

SEA TO SKY PREMIER PROPERTIES



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Inspiration, Education and Individuality Combine to Create...

EXQUISITE INTERIORS



If you set out to count the number of TV shows, magazines and websites devoted to the subject of interior design, it's a good bet that at least one more will have been launched just as you think you've reached you're final tally.

From Debbie Travis creating "Facelifts" to Colin and Justin "heisting" the homes of unsuspecting décor offenders, the level of interest in home design is at an all time high and consumers have become extraordinarily well-informed in the nuances of interior styling.

It stands to reason then, that professional interior design companies may be feeling a little insecure, given that pretty much any look and directions on precisely how to create it is so readily available. Quite the contrary, says Sharon Halpin of Fruition Design Inc.—a young boutique agency based in Vancouver's eclectic Gastown district.

"What we're seeing now is a much more educated client—people use these programs and magazines to explore everything that's available and to help decide what best suits their personal style," she says.

"Our role is to work with them to hone these concepts and bring their project to completion."

In reality, few people have the time or expertise to single-handedly tackle a major

interior overhaul and those who do often rue the day they decided to take on the task. Kelly Reynolds, the other half of the Fruition Design team admits they have occasionally been asked to step in and take over DIY projects that are not shaping up quite how the client anticipated.

"Obviously that's not a good place to be, for anyone," Kelly explains, "But fortunately the vast majority of our clients approach us in their early planning stages, allowing us to get a good sense of who they are, what their lifestyle is like and how they express their individuality."

Establishing a strong personal connection with each client is one of the distinguishing features of Fruition Design's approach and it's not uncommon for the business-client relationship to morph into friendship throughout the course of a project.

"It's an incredibly personal business," he says. "We're essentially being invited into someone's home and asked to create something that is a true reflection of their world. Our belief is that a home is your visual signature so it's not really about what we want, rather what our client wants us to create."

While individual themes and styles definitely vary, there is a strong undercurrent of environmental awareness and most clients nowadays are keen to incorporate an eco-friendly approach to their renovation.



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This is particularly evident on the West Coast, where people have a real attachment to nature and the spectacular beauty of their surroundings. Far from being a passing phase, eco-friendly products such as low-flow toilets and shower heads or geothermal heating and cooling systems have been available and widely used in Europe for about 20 years. While definitely considered 'green' these products also provide significant cost savings, so benefits flow to the environment and homeowner alike.

"Environmental sustainability is another area where clients are incredibly well educated," says Kelly.

"It used to be that people would ask about the possibility of incorporating eco-friendly products, now they'll come to us with a raft of sustainable design concepts that they've seen or heard of and these often form the basis of our creative exploration."

Take sustainable flooring, for example. While hardwood flooring is very popular in this region, Fruition sources much of their timber from forests that are concerned with bio-diversity and water conservation. Or bamboo, which as a flooring surface is hard wearing, durable and filled with brilliant detail, but is also a fast growing plant and quickly replaced in its natural environment—a perfect blend of practicality, aesthetics and conservation.

Recycled materials are also in high demand and being used as distinctive features in modern design. Counter tops and bath tiles made from recycled glass can be refined and subtle or a statement unto themselves with brightly coloured recycled beer and wine bottles. Fancy an Alehouse Amber anyone? You'll find it in the countertop!

"This is where we get to really have fun," says Sharon, who's certainly not shy in her use of colour, light and whimsy.





In fact, one of the hallmarks of Fruition's work is the use of bright colours as accents on a backdrop of grey or other classic, muted tones.

"This way," she explains, "you have an elegant, timeless design base, which can be updated at minimum cost with a fresh splash of colour or a new, contemporary piece."

As with any fashion based industry, interior design can run the risk of falling victim to short term fads or single-season sensations and there is a definite art to ensuring that today's "must-have" look is not tomorrow's "what was I thinking?"

"With the explosion of new housing developments in recent years, people want to give their home a uniqueness that you otherwise don't get with a townhome or condo complex, no matter how up-market the development", says Kelly.

"Having said that, we firmly subscribe to the theory that the uniqueness comes from within, from the client's personality — not strictly from the pages of a magazine."

While artistry is imperative in interior design, it is equally important to strike the right balance between vogue and practicality. Many designers strive to create an absolute showpiece which may be visually stunning, but not entirely user friendly.

Kelly and Sharon see their role as taking the best design trends and translating them into workable, liveable interiors—each project a custom-made haven, with a functional bent.

Of course, they make it sound simple but as we've seen on TV, it takes a true professional to completely transform a space—taking an individual's dreams, desires, personal style and comforts—and bring it all to Fruition.

Visit www.fruitiondesigninc.com for inspired ideas.