

# Condo Living

P SECTION » TORONTO STAR « SATURDAY, AUGUST 2, 2003 ★ thestar.com



Wendy Younes favours softer, more traditional styles. Her husband, Rick Needham, likes minimalist. The right wall colours for their new loft helped them blend the two.

LUCAS OLENIUK/TORONTO STAR PHOTOS

## Colourful union



Sylvia O'Brien picked the green shade for the fireplace wall based on a photograph that hangs above the hearth.

### Couple uses bold palette to blend two households in loft Distinct styles work in combined space, *by Tracy Hanes*

Take his red racing motorcycle frame and well-worn, rust-coloured leather chair, her ornamental lacquered Chinese screen and assorted delicate floral artworks, and what do you have?

One large decorating dilemma, especially when that eclectic collection of his-and-her pieces has to co-exist in the soaring open spaces of a loft.

Rather than risk marital discord, Wendy Younes and Rick Needham married in September, 1999, they called in colour consultant Sylvia O'Brien, owner and creative director of Colour Theory, a Toronto firm that specializes in helping homeowners find the right paint colours for their living and working spaces.

After Younes and Needham married in September, 1999, they, along with Younes' teenage son, Matt, moved into Needham's bachelor pad in the Brewery Lofts, a former CBC warehouse on Sumach St.

Needham added a mezzanine at one end to provide a second level bedroom for Matt, now 17, which doubles as Younes' workspace and as the family TV room.

Younes specializes in leadership coaching for corporations and hospitals and spends many hours working from home. Needham works in the specialty steel prod-

ucts industry.

The loft has 14-foot ceilings, marbleized concrete floors, massive mushroom-shaped concrete columns and a wall of windows. Needham chose the loft because its industrial elevator allowed him to bring his motorcycle up into the apartment to work on.

His tastes run to steel furniture and leather, while Younes likes softer, more traditional looks. They had to be "somewhat brutal" in paring down their furnishings to combine households, according to Needham.

Non-negotiable were cherished items such as his rare Triumph motorcycle frame and her grand piano. But they were stumped when it came to choosing a colour scheme to replace the chalky off-white on the loft walls.

O'Brien started Colour Theory four years ago at her husband's suggestion. A carpenter, he had been doing a kitchen renovation for a couple who had picked flooring, countertops and cabinets in disparate shades, then hit an impasse when they had to choose paint colours for the walls.

He called on O'Brien, a former visual artist and women's wear designer, to help out. She not only found a colour scheme that satisfied husband and wife, she discov-

ered she had a flair for mediating.

"My husband saw that there was a need for something in between a decorator and the guy at the paint store," says O'Brien. "I did market research and became aware that many people feel a level of intimidation about hiring an interior designer. They feel a designer might make them change their furniture or criticize their taste. That's not true, but it's a perception that exists."

"I'm not a decorator, nor do I want to be. I don't tell people what furniture to buy or how to lay out rooms. And several decorators and designers subcontract me to do colour palettes for projects they're working on."

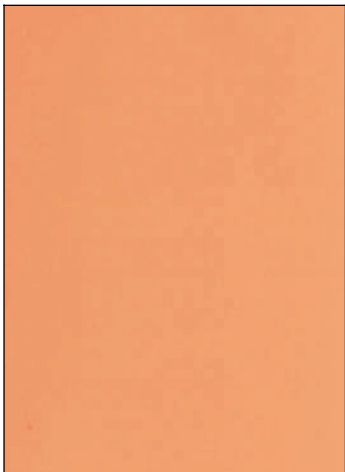
Although O'Brien carries samples from a range of paint companies, she is also a Benjamin Moore colour consultant.

O'Brien arrives at a client's home armed with a booklet of thousands of paint colours.

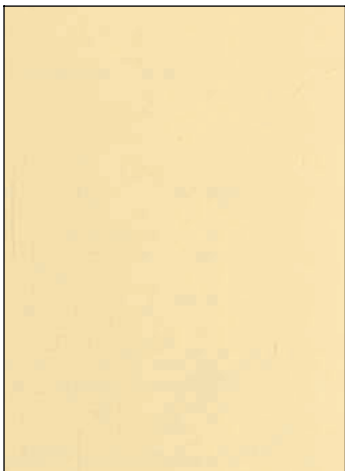
She looks at the furniture, accessories and lighting, then asks the client to pick colours he or she has a gut reaction to. She then comes up with a selection of 14 to 16 shades, and uses large 2-by-5-inch swatches so people can see the true character of the colour.



Boston Brick No. 2092-30



Cool Lava No. 2088-50



Pittsfield Buff No. HC-24



Cushing Green No. HC-125



West Coast No. CC-750

All paints by Benjamin Moore

► Please see **Colour, P5**