



Show and Dwell

Treasured memories from past homes inspire a brand new design in Westboro

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In 2017, Jessica and Neil Gosbee were eager to launch a fresh chapter. After a decade caught up in the hectic day-to-day of Toronto, the appeal of a lifestyle that offered more time and space for themselves and their two young daughters drew the couple to Ottawa.

Their decision to relocate also provided Jessica with the opportunity to take the lead in designing her family's home — a refined version of the classic modern farmhouse. She would go on to oversee every detail of the project, unleashing her creative side while amassing an avid Instagram following for her pretty posts documenting the finer points of the build and her decor choices.



■ LEFT: Jessica and Neil Gosbee relax on the back deck of their new Westboro home with daughters and puppy. Their move to Ottawa provided Jessica with the opportunity to take the lead in designing her family's house

■ ABOVE: Having a house with a porch reminded Jessica of her childhood — she grew up in southwestern Ontario in a Craftsman-style house surrounded by farm properties



■ Jessica visited Atmosphère & Bois to choose each of the wood beams for the ceiling. The moulded fireplace surround by City Plastering was based on a design Jessica spotted on Instagram



Long a fan of American design celebrity Joanna Gaines and her laid-back decor style, Jessica refashioned that look to reflect her own history and the two houses she has most loved. The first was her childhood home — she grew up in a rural environment in southwestern Ontario in a Craftsman-style house surrounded by farm properties. The second was the Toronto house where she, Neil, and the girls shared all their memories as a family. It was a small heritage Tudor redbrick backing onto a reverse ravine. “I wanted our new home to be a mix of the feeling of those two places I loved — the rural and the urban. That mix reflects our style but also our personality.”

Westboro proved to be the perfect setting for the family’s new beginning. Though they began their house search in the more rural neighbourhoods of

Manotick, Carp, and Stittsville, Jessica and Neil were quickly won over by Westboro’s village vibe. It reminded them of their previous neighbourhood of Bloor West Village, and Westboro’s close proximity to coffee shops and pubs was doubly handy given that both work from home. It didn’t hurt that Neil, who grew up in Ottawa’s west end, had close friends who had settled there

■ ABOVE: A stunning kitchen is anchored by an eight-burner stove, a must-have for Neil, who is the cook of the family. The eating nook to the right looks out over the backyard

■ RIGHT: The family usually enters the house through the mudroom, which opens into a tucked-away prep area of the kitchen. The half door keeps Buddy the dog out of the house but “connected” when he’s waiting to have muddy paws washed





and were enthusiastic boosters of the neighbourhood.

A tiny teardown on a large lot was too good to pass up, providing the impetus to design a sensitive urban infill that would please the Gosbees and their neighbours. Local friends introduced Jessica to design-builder Gordon Weima, who is known in Westboro as the man behind a number of contemporary houses that bridge the past and present.

The two immediately hit it off, sharing inspiration photos and ideas before Weima walked the couple through a long-term vision of how the interior spaces needed to be designed to allow the house to grow with the family and suit their needs for years to come.

He understood Jessica's passion for juxtaposing the rough-hewn with the refined and shared her dedication to detail. "Gord jokes that I sourced tile



■ TOP: A table and pendant lights from Restoration Hardware set a rustic tone in the dining room, which is open to the living room

■ ABOVE: A Japanese-inspired charred-wood wall by Markian Pergat of Charclad adds an element of sophistication to the dining room



from every edge of the city,” says Jessica with a laugh. Off work during the nine months the house was being built, she scoured the city for just the right finishes and accessories, in the process forming close ties with an extended network of tradespeople, tile and lighting experts, and decor-store owners.

As Jessica discovered the perfect tile, pendant, or tub faucet, she would post her find on Instagram, sharing her joy for good design and celebrating the local businesses that made or carried the product. Over the past two years, her posts, originally meant for family and friends, have garnered her a following of nearly 4,000 design fans smitten with her curated vignettes of “life and finds” at the Gosbee house. Indeed, Jessica regularly finds herself answering design-related questions and offering advice.

She has even worked directly with a couple of her Instagram followers to help them hone their own modern-rustic aesthetic as they renovate.

