore's Full Moon. Technically an off white, it has enough pigment that it's "heading toward pale blue or iris," and is well-suited to silver, purple, and periwinkle tones, says Heron.

Hints of purple and cornflower blue turn up in the sofa, custom-made by Gresham House to ensure that it did not exceed 33 inches front to back (standard is 36 inches).

"We worked really hard to minimize the guts of the back to allow for the maximum seat depth," says Heron. "That's one of the benefits of working with people who can customize within a framework—it doesn't really have to add to the cost."

PATTERN-FRIENDLY PLAYGROUND

The piece is covered in a Bargello (flame) stitch in a family-friendly Crypton fabric that Heron thinks is assertive but not aggressive.

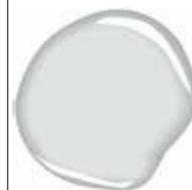
"People think they should not put a busy pattern on a sofa, so they put a tiny Herringbone or fretwork woven fabric. But the patterns are often way too small and they just make the piece seem dinkier and too traditional."

Patterns on pillows for the sofa both play with scale and connect with other elements in the room. Tones of the embroidery on a pillow with a modern Greek-key design echo the sofa, for example, while the grey on the back of the Robert Allen burnt-velvet leopard print, which Heron uses "all the time, in every project," is a colour cousin to the draperies.

"All those tone together, so that it's all quite complementary. That kind of sliding scale makes your eye move across the room, and makes it seem bigger," she says.

Pattern, says Heron, can be "your best friend" in a small space, if kept within a consistent colour palette. Here, the living room rug is a bold trellis in an anchoring blue of Heron's own design, which she favoured in part because "when you put a grid down on the floor, your eye follows the pattern and it spreads out and (space) seems bigger."

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The colour conversation for this space starts with walls washed in Benjamin Moore's Full Moon 2119-70

A sofa tucks neatly into the space, while a pair of vintage Vladimir Kagan chairs "soften" an angular bay window.



SPECIAL MEMENTOS

There are lots of personal touches, including piles of books, and a crowd of photographs of family and friends on an entranceway table. Art includes a print of a photograph taken of a very young Luke on a beach, the sunny blue of his gingham shirt mirroring lampshades that sit opposite.

BUILT-IN CUSTOM STORAGE

Storage that is "really well thought-out" will be key in a small space, says Heron, who designed a shallow buffet/bar console to provide a crucial 12 inches of storage. Made from printed acrylic sheeting from fabricator Lumigraf on a plywood-box construction, it was built by a "brilliant" cabinetmaker who was bedevilled—but not defeated—by the intricate bevelling she requested.

MORE THAN JUST A LIGHT FIXTURE

Heron, who says good lighting is always a worthwhile splurge, prefers "over scale, dramatic lighting" in small spaces, especially those with higher ceilings. In the dining area, Heron likes that a large, spikey bronze fixture "feels like sculpture rather than sparkle."

"A lot of people think that removing personality makes a space feel bigger and brighter and more open. But no matter what size your house is, it needs to reflect you. If it doesn't, you are lying to yourself. And to everyone else, that is not who you are." ♦

Designer and television host Meredith Heron characterizes her work as an extensive conversation with colour, form, pattern and texture. meredithheron.com

SOURCES

Most items were sourced through Meredith Heron Design **LIVING ROOM: RUG:** Ellwood through Meredith Heron Design, Thomas O'Brien **CHAIR:** Century Furniture **CHANDELIER:** Arteriors through Meredith Heron **DINING ROOM:** Dining **CHAIRS FABRIC PATTERN** designed by Meredith Heron through JF Fabrics **LIGHTING FIXTURES:** Kelly Wearstler through Meredith Heron **FOYER:** Hide **RUG** from Meredith Heron Collection

