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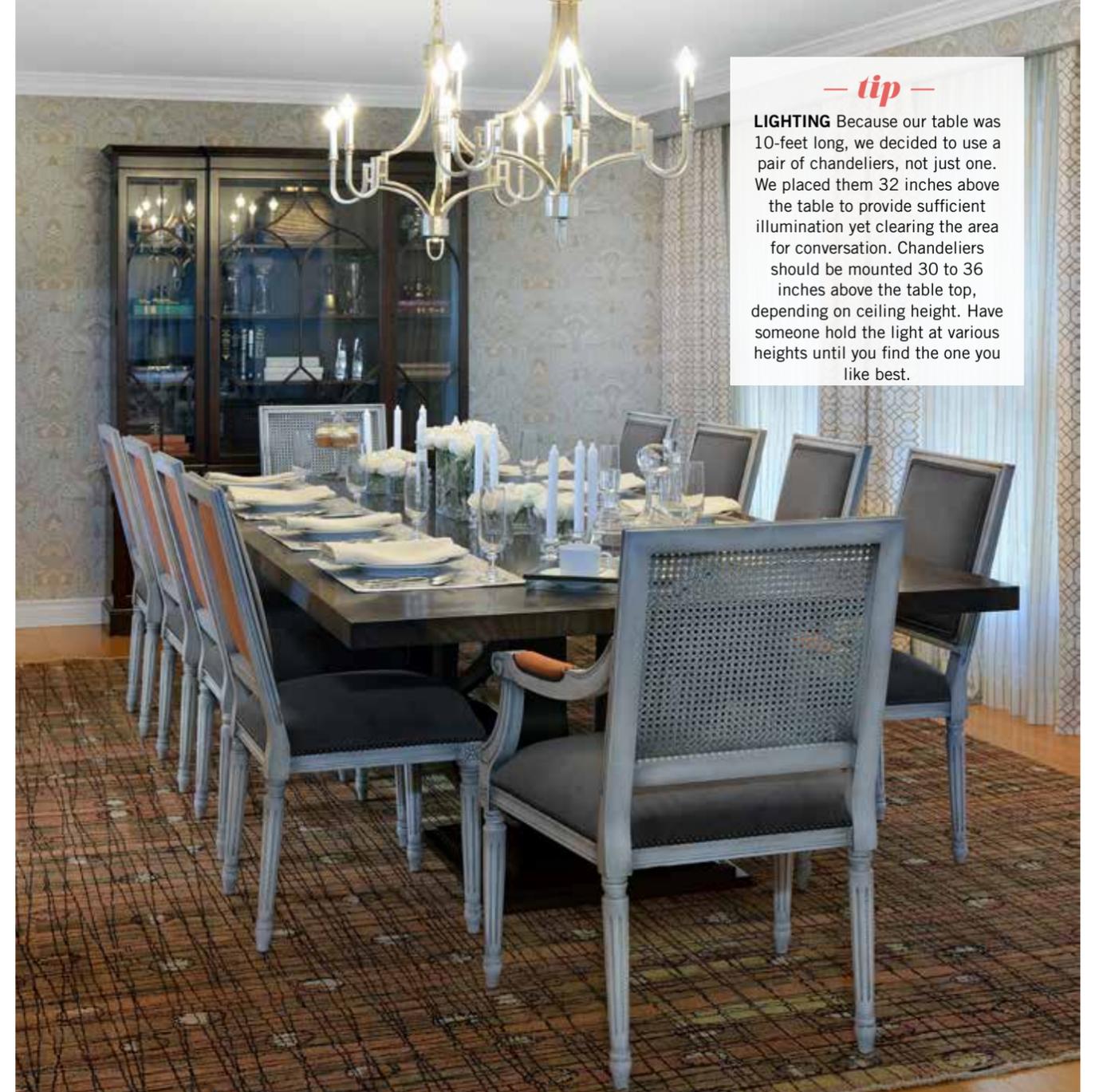
Designer Erica Gelman injects some life into a traditional dining room that longed for a colourful yet classical update

BY ERICA GELMAN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY LARRY ARNAL

distinguished DINING

The dining room decorating challenge—a room that evokes a myriad of questions. Can I use colour? Should it be bold or understated? Does it need to reflect the rest of the house? Is it worth making an investment? The dining room takes on many forms, from spacious rooms to alcoves off the kitchen, this space is meant to be a place to gather with family and friends for everyday meals or special occasions. Yet, it typically has a stigma of being too formal for ordinary use; we needed to prove that theory wrong. Our design team took an ordinary, bland and mismatched dining room and showed our clients that not only could we use colour, be bold yet understated, but we were also able to reflect the feeling of a casual yet classic space in their otherwise traditional home.