But even though she has become somewhat of an expert, Jessica is quick to acknowledge that her Toronto-based friend, designer Christen Oatley, played a central role as she began contemplating the possibility of designing her own home, helping her create mood boards and focus on her must-haves. Those essentials were as much philosophical as practical. “I wanted our house to feel relaxed. I wanted family and friends to feel like they could kick their shoes off and feel casual and at home,” she says.

That casual tone was far from effortless, but rather the result of hours of research, an astute eye for detail, and conscientious editing. Today, natural light streams in,

■ ABOVE: Just beyond the foyer, the casual piano room faces out onto the front porch, the floor-to-ceiling windows providing street views and lots of light. The shiplap wall cladding adds texture to the room and lends a cottage-like ambiance

■ FACING PAGE, TOP LEFT: The double-sided fireplace separates the master bathroom from the bedroom, ensuring both are cozy on cold winter nights

■ FACING PAGE, TOP RIGHT: The weathered wood for the barn doors and the ceiling beams in the master bedroom was sourced from Atmosphère & Bois

■ FACING PAGE, BOTTOM: A luxurious master bathroom boasts both a freestanding Victoria + Albert tub and a spacious shower. Faucets in matte black from the Rubinet Faucet Company mirror the black window frames and inset black-framed mirrors overlooking both vanities

illuminating a family home that is subtle in tone but also filled with textures and patterns, modern and rustic elements. Oiled wood floors, perfect for masking puppy claw marks, anchor the house, and wood beams recovered from Ontario and Quebec farms are a design highlight on the main floor and in the master bedroom. In the dining room, a charred-wood feature wall provides a dark and dramatic backdrop to formal meals.

As she sits in the breakfast nook, Jessica surveys her world with a practised eye. “This house feels comfortable and cozy and full of light. It feels like us, which is exactly the point.”





IN DETAIL FOYER

Consider the Gosbees' foyer a microcosm of their home. Curated but casual, it offers a taste of what's to come when guests venture deeper into the house. The major themes are all there — a neutral colour palette, wood accents, lots of light, and accessories that are as functional as they are beautiful.

The family generally enters through the side-door mudroom; the foyer is just for guests. And so Jessica pictured the mood she wanted to set when company called, flexing her design skills and seizing the opportunity to be both playful and purposeful in the compact space. On the playful side, notice the sculptural electronic chimes that announce a visitor's arrival and the oversized circular coat hooks adorning one shiplap-clad wall. Those with a keen eye will observe that the herringbone floor is laid out to point the way in and out. The atmospheric sky-scape, a popular wallpaper design produced by Cole & Son, adds a dramatic note.

On the purposeful side, the pretty oversized mirror is designed to amplify incoming light, while the wire pendant light was specifically chosen to ensure natural light passes straight through. And that floating live-edge bench? Jessica visited The Wood Source to choose the slab, which was then finished and cut to fit the foyer.



Resources

DESIGN BUILDER
Gordon Weima

KITCHEN CABINETRY
AND CUSTOM MILLWORK
Gerry's Custom Kitchens

FURNITURE
**LD Shoppe/
Restoration Hardware**

CUSTOM-MADE FURNITURE
Atelier Meuble Rustique
(Master bed, side tables)

TILE
Ceragres
(Master, foyer, bar)
Saltillo Tile & Stone
(Powder room, mudroom)

KITCHEN INTERIOR DESIGN
Ten & Co.

LIGHTING
**Astro Design Centre,
Crate & Barrel,
LD Shoppe,
Rejuvenation,
Restoration Hardware**

DINING ROOM FEATURE WALL
Charclad

FIREPLACE SURROUND
City Plastering

FIREPLACE INSERTS
**High Energy Gas &
Wood**

FLOORING
Logs End

BEAMS AND BARN DOORS
Atmosphère & Bois

FOYER BENCH
The Wood Source

PLUMBING FIXTURES
**Astro Design Centre,
Mondeau/Boone,
Preston Hardware**

COUNTERTOPS
Emerald Tile + Marble
(Master bath, kids' bath)
Ottawa Granite Pro
(Kitchen)

WALLPAPER
Newell (Powder room)
Cole & Son (Foyer)

WINDOW COVERINGS
**The Decorators Choice
Paint Store Limited**