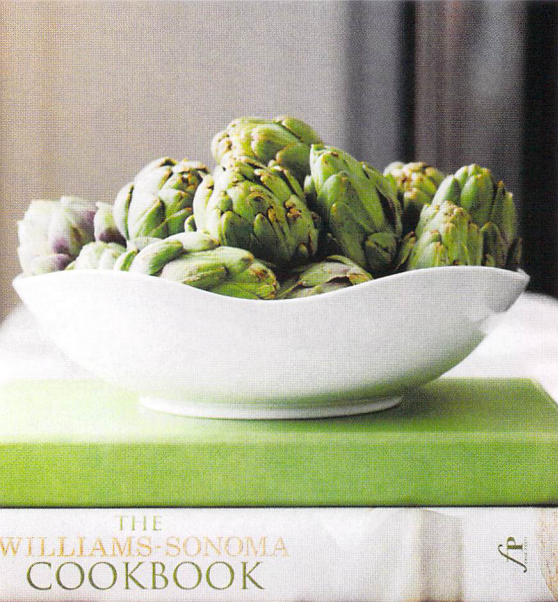




TEXT IRIS BENAROIA | PHOTOGRAPHY DONNA GRIFFITH | STYLING ANN MARIE FAVOT

colour me *fun*

Designer and blogger Tim Lam embraces a constant evolution of colour and accessories in his downtown Toronto condo. In 15 questions, he tells us how he keeps things fresh and exciting.



Tim Lam's home is a shrine to all things loved. The 33-year-old decorator and blogger (and auditor) behind Design Maze has amassed a vibrant collection of furniture and accessories in his downtown Toronto condo. Wonderfully energetic, his 750-square-foot space harnesses colour and pattern – and lots of it – against a neutral backdrop. It's impossible not to feel happy here.

Tim changes his home's look seasonally to keep it fresh. With his gumption, we're sure we'll be seeing great things from this decorator.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

LEFT Simple and stylish: An organic-shaped bowl cradles fresh artichokes; at first glance, the living room's palette seems haphazard, but Tim's colour choices are actually complementary; Tim loves collecting pottery, mixing expensive and inexpensive pieces from different eras: "As long as they're all white, they look harmonious together," he says; unlike the rest of his condo, the kitchen is kept simple yet finished with Tim's deft touch; with its animated, interlacing botanical pattern, this wallpaper (which Tim first saw in *Style at Home!*) makes a beguiling focal

point in the dining room; since Tim didn't have room in his condo for a bar, he fashioned a tray (made from a picture frame, fabric and several baking sheets for reinforcement) to hold everything from cocktails to baked goods to sit on his cooktop; Tim's collection of white shapely pottery looks striking against the back-painted shelving unit that was retrofitted with glass shelves.

RUG, Elte; **SLIPPER CHAIR UPHOLSTERY**, Duguay Antique Restoration; **TOSS CUSHION FABRICS**, Designer Fabrics; **TOSS CUSHION SEWING**, Wesley Seto Design; **TABLE LAMP**, Jonathan Adler; white **POTTERY**, Eva Zeisel Originals.



The rug and statement wallpaper are a testament to designer and homeowner Tim Lam's chutzpah - he's not afraid to get flashy. To balance the colours, classic Cherner dining chairs and a Saarinen-inspired dining table were introduced. The funky chandelier adds a note of whimsy.

DESIGN, Design Maze Interiors, designmaze.ca; **RUG**, Elte.

WE LOVE COLOUR!

Osborne & Little
Sariskar Maharani
WALLPAPER in 02,
Primavera.



When did you start your blog, Design Maze (designmaze-tim.blogspot.com), and why?

The idea of blogging actually came from my good friend Scott Young, an extremely talented photographer, who suggested I document the hard work I've done to revamp my 30-year-old condo. I thought what an amazing idea to use my blog as a venue to share my thoughts and pictures of my condo with friends and family, especially with many of them living in Asia. I'm so glad that Scott put this idea in my head. It's one of the best decisions I've ever made in my life!

What did your place look like before you brought your keen eye to it?

It was a bad 1970s job. The walls were in good condition, but they were beige. The original parquet flooring was in rough shape, the kitchen was really dated with its original linoleum flooring, and the horrifying salmon-pink bathroom had to go.

Did you tackle your condo all at once or one room at a time?

I had the luxury of doing it all at once and stayed at my dad's place during the renovation. With all the flooring coming up, a bathroom to completely redo and a kitchen to modernize, I was glad that I didn't have to live through all that drywall dust.

What inspired your condo's look?

I was obsessed with the first season of *Sarah's House* when I purchased my condo (well, I'm still obsessed with the show). So naturally, the colour palettes, design details and materials used by Sarah Richardson and Tommy Smythe inspired many of my own design decisions. I love their timeless, classic and elegant aesthetic, as well as their attention to detail and ingenious mixing of fabrics and patterns.

