

CANADIAN

OCTOBER 2015

Harvest Vegetable  
Sides with BIG Flavour

# HOUSE & HOME

CANADA'S MAGAZINE OF HOME & STYLE

## Natural BEAUTY

INSPIRED DECORATING WITH  
HEART AND SOUL

15 OF THE BEST  
TABLE LAMPS

8 Fabulous  
KITCHENS!  
HOT COLOURS,  
BEST FINISHES  
AND A DREAMY  
MAKEOVER

SUZANNE DIMMA  
ON THE NEW LOOK  
OF BRITISH STYLE

# Timothy Whealon

The New York designer talks about his American design sensibility and shares his best decorating advice.

Text by STACY LEE KONG

Venetian plaster walls read as lavender, grey or blue, depending on the time of day. Timothy designed the brown and cream rug based on an 18th-century Portuguese carpet.



**W**hether he's decorating homes in London, Monaco or the States, Timothy

Whealon has a clear signature style. "At its base, my decorating has a very American, or maybe North American, sensibility," he says. "It's clean and edited, but it references so many different things that I've seen in different places."

A one-time Sotheby's employee, Timothy started his own firm in 1994 and quickly established himself as the go-to guy for high-end spaces that still feel comfortable and personal. "I want to create rooms that can continue to evolve after I finish them, so a homeowner can add a piece of art or their tchotchkes and not destroy the beauty of the space," he says.

Timothy chats with *H&H* about where he's finding inspiration right now, how to mix traditional and contemporary design elements and the difference between decorated and *too* decorated.



Timothy Whealon in the front hall of his Hamptons home.

Photography by Max Kim-Bee, from *In Pursuit of Beauty: The Interiors of Timothy Whealon* by Timothy Whealon, Rizzoli New York, 2015 (room)/William Waldron, *The Interior Archive* (portrait)

Q+A

**HOUSE & HOME:** *When did you first know you wanted to be a designer?*

**TIMOTHY WHEALON:** I was always interested in design. When I was a teenager, I'd spend my extra money at auctions, and I went on to study art and train with Sotheby's. The turning point for me was when I started helping people buy art and antiques and I saw what decorators did with them. They were taking patina off pieces of furniture and covering them the wrong way. I was like, "Uh ... I can do this better!"

**H&H:** *What are the key elements of your aesthetic?*

**TW:** A little bit of old, a little bit of new, a little bit of matte, a little bit of shine! It's really the mix for me. I try to create spaces that feel very current; I'm not interested in creating a period room. But I do like to strike a balance between pieces that feel modern and those that refer to the past. And at the end, once I have the mix right, I like to pop in an element that feels unexpected. Art is really important; that's what I usually use as a finishing touch. But it doesn't have to be serious art — it could just as easily be a framed textile or a wall of drawings by the kids.

**H&H:** *What advice would you give to someone trying to master the mix?*

**TW:** Buy beautiful, interesting objects, because then they always have a home. It might not end up exactly where you think it'll go, but it'll work somewhere. And I think it's the same thing for a client. I might find a beautiful piece that I love, but if I can tell they're hesitating, I'll say, "If it's not speaking to you, don't buy it!" If you buy things that speak to you and are very personal, you'll be fine.

**H&H:** *What are your design influences?*

**TW:** Travel is a big one. I'm very influenced by what I've seen in England and Scotland, and I love Georgian architecture. The English country house is a big influence. As far as designers go, I'm a bit of a generalist: I'm influenced by people like Billy Baldwin, David Hicks and some of the great architects, like William Kent and



