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Life on the Edge



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Stunning New
Architecture from
the Okanagan

Colour is King in a
Gorgeous New
Calgary Home

Al Fresco Dinner
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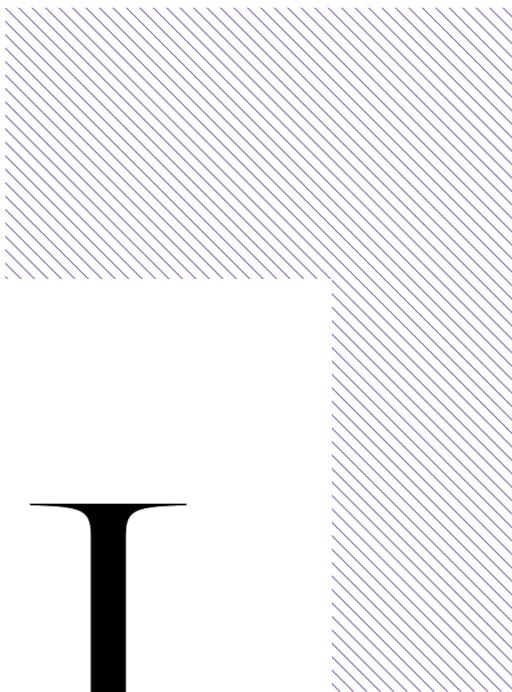
All in the Family Designer Reena Sotropa manages to find the balance between elegant and kid friendly in this Calgary home. All the fabrics for the custom furnishings were thus chosen for not only their aesthetic qualities but for durability as well. (There was even some stain testing.)



by JACQUIE MOORE
photographs by PHIL CROZIER

FROM THE GROUND UP

A fateful purchase of a brilliantly designed area rug was the start of a bold and beautiful colour palette in this stunning Calgary home.



It started with one hand-knotted rug. Designed by renowned German carpet maker Jan Kath, it was a riot of colour and pattern, and not for the faint of heart—no doubt a less courageous designer would have attempted to talk her client out of it. For Reena Sotropa, principal of Calgary’s Reena Sotropa In House Design Group, however, a client’s choice of rug is an invaluable edifying window to the soul. “We always begin with rug shopping—you learn a lot about people based on the rugs they’re attracted to,” she says. “This couple had fallen madly in love with a Jan Kath, but it was more than they’d planned to spend—we tried for a month to find something as beautiful, but nothing could come close.” As it turned out, the rug—more

colourful than any piece Sotropa had worked with—was well worth rejigging the budget for: it provided a lively and elegant palette that informed the living room as well as the rest of the house.

Located in Calgary’s Parkdale neighbourhood, this two-storey home, built by Veranda Estate Homes, has an unusual placement on its corner lot. Where all the other houses on the street face due north, its front door—and house number—point west. While confusing to first-time visitors expecting the address to follow the city’s predictable grid pattern, a combination of feng shui philosophy and idiosyncratic aesthetic choice trumps convention both outside and inside the home.

Sotropa first met the homeowners when she designed nurseries in



Kaleidoscopic Colour It all started with a rug. Jan Kath's Scarlenka Wrapped provided the palette for the design of the home, including the bold navy and emerald-green sofas. The couple was fearless with colour throughout (opposite), including in the teal-walled dining room, and with the Robert Allen fabric on the bench in the entryway.

their previous home as each of their three children came along. Back then, she says, the couple (one of whom is of Chinese heritage) was “certainly not afraid of colour or pattern.” This time, she found they were eager to make even bolder choices in every room of the house. Certainly, the rug—Kath's Scarlenka Wrapped—and its prominent place in the living room called for fearless takes on furniture and other accessories. “I knew my clients, who have both exquisite and very fun taste, wouldn't want grey sofas,” says Sotropa. “We went with navy and emerald green instead—strong colours that read almost neutral in this space.”

On the other hand, Sotropa's job wasn't always to meet bold with

bold. In the mud room, for instance, where the couple had installed Beware the Moon's ostrich-motif wallpaper before the designer came on board, Sotropa strove to ensure the “quirky quota” was perfectly balanced. She introduced a couple of pops of orange but otherwise let the millwork serve to add a feeling of gravitas and timelessness. Likewise, in the dining room, the couple's eccentric choice of dark teal for ceiling and walls is beautifully balanced by two pieces of custom art—framed panels of luminous wallpaper featuring crystal-beaded dragons on a silver-leaf background—which lend levity to the space. A swath of leopard-print carpet on the stairs is elevated from outlandish to elegant, framed as each step is by dark-stained white oak. Wallpaper



Connection Zone In the master bedroom, silver-finished night tables pair up with a cozy velvet headboard and linen accents. In the hallway (below), Tibetan lamb-topped stools fit cozily under an antique Chinese altar table scored from Ebay.



featuring enormous koi adds a startling but pleasing hit of interest in a small powder room.

While Veranda seamlessly answered the clients' feng shui-related requests for the alignment of doorways, flow of space and other considerations, Sotropa helped ensure the couple's sophisticated aesthetic wishes were fulfilled in a way that also ensured their young family would feel relaxed in every room. "As beautiful and decorative as the house is, it also had to be kid friendly," says Sotropa. All the fabrics for the custom furnishings were thus chosen for not only their aesthetic qualities but for durability as well. "We took all the swatches and dumped mustard, olive oil, maple syrup and all kinds of other potential stains on them so we could see what they would do." If they didn't stand up to the spill test, they didn't make the cut.

The lower level of the home represents perhaps its most marvelous marriage of practicality and whimsy, where colours and layered patterns and textiles give the heavily used space an air of storybook charm. A built-in daybed topped with a mattress-sized cranberry-coloured cushion is an irresistible island for reading and napping, and also serves as a cover for the home's utility hub. A large opaque glass table adds a hit of almost fragile lightness to the otherwise richly hued space, but it can easily withstand daily doses of Elmer's glue, sparkles, paint and other science- and craft-related messes. Proof in spades that, approached with an open mind and a light touch, a home can be stunning and silly, traditional and unorthodox, all in a single breath. *///*