Where else do you go for design inspiration?

I subscribe to different magazines and clip my favourite rooms and put them in a folder - I'm an old-fashioned guy in this regard. I'm always online looking at Apartment Therapy, Design*Sponge and other design blogs - the world of design bloggers is so inspiring.

Where do you find pieces for your clever vignettes?

Most of the time, I arrange objects that I already own. I'm an accessories hoarder, so I'm always on the lookout for unique, stylish and affordable decorative pieces. I have a secret stash in my closet. I also store lamps, mirrors, *objets* and vases in my dad's basement. It's gotten to the point where he's told me "You have to stop shopping!"



An ethereal glass coffee table quiets down all the activity in the space. "It has a light, airy look that I love," says Tim. The 1950s original Saarinen Womb chair was beige when he bought it and the foam was ruined. Recovered in bright red, it takes pride of place in the living room.

What's your advice for living with colour?

Listen to your heart. Don't be afraid of what may seem too bold. As long as you love it, that's all that matters. If you back away from what you love and pick something else, the space will just be safe and you'll always wonder what the room would have looked like if you had gone for your number one choice. After all, you can start with small doses or easy-to-remove applications (for example, on a focal wall or on toss cushions) and go from there.

You've changed the look of your condo since *Style at Home* visited. What does it look like now?

At the moment, my place is all neutral. After living with those bright, bold colours for a couple of years, I wanted to introduce drama and interest into my space through subdued hues, variant textures and patterns. I chose yellow as an accent to highlight the various shades of grey and natural linen. It's the richness of a smooth silvery velvet, a powerful yet calming grey-and-cream zebra print and warm metal accents that bring the space to life. I kept all the furniture the same, except for the sofa. My new sofa is much more neutral than the green one shown here but has a fun polka-dotted fabric that goes around the back.

Any notable design mishaps?

The sofa sent a chill up my spine when it first arrived. It's the same length as the green one but without the built-in side table, so the room looked off balance when the new sofa was put in place. The red Womb chair also really stood out in a room full of neutrals. To solve this dilemma, I moved the furniture around, switched up side tables from another room and added new drapery with a geometric print to counter the chair's bold colour. The end result is an unbelievably cozy living room!

How often do you change up the look of your space?

I used to change up the decor in my place three times a year. Now I've cut back to spring/summer and fall/winter.

To what extent?

I tend to change accessories like toss cushions rather than repainting walls or putting up new wallpaper. If you look closely, my house is really more neutral than you might think, with white and grey throughout. This neutral backdrop allows me to easily switch up my accent colours without a significant financial commitment. However, I'm a firm believer that there's an impact, drama and energy that can only be achieved through wallpaper.

Any design rules or things that you shouldn't do?

Never one-stop shop! I know it's easy to go to your favourite store, hand over your credit card and wait a few weeks for the entire living room set to pop up at your house. The difference between a house and a home is its character and personality, which can't be achieved through one-stop shopping. Just because the pieces play well in the showroom doesn't mean you'll like them forever in your own home. My approach has always been to shop at stores with different price points and then mingle my finds together for an eclectic yet cohesive look.

FOR SOURCES, SEE OUR WORKBOOK



If you could only live with one colour, what would it be?

I would go for a warm white, such as CIL Paints' Wedding White - it works with anything!

What's your favourite colour combination?

At the moment, it's a rich royal blue with a muted golden yellow. I love how the elegant shade of yellow juxtaposes with the deep, sophisticated blue. The overall effect is exquisite, decadent and electric.

What's your go-to neutral?

It has to be either white or grey. I love how calming and serene it is when the two colours play off each other in a space. I applied this theory in my own home with CIL Paints' Wedding White and White Husky. I also like CIL Paints' The Plaza - it's the perfect warm grey to complement any neutral space.

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Cole & Son Mimosa WALLPAPER, Kravet/Lee Jofa Showroom.



TOP Since his bedroom doesn't have a closet, Tim (pictured above) reconfigured IKEA's Pax wardrobe system to fit around his headboard, giving it the look of a built-in.

Pax **WARDROBE**, IKEA; **TOSS CUSHION FABRICS**, Designer Fabrics.

LEFT Pattern emerges from both the wallpaper - which has a muted botanical

design - and the natural striations on the dresser. A buttery yellow vase adds warmth to the scene.

DRESSER, Stylegarage.

OPPOSITE Bright Billy buttons - favoured by designers because they're so cute and springy - highlight the yellows in the encaustic artwork.

Saarien **SIDE TABLE**, Gabriel Ross; **Momentum ARTWORK**, Laura Culic.

CANADA'S

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