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FALL 2010

THE *Designer* issue

ART + ARCHITECTURE
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A FRESH TAKE

Two interior designers describe their approach to creating modern spaces that exude warmth, while maintaining clean lines

TEXT **CAROL CRENN**



Sharon Halpin (above) injects warmth and colour into her projects (top) with accents like toss cushions and standout art pieces.

Few people agree on the definition of "contemporary design," and few others create it without some hesitation. Adding visual warmth, comfort, functionality, relative timelessness, and personality within contemporary, clean lines is vital. What accomplishes these variables? Sharon Halpin of Fruition Design and Karin Bohne of Moeski Design each share their design philosophies.

SHARON HALPIN: FRUITION DESIGN

Sharon Halpin's signature style is strong and clean. She feels that you can deliver comfort, fashionable style and individuality through intelligent use of colour, texture, space and light.

How do you create a contemporary room that's not cold? Accessories. I'm not just

referring to toss cushions, but standout pieces. I used a gold head-shaped accent table from Inform Interiors within a grey, modern Vancouver living room, and traditionally-shaped Louis XV chairs – but made out of rubber – from the Netherlands for a Toronto living room. I often add Brent Comber Originals' locally made trunks and saddle benches to inject earthy warmth.

I recently attached a "shattered wood" light installation, by Brent, to a stone wall that's illuminated by LED lights behind. Consumers often see the same pieces in stores and magazines, but designers are exposed to artists and manufacturers worldwide, and have expertise to source items that embrace your personality and also add a touch of the unexpected. I'm constantly searching in the most unlikely places.

Where did you get your interest in design?

I was born with a passion for it. I was a personal shopper at Holt Renfrew. Whether someone with a page torn from a magazine says, "I love this outfit. How can I get a similar look?" or "I love this room. How can I get a similar look?" I like working to develop trust, and giving them what makes them feel happy, comfortable and stylish.

How do you interpret modern style? I don't choose the cooler, harsh lines of true contemporary design. My rooms are never monochromatic, such as stark white or grey – if there is a hard-edged tile floor surrounded by tiled wall, a pop of colour will be added in an area carpet or sofa for warmth. Very contemporary rooms should feel inviting.

What's your top product? Wallpaper. It gives textural impact to walls that a painted finish can't, and it can be steam removed. I love a product from Phillip Jeffries called Granite Stone, available in several colours. Pieces of mica are pressed into the paper to make walls look like granite. I also like to contrast a modern environment with travertine stone tile that reflects its history, often with little embedded fossils.



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**ELEMENTS OF
STYLE** Halpin
favours Brent
Comber's Shattered
Wood light installa-
tion (top) and Phillip
Jeffries Granite
Stone wallpaper.

What's your biggest triumph? An ocean-front home in West Vancouver had a beautiful view but chopped-up layout with cramped rooms. We gutted it, got rid of the small master bathroom, and floated the tub in the bedroom – it looks fantastic. The egg-shaped Elise bathtub sits in an alcove off a private window overlooking the garden. This allowed room to create a dramatic, walk-in double shower. The bedroom has

a modern Afromosia wood built-in bed, floor and closet, so the white tub becomes the focal point. A fireplace in the middle of the living room created cumbersome walkways on either side, and arranging furniture forced backs to face the view. We demolished it and suspended a contemporary direct-vent stainless steel fireplace on a wall to maximize space and view.

What's your favourite colour? Runway fashions translate into furniture – I like deep blues and grey-greens, like seafoam. For a contemporary kitchen in Deep Cove, I used muted-green lacquer on cabinetry to complement a green Caesarstone quartz slab (called Apple Martini) on the island and to accent stainless steel countertops. These clients aren't afraid of colour, and living in a darker, rainier region affected the brighter choice.

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