



DESIGNERS DEFINE INTERIOR SPACES



The living room, above, by BYU Design for Bosa's Quantum. Designing display suites means catering to 150 or 200 people, says Ada Bonini, of BYU Design.

In an effort to put good design into the hands of the masses, a brand new Gastown company has come up with a unique concept, drawing up detailed decorating plans for do-it-yourselfers, more accessible and less intimidating.

"We provide the guidance, instructions and information people need to bring the vision for their home to life, task-by-task, room-by-room and to execute the plan at their own pace and terms," explains owner Dwaina Sprague. Armed with plans, clients set off to purchase the furniture and accessories for their room, assisted by referrals to specific stores. Depending on budget, it could be IKEA or Roche Bobois. Good Space works closely with Norwalk Furniture. "It's important to work with a reputable company because you want to know the person will respect the plan," Sprague explains.

Alda Pereira, an interior designer for more than 15 years, runs Alda Pereira Design Inc., covering the field from residential to multi-dwelling and commercial projects, working with such well-known developers as Townline, Reliance Holdings and DR3 Developments. In common with other designers we interviewed, she finds the work challenging and exciting.

"I love it," she says. "There aren't any two jobs that are the same. They all come with different sets of characters – it's like working with a new play. It's very people-oriented and I enjoy people. Also, I don't like repeating anything so it's always a challenge."

Her collaboration with developers, she explains, starts at ground level, a full package which includes construction drawings. Working closely with marketing guidelines, with very precise concepts in mind, she uses her creativity to develop the perfect home. "Primarily we focus on how people are going to live – usually these days in small spaces. Developers are selling space and we're trying to make it as exciting and as livable as possible."

Space, or the lack of it, more and more dictates design, Pereira says. "This is where I see the big trend; not in different colours but more about integrating the space as much as possible. You have to push the boundaries out more with open-concept plans because we no longer have the luxury of space. We do a lot of forward thinking; we tend to lead in trends rather than follow them. Like fashion, there's so much choice out there.

"And of course there's a major trend as well to sustainability and green. It's up to us to come up with appropriate materials – paints, flooring and low-energy appliances."

Interior designers may work with developers or with homeowners, design display suites for a thousand pairs of eyes, or find the perfect piece for a private home.

BY LESLIE PETERSON

□ In the British television series, **How Not to Decorate**, two designers seek out England's neediest houses and whip them into shape. Bad spaces filled with dated decor, clutter, domestic neglect and dubious taste transformed into good spaces. Off-screen, but just as effective, Vancouver's interior-design firms set the stage for multi-family developments housing hundreds of people, while others work mainly with individual homeowners.

Call them decorators or interior designers, but make sure you understand the difference. Decorators can be anyone with a good eye, a flair for selecting paint colours, fabric, furniture and window treatments. Designers, on the other hand, are certified professionals. They study plumbing, heating, electrical systems, surfaces and materials, and work with architects to define interior spaces -- "a big package," as one describes it.



Like Pereira, Ada Bonini, of BYU Design, works with a number of large developers, including Bosa Properties, Cressey, Wall Financial, Townline, Mosaic and Intergulf. She describes the process:

“For clients such as Bosa we’re responsible for the individual suites, common areas and display suites and the sales or marketing centres. So they will give us a brief on their marketing direction, their target market and just where they see themselves. It always starts with the building itself – suites, finishes, counters, lights and plumbing. That’s the first thing we tackle, to get the project priced. From there we start with marketing the individual suites, set up a display suite and envisage a representative purchaser. We then plan the common areas, including amenity spaces, hallways, the lobby, parkade and mail rooms. It’s quite a big scope.”

Designing display suites is no easy task, she says, when catering to 150 or 200 people. “Finishes represent a very careful balance because we want to be creative and different for the market but unless the developer has a specific concept we have to gear it toward the mass, rather than the individual. We have to make sure no one will walk into it and hate it, to make sure it’s a positive memory point, like colour, or a combination of artwork or the way light fixtures hang.”

Generally, Bonini says, designers are now focusing on texture and sustainable green design, using natural materials, more local woods and recycled content materials: paperstone for counters, wall coverings with

pressed paper, while more quickly renewable resources such as bamboo and cork are starting to make a comeback.

Working one-on-one with clients, Dwaina Sprague at Good Space deals with a wide variety of homeowners, from those who simply want to “stage” their home prior to sale right down to those who plan to stay in their homes for a good long time.

“No matter what their plans, we want not just a look but also a feel, to get a hug when they walk through the door. People spend a lot of time in their homes and a lot of money. It’s a spiritual thing; they feel nurtured and decompressed and have incredible passion for their homes. It’s exciting talking to people who want to live in their home in a meaningful way. We’re therapists, marriage counsellors – all of that and we like to see our clients having fun in the process.” □

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Interior designers like homeowners to “get a hug” from their home when they walk in the door, says Dwaina Sprague, of Good Space.

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Norwalk continues to establish standards in smart, stylish furniture by working with top designers, like Candice Olson of television's Divine Design. Part of the Norwalk-exclusive Candice Olson Collection, above, Candice's Oscar sectional, enjoys some lofty company – her Gretta ottoman and Beckett chair designs.

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