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# THE GLOSS

MAGAZINE

ISSUE 100 / JANUARY 2011

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM  
YOUR TRAVEL TRENDS

GOING  
*for*  
BROKE

NO SHAME IN  
BEING SKINT  
(AND SHOWING IT)

HISTORIC HOUSE

AN IRISH-AMERICAN AT HOME

GREEN  
ACRES

FLEEING THE  
RAT RACE FOR  
PASTURES NEW

*Unstoppable*

FOUR WOMEN WHO MADE WAVES IN THE 1980S  
ARE DOING IT ALL OVER AGAIN



OPPOSITE PAGE: In the **LIVING ROOM**, large mirrors add impact. For similar, try Mimosa Interiors, Montrose, Dublin 4. **FAR LEFT AND LEFT**: In the **HALL** is a 1930s sycamore table with latticework that was made in Argentina. The Chinese vase was bought in an antique shop. An old Irish oak gothic chair was a present from a friend. O'Sullivan Antiques, Francis Street, Dublin 8, specialises in period Irish furniture and *objets d'art*. **BELOW**: In the **LIBRARY**, a small kidney-shaped table saves on floor space.

# GOOD BONES

In his country house in upstate New York, Irish-American decorator **MATTHEW PATRICK SMYTH** created a classic, stripped-back blank canvas for his rich collection of antiques and acquisitions: the perfect treatment for a historic house with good bones. There's even a nod to his ancestry, with Irish craft and stonework playing a part in the restoration of the house

**M**atthew Patrick Smyth is a second-generation Irish decorator based in New York. His style interweaves European and American traditions, fusing art, architecture and design to create classic interiors. His weekend retreat is a former coaching inn in upstate New York - a two-hour drive from the Big Apple. Smyth, whose grandparents were from Mayo and Meath,

studied at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York and was then mentored by American designer David Easton, an East Coast legend, which led to a visual vocabulary rooted in classical design principles.

He may deliver a polished uptown product for his clients (about whom he is very discreet) but Smyth describes himself as a 'low maintenance, no fuss kind of guy' and the home that he renovated for himself bears this out

"Everything is so simple that when the taxman visited he was so underwhelmed by the finish, the lack of marble bathrooms and curtain swagging that he reduced my tax bill," he laughs.

When Smyth bought the house, it had 15 rooms. Parts of it date from 1795 so there are period features aplenty. While Smyth reduced the number of rooms, he preserved all of these features. The renovation took six months.

Now a three-bedroom house, it is a repository for all his finds; from dealers, markets and from his travels, especially his regular trips to Paris and London. "I'm on one of the East Coast's great antiques axes. There are lots of places to go antiquing: Hudson, New York; Sheffield, Massachusetts; and Kent, Connecticut. Day trips are very tempting. I go shopping for clients and end up buying for myself."

Walking into the house, you're greeted by a tiger maple staircase with an ivory inset that is original to the house. The old pine floor, at one time "a patchwork of painted floors" has been undercoated in red and then painted in a black lacquer, a decorating trick that makes it exude a warmth usually lacking in a glossy black finish.

The living room is to the right of the hall. A pair of large wall-hung mirrors frame plain pine pillars and add drama and a sense of balance to the space. They were made by his New York-based Irish cabinet maker, Danny Murphy. Antique French garden urns sit atop.

A door connects through to the dining room, in reality a passageway, with painted pine panelling original to the house on one of the walls. Maps of the Paris *rondissements* on another wall echo the shape of the panelling. A slate hearth runs the length of the room. There's also a side door that Smyth uses as the official front door for parties. "When entertaining I set up this hallway as a dining room."

It leads into a large L-shaped, eat-in kitchen. The island is an old piece of English oak purchased in Athens, New York. "I removed the back to create open shelving that is accessible when you are sink-side." The rest of the kitchen cabinets are traditional and the countertops are mahogany.

This is where Smyth and his partner, writer Jean Vallier, eat most of the time. Banquette seating and a Windsor chair frame the fine hunting table that is big enough to spread out the newspaper and read at or even work at, Smyth explains. "In winter, with a fire going, it is my favourite room in the house."

The dresser is Irish and the pottery displayed a collection of pieces he's found over the years. The half-back door and open hearth, fashioned by an Irish stonemason called Andy



# HOME



ABOVE: In the **SITTING ROOM**, slate-coloured tiles are easy to manage. The grey glazed Italian porcelain tiles at Tilestyle, Ballymount, Dublin 24, recreate a natural slate finish. LEFT: The Irish-style kitchen **DRESSER** houses Smyth's collection of vintage pottery. The Victorian Joinery Company, South Gloucester Street, Dublin 2, are specialists in handmade, hand-painted kitchen furniture. BELOW: The **BATHROOM** has a salvaged traditional roll-top bath. For professional bath and Aga re-enamelling, try H&F Enterprises, Cashel, Co Tipperary.



Savage, are home country touches that recall west Cork, where his cousins still live. The floor may look like slate but is in fact a porcelain tile that is far easier to maintain.

The library is a tiny room that doubles as a fourth bedroom when he has a full house. It is fitted out like a boat, Smyth explains. "I built in a day-bed with storage underneath to store pillows, blankets and sheets. There are books everywhere. On Saturday afternoons it's a great place to lounge and read. It's also where I keep my family photos. The room isn't big enough to hold a standard-size desk so I installed a kidney-shaped table that has soft edges and doesn't eat up floor space."

Upstairs there are three bedrooms. In the master bedroom, there is a pair of French 1950s nickel sawhorses that form the legs of his desk. A glass top would have been an obvious choice but Smyth preferred a wooden one. A

model of a theatre sits on it. "I once entertained the idea of doing set design and imagine it as a maquette for a Shakespearean play or an opera such as *Toxica* held in the round." The stool is covered in Alaskan furs.

The preferred bedroom for guests has its own little staircase leading up from the kitchen, meaning guests are free to come and go as they please. The Georgian bed is made from tiger maple and he found a decorative wooden trophy in London's Portobello Market: "I brought it back home in my carry-on baggage - back in the day when such things were still feasible!"

"Whether I have four guests for the weekend or a party of 40, the house still feels comfortable," says Smyth. Job done.

■ ALANNA GALLAGHER *Matthew Patrick Smyth's book, "Living Traditions: Interiors" (Monacelli Press), is now available. For more, see [www.matthewsmyth.com](http://www.matthewsmyth.com)*

TOP: On the **LANDING** is a fine Palladian window, one of the reasons Smyth bought the house. The soft, muted colour palette selected for the walls and upholstery fabrics (for well-priced cotton ticking and linen try Helen Turkington Fabrics, Clonskeagh, Dublin 6) is anchored by Smyth's choice of dark mahogany wood pieces. ABOVE: In the **BEDROOM** high thread-count linens add a sense of luxury. Arnotts (Yves Delorme) and Brown Thomas (Frette and Graziano) have both recently extended their luxury linen offer.