

CANADIAN

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Matty Matheson's Best
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LEFT: In an apartment at The Apthorp on Manhattan's Upper West Side, Brian replaced a fussy Louis XV-style mantel with something sleek. He also hung a Hervé Van der Straeten chandelier to contrast the ceiling's original plasterwork. "It's like a Matisse cutout — it's one of my favourite chandeliers," says Brian. "The light is concealed within the leaves so there's a beautiful uplighting of the plasterwork."



IN GOOD COMPANY

New York designer Brian J. McCarthy on mentors and must-haves.

Text by WENDY JACOB

WHEN ALBERT HADLEY of Parish-Hadley hires you as his assistant, it's like being tapped on the shoulder by a design god. That's how it felt to Brian J. McCarthy in 1983, then a student at the Pratt Institute. Once at Parish-Hadley (a firm that's designed for the Kennedys, Astors and Rockefellers, and whose alumni include Bunny Williams and David Kleinberg), Brian rose through the ranks to become a partner by 1989. Then, in 1992, the designer struck out on his own to found interior design firm, Brian J. McCarthy, Inc.

Though he has encyclopedic knowledge of Parish-Hadley, even penning the book *Parish-Hadley Tree of Life: An Intimate History of the Legendary Design Firm* with Bunny Williams, Brian's signature style is all his own. He happily paints his dining room ceiling a shade called Mississippi Mud and places a Les Lalanne side table depicting a cross-legged monkey holding lily pads aloft in his living room. Here, the designer shares his best decorating tips and style inspirations.

Q&A

HOUSE & HOME: What are some of the biggest lessons you learned from your mentor Albert Hadley?

BRIAN J. MCCARTHY: That furniture plans and elevations are key. Albert was great at what we call skylines — how the eye moves around the room. You want the eye to not only scan horizontally but move up and down, without it being chaotic. Albert was such a great editor; there isn't a day that I don't think about skylines, or him.

H&H: How do you get your clients engaged in the design process?

BJM: We start by asking for magazine tears or books that give me insight into the colours and patterns they like, but we

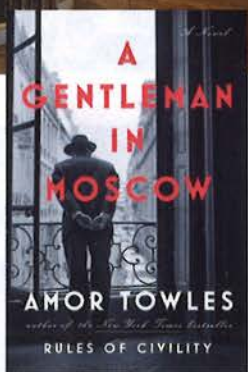
BRIAN J. McCARTHY'S

REFINED PICKS AND UNEXPECTED INDULGENCES

Design Inspiration One of my favourite houses is Drottningholm Palace, which served as a summer residence for Swedish royalty. The pine floors are from the 18th century and are faded by the sun. I attempted to recreate something similar at our country home, Alfalfa House.



Current Read
A good friend gave me a copy.



Must-have Tool For 35 years, I've been carrying a folding ruler. I'm constantly checking dimensions, almost like a reflex.



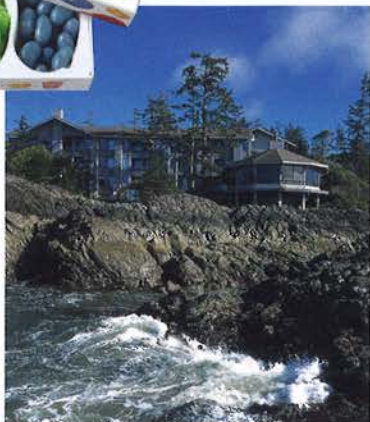
Bravest Decision
Painting our living room ceiling Mississippi Mud (2114-20), by Benjamin Moore.



Secret Indulgence
A handful of sour Jelly Belly jelly beans.



Dream Destination
The Wickaninnish Inn in Tofino, B.C. The way the dining room juts into the ocean is like a bowsprit on a ship. It doesn't take away from the landscape.



ABOVE AND RIGHT: The entry and guest bedroom at Alfalfa House in the Hudson Valley. "This property was 15 acres of alfalfa fields, with no trees or shrubs. When we built the house 12 years ago, it looked like the house from *The Wizard of Oz* that just fell out of the sky into a field."



ABOVE: Brian clad a client's library in Los Angeles in lacquer panels set in bronze fittings.

hope to entice them into wanting to spend more time thinking about the design itself. I've been known to do one, two or even three houses for a client, and I want each experience to be different. You can't execute an idea, concept or style in a New York apartment and go back to the same watering hole for the summer house in Southampton.

H&H: *You and your partner, Daniel Sager, built a weekend house in the Hudson Valley. Do you have any tips for country decorating?*

BJM: Our house upstate is very different from our apartment in Manhattan because of the materials. Other than some wallpaper, it's not about finishes. In our country home, I kept the walls a linen white, with a very subtle grey on the trim to

highlight the architectural details. Some of the furniture is from our Manhattan apartment. When we first built the house, Danny said, "I don't want this place to be filled with European furniture." What's it full of? European furniture — but these are the things that appeal to me.

H&H: *As an established designer, what insights have you gained?*

BJM: You have to push clients beyond their boundaries and open their eyes to things outside their comfort zone. Even if they rule something out, it engages the mind and enhances the process and the end result. Also, architecture is critically important. There has to be appropriateness and naturalness so when you walk into a space it feels real, not like a stage set or an assumed personality.

Photography by Francesco Lagnese (Alfalfa House)/Fritz von der Schulenburg (turquoise library)/Tom Ryan (Wickaninnish Inn)/Rusm, iStock.com (Drottningholm Palace)/A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles, courtesy of Viking, an imprint of Penguin Random House, 2016 (book)