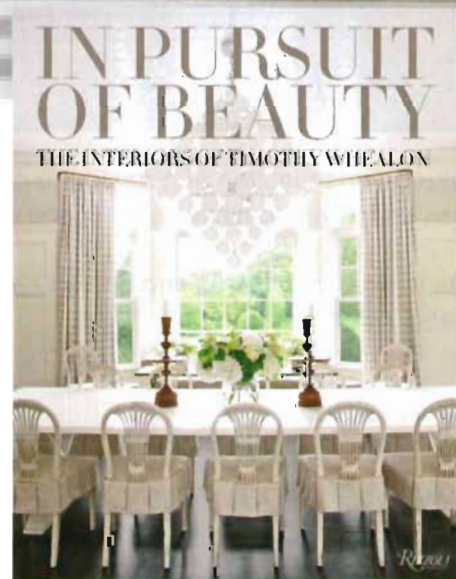
High ceilings and a soothing palette give this principal bedroom a relaxed vibe, while a leggy brass coffee table and lacquered four-poster bed add a glam note to the space.

Timothy's first book features 10 of his all-time favourite projects

Edwin Lutyens. But modern icons like Philip Johnson play a part in my aesthetic, too.

**H&H:** *How do they show up in your work?*

**TW:** I often find some motif when I'm travelling that will stay with me. I visited Rome a couple of years ago, and later, in an apartment on New York's Upper East Side, I had the floor painted in a simpler version of a Renaissance floor. It was very modern-looking, but the design came from seeing all those beautiful inlaid marble floors when I was in Italy.



**H&H TIP:** Paint the ceiling a blue-white hue for extra serenity. *Avant-Garde Blue* (6159-21), Sico.



A graphic, large-scale wallpaper makes a big impact in this tiny powder room, while a rustic planter brings a little of the outdoors in.

**H&H:** *Where have you been finding inspiration recently?*

**TW:** Nature, specifically gardens. I love creating very airy, light, edited spaces that have an ethereal quality and feel like I've brought some of the outdoors in. When I went to the Musée Rodin in Paris, I just sat in the sculpture gardens. I also recently visited a private David Adler house in Chicago with a beautiful garden. The structure and the beauty of those spaces have a big influence on my work.

**H&H:** *What's the most important part of a room?*

**TW:** Some people would say colour, but I really think it's the fabric. That's what gives the room texture and mood.

**H&H:** *What's the first thing you do when you start a new project?*

**TW:** Look outside the window! My designs start with the location, architecture and view (or the lack thereof), and go from there. And honestly, the next step is really getting inside my clients' heads. People can't always articulate what they want their home to look like, so interpreting what they say versus what they really *mean* is probably the biggest challenge on every job.

**H&H:** *Do you have go-to paint colours?*

**TW:** I'm big on chameleon colours — I love when sometimes a room looks like it's a soft grey, other days it's soft blue, and then another day it has a hint of lavender. I use Ralph Lauren's Polaris (RLUL216) all the time. I also really like Benjamin Moore's Polar White (2069-70), which has a little bit of a lavender undertone, and Farrow & Ball's Cornforth White (228), which is one of their greys, but it has some warmth to it.

**H&H:** *In your book, you talk about trying to create spaces that don't look "too decorated." Where's the line for you?*

**TW:** What I mean by that is I've never been one of those decorators who puts a scheme in a room and goes to the design centre and picks everything out and makes sure it all matches. I like things that are just a little off, that are hand-blocked or have bespoke details. My interiors are decorated, obviously. I spend a lot of time thinking about how things go together in each space. But I also try to create rooms that feel like they happened organically.

Key ELEMENTS

Here's how Timothy Whealon's classic style comes together.

1.

Art of all kinds, like this framed textile, is Timothy's favourite finishing touch.



Georgian architecture is a major design influence.

2.



A well-chosen antique adds historical charm to contemporary spaces.

3.



4.

The structured design of formal gardens, like those at the Palace of Versailles and Musée Rodin (shown), is one of Timothy's top sources of inspiration.

Photography by Max Kim-Bee, from *In Pursuit of Beauty: The Interiors of Timothy Whealon* by Timothy Whealon, Rizzoli New York, 2015 (powder room)/ ©Lee Snider/Alamy (Georgian house)/Val Wilcox (antique bowl)/©Jim Umberger/Alamy (gardens)/Framed textile, St. Frank/Antique silver vessel, Cynthia Findlay Antiques