Our clients, a young couple who we've worked with in the past, had upgraded to a new, much more spacious home with their young children. The family needed our help with designing their new dining room because, like most young couples, they literally had nothing to fill in their space. Correction, the original homeowner had left behind their dining room set at a minimal cost to our clients. And although it wasn't the best looking, it was functional and they believed it could work for the time being. However, very quickly our clients realized they longed for more. More style, more comfort, more sophistication.



— tip —

LIGHTING Because our table was 10-feet long, we decided to use a pair of chandeliers, not just one. We placed them 32 inches above the table to provide sufficient illumination yet clearing the area for conversation. Chandeliers should be mounted 30 to 36 inches above the table top, depending on ceiling height. Have someone hold the light at various heights until you find the one you like best.

It is easy to get stuck on decorating a space when furniture already exists in the room. That said, to redecorate you don't need to get rid of everything either. We always ask the homeowners how they use the space now as opposed to how they would want the room to function. This particular project was a "back to basics" decorating challenge where we did not go in and remodel the room at all. We kept the plan, the finishes and architectural elements exactly the same. If you're planning your own design project, before putting together the colour palette, ask yourself or your design professional, what base you are working with. Since we weren't doing any structural changes or renovating the space, we had to keep in mind the tone of the existing floors,

which already had a strong orange base to them. Instead of ignoring them, we decided to use their undertones as our starting point. Luckily, we did have the chance to paint and fully wallpaper the space but you may be keeping your existing wall colours as is, this is definitely something you'll need to keep in mind.

With this particular design process we began by pulling an exciting colour palette together. We incorporated oranges, greys, both pale and murky, along with velvety creams and natural wood tones. We really sought out a colour palette that was playful yet easily turned formal. With the help of Budget Blinds we also turned one wall of windows into a layered focal point, which provided ample softness to the

DESIGN LESSON

large-scaled space.

What about budget? Our clients wanted to “do it right, the first time,” meaning they knew it would be an investment, one that they would enjoy for years to come. We decided to play with furniture styles to achieve a custom, personalized look but unified the diverse styles with colour. We designed a custom walnut table made to feature an original Deco pedestal. The piece was made to order and prepared by hand making the quality of the table second to none. When sourcing a dining table always remember how much use it will actually get. If you’re prepared to invest in quality and longevity, purchase the best of what you can afford and you’ll only buy it once. Our clients made that same decision with their dining chairs; Louis XVI showstoppers. We finished

these traditional chairs in a modern distressed pewter stain to create truly unique pieces. Another way we added a bit of modern flair to the otherwise classic design was by having the chairs upholstered in two different Kravet Fabrics—durable grey on the seats and a pop of colour on the backs.

The result—a classic, tailored and one-of-a-kind space that’s lively enough for family gatherings yet has the essence of sophistication for ceremonial entertaining. We mixed very traditional furniture with modern fabrics and contemporary geometric wallpaper and drapery to pull it all together. We didn’t shy away from patterns, colours or even uncommon lighting techniques. The homeowners can finally enjoy their personalized space without question—it is exactly what they had yearned for.



— tip —

STYLE To create an impactful moment we used a striking juxtaposition to patterned walls, they played off the warm terracotta colour in the accent fabrics. Repetition is key for continuity.

SOURCES:

CEILING REPAIR, Paint and Wallpaper Install –Con/Serv Painting Corp, Andrew Ciraco–416.748.0003 Custom Made **WALNUT TABLE**, Louis XVI Cane Back Arm Chairs, Louis XVI **DINING SIDE CHAIR** and Restored Antique Satinwood Louis XV Bookmatched **HIGHBOY** - Carrocel Restoration, carrocel.com **WOOL RUG** – Weavers Art, weaversart.com **CUSTOM DRAPERY** Design and Install – Budget Blinds, budgetblinds.com/southeasttoronto/ Thibaut **WALLPAPER, DRAPERY FABRIC AND CHAIR FABRIC** – Kravet Fabrics, kravetcanada.com **LIGHT FIXTURES** – Sescolite Creative Lighting, sescolite.com **TABLE ACCESSORIES AND ACCENTS** – Crate & Barrel, crateandbarrel.ca



— tip —

DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START? If you're decorating and not renovating your space, start with soft finishes; fabrics, wall covering, drapery and then move forward and choose your hard finishes. However, if you are remodelling, select all hard surfaces before selecting any fabric.

