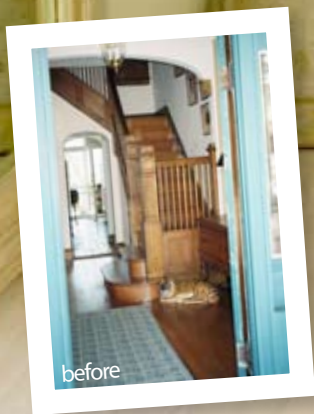


A LIGHTER SHADE of pale



WASHINGTON, D.C., SHOP OWNERS DRENCH BOTH THEIR



HOME AND THEIR BUSINESS IN THE PRETTIEST OF WHITES

Luminous silk drapery panels in the living room complement gilded accessories, creating luxurious formality. The sisal rug covering the whitewashed floor exudes warmth and texture.

Preceding pages: In the foyer, a floor mirror and a Swedish clock both stand 8 feet tall, accentuating the ceiling height. ■ A 19th-century Gustavian secretary gives the creamy white foyer a jolt of bright apple green. Dutch botanicals from the 17th century pull the scheme together.



In accounting practices, everything is black and white. So when financial analyst Loi Thai decided to make a leap from his world of numbers to become an antiques dealer, he seamlessly made the transition by selecting Swedish-style acquisitions that glow in the palest of colors—white in all of its forms.

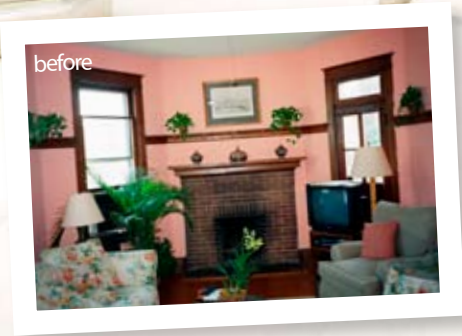
Tone on Tone, the Bethesda, Maryland, shop cofounded in 2004 by Loi and partner Thomas Troeschel, carries an ever-changing assortment of painted furniture from 18th- and 19th-century Sweden. A mini-museum for designers seeking high-style Swedish antiques, the shop boasts an exquisite inventory of furniture enhanced by accessories—gilded mirrors, English china and early transferware, lusterware, and ironstone.

“When I visited Sweden 10 years ago, I was taken by the fresh and calm aesthetic,” says Loi. “I loved the serenity and peacefulness of the light colors. And because this furniture is a painted adaptation of classic forms from other European countries, it works well in a variety of design situations.”

After hours, when Loi and Thomas retreat from Tone on Tone to their nearby home in Washington, D.C., they live and play among more of the same, with their own collection of Swedish furniture put into the environment of an early-1900s four-level Edwardian townhouse.

Achieving a white, cream, and pale gray palette sounds like a simple endeavor, but in 1996, when Loi and Thomas moved into the house, it was anything but a light, blank canvas. Because the townhouse was attached to another unit, its interior was naturally dark, leaving only three sides exposed to sunlight. For six years, the pair lived with the house as they purchased it, making only small cosmetic changes. But in 2002, they began a full-blown renovation and restoration, one based entirely on the soft-looking painted furniture they loved.

Unfortunately, dark woodwork in bad condition trimmed the perimeters of every room, floorboards were uneven, and the overall decoration was dated and mismatched. Reaction to



The library, situated between the formal living room and the dining area, is dotted with special furnishings like this Gustavian chair with saber legs and a white-painted French iron stool.

Left: Even in the absence of a rug, the dining room remains cozy, with a limestone fireplace and cream-colored Gustavian chairs cushioned in floral linen and gathered around an English double-pedestal table.



Opposite: Even without the formal antiques that grace every other room in the house, the kitchen's sunny yellow-and-cream palette blends beautifully into the overall theme.

Left: This early 1900s townhouse is only a five-minute drive from Tone on Tone, the homeowners' antiques shop in Bethesda, Maryland.

Above: An old Irish pine hanging shelf provides an ideal spot for a collection of vintage English ironstone.

Right: Loi Thai takes a break in the townhouse's new garden.

this unattractive look led Loi and Thomas to create a scheme that reflects the world of dreamy white in which they spend their days, providing the design community with pristine Scandinavian treasures.

Their first task in the renovation was to make a clean slate of the interiors. For this Loi relied on the power of paint. Floors were sanded, bleached, and finished with whitewash, used commonly in Sweden but less often in the United States, where opaque paint is generally preferred for floors. Unnecessary chair and picture rails that had been added over many years were removed to give a cleaner, more updated appearance. All of the remaining molding and paneling was painted crisp white to highlight darker walls in custom pale grays.

"When people think of Swedish style, they automatically think all white," says Loi. "But Swedish whites are never pure whites, grays are never pure grays. They always have layered tones of color that give a wonderful patina. That's why we call

our store Tone on Tone—it's many color variations of the same hue, a soothing approach to design that really happens no matter the color, but especially with white."

The house endured a structural alteration as well. A three-level addition expanded the house on its backside, extending the kitchen so that the breakfast area now enjoys better views of the newly terraced garden, appointed with European boxwoods, hornbeams, and yews. On the second level, a sleeping porch was repurposed as a master bathroom. A potting room was added to the basement, and the attic was finished for conversion into an office/den.

Brick fireplaces in the dining room and master bedroom were given fresh surrounds better suited to the turn-of-the-century house. The opening of the dining room fireplace was lowered, putting it at a more intimate level for those gathered around the table. Lacking mantels in their previous incarnations, each fireplace received a new topper as a part of its face-lift.



Right: Although Loi wanted Swedish overtones throughout the house, he incorporated pieces from other countries as well. In the restful master bedroom, a round Italian mirror with a natural finish reflects the room's tranquil beauty. **Left:** In the master bathroom, hand-glazed, peach-colored tiles were selected for their irregularities. **Below:** Chartreuse hydrangeas offer a spot of subtle color on the bedroom mantel.



SWEDISH DESIGN IS A BREATH OF FRESH AIR AND ALWAYS FEELS CHEERFUL. —LOI THAI

Realizing that their finished house would be the setting for dinner parties and other gatherings for friends and family, Loi and Thomas wanted the galley kitchen to be hardworking and happy so they could easily prepare food. Cabinets were torn out and replaced with recessed-panel Shaker-style ones, which were then painted sunny yellow, a departure from the suite of whites that illuminates the rest of the house.

As antiques dealers, Loi and Thomas sought to salvage as many existing elements as possible. “We didn’t want anything in the house that was too foreign to the original architecture,” explains Loi. Instead of buying new hardware for the cabinetry, they took the kitchen’s original brass hardware and had it nickel-plated—a solution that gives a recycled item modern spirit.

The terra-cotta floor was exchanged for limestone on the kitchen floor. In the breakfast area, a round table and modern wicker chairs live in front of a wall with soaring windows that afford views of the garden with its striking urns and architectural embellishments.

With the house complete, Loi and Thomas can hardly tell the difference between home and work. “When I walk into the store, it feels like a second home—and vice versa when I walk into this house,” says Loi. “As we completed each step of the renovation, we watched the house being transformed not only physically, but emotionally as well. Swedish design is a breath of fresh air and always feels cheerful.” †

For more information, see sources on page 170

