

KING EDDY'S CONDO

Peter Brooks took up the 45-day challenge to build on a storied past

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OLD HOLLYWOOD. Those two words helped Peter Brooks focus his mind for the challenging project ahead. He and his team had 45 days to design and decorate a 1,200-square-foot condo, which was a bare white box with minimal amenities.

The condo in question was in the King Edward Hotel, which opened in 1903, and is rich with celebrity lore and mid-century elegance.

"I grew up in Toronto. I knew the King Edward," says Brooks, the owner of BedfordBrooks Design, who, like many Torontonians was

relieved when the storied monument was saved from the wrecking ball. "My grandmother and mother used to have high tea there," he says.

Tea was not the only thing served up. There was scandal, too. In 1964, Elizabeth Taylor, who was still married to Eddie Fisher, carried on a torrid affair at the King Edward with Richard Burton, which shocked Toronto at the time. Burton was staying at the hotel to perform in a production of Hamlet at the O'Keefe Centre.

The building has many stories to tell,

including the one about the bed-in staged by John Lennon and Yoko Ono in 1969. It now has 143 condos that share the building with the hotel's 300 guest suites.

Brooks was lucky that this project, completed in March, 2013, was for Janice Rushford, a friend who had bought a condo suite in the building. He had worked on her previous home in the Beaches and she trusted him so implicitly that she decided not to get involved in his design process. There was no consultation, no swatches, no vetoes. ☞





“I could not see myself intervening. I would just be in the way,” says Janice, who works as a real estate agent in Toronto and during the six weeks of renovation tried to focus on her work, though she admits it was difficult.

But she wanted a surprise. The 45 days ended with a party that coincided with her 40th birthday. It was held in one of the private ballrooms, and small private tours of her new home were conducted for groups of guests.

Janice spent years as a single mother, working as a secretary. She moved up in the company. “Now I help people find new homes. It’s my dream job,” she says, adding that she loves that her own new home is housed in such a significant building. With her son now 23, she was excited to embark on this new phase in her life. 📖

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The chandelier and the area rug, both from ELTE, inspired the living room’s design. The bookcases are custom-made by BedfordBrooks Design, while the sofa is from Decorium, the ottoman from Decor-Rest and the tulip chairs, Zilli Home. The ceiling’s frosty pink is a Benjamin Moore colour.





She loves the era of old Hollywood – “My dad was a huge fan of Frank Sinatra” – and she adores such celebrities as Judy Garland and Audrey Hepburn. She also appreciates many of the things associated with the early life of the King Eddy. She and Brooks had a pre-project meeting in the hotel and they both stared in awe at the beautiful moldings in the ballroom. “I saw in his eyes that he understood what I wanted,” she says.

For Brooks, it all started with a crystal chandelier, which was given a spot in the condo’s living room. A classic Barron rug complemented the look, and muted tones for the walls, sofa and chairs helped complete the room. Custom wainscoting was installed in the entryway, along with golden floral wallpaper; they contrast with the rich black doors.

The living room’s coffered ceiling was painted a frosty pink. The kitchen’s cabinetry and island were custom-built, as were the living room’s bookshelves. A recessed bar boasts mirrored drawer facades and antique glass handles.

In the guest bedroom, a leaded window with bevelled glass is a nod to earlier times. 

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The kitchen cabinetry is custom-made by BedfordBrooks Design, while the hardware is supplied by the Door Store.

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The surprise, which was filmed for posterity, came when Janice arrived with her dog to view her new home. She found everything in place, from the clothes in her drawers to two ruby slippers next to the bed. “I was crying and shaking. I loved everything in here,” she says.

Janice says she would never have chosen such design elements as pink ceilings and is relieved that she left herself out of the planning to trust Brooks and his team to do what they do best. “I feel so privileged to live in this hotel and in this great building,” she says.

As for Brooks, he’s happy that the old Hollywood feel is still alive, not only in the King Edward Hotel, but in one of its condos. ➤



Designer Peter Brooks created a leaded window in the guest bedroom, which recalls the building’s architectural history. (Opposite) The bed is from ELTE, the end tables from Tanya’s, and the table lamps from Union Lighting. The wallpaper, the vintage Roslyn collection by Sanderson, comes from Primetime Paint & Paper.

