

Falling in Love

AGAIN



T

he Group of Seven created iconic images of the Canadian landscape. Their paintings capture our vast and varied country in its many evocative forms.

So it's never surprising to find pieces that capture their influence in Canadian homes. In this enchanting interior, created for a Calgary family by designer Alanna Dunn, the understated palette creates a similar colour harmony and sense of wide-open space as does the stunning painting, reminiscent of a Group of Seven landscape, that hangs in the living room.

LEFT The petite front hall is packed with style and storage. Interior designer Alanna Dunn complemented two existing cupboards — refinished with luxe white macaibus quartzite tops, a coat of serene grey paint and chunky brass handles — with a new “locker” that’s divided inside with hooks and cubbies for all of 10-year-old Blake’s gear. “The locker is so smart!” homeowner Leanne Todd says. “It looks so beautiful, and it’s filled with Blake’s school bag, swimming bag and soccer bags. She lives for sports, so it’s amazing to have space that organizes her life. And it’s all ready to go, so we’re not hunting for missing things.” The low cupboard doubles as a bench. A square of herringbone-laid slate tiles is a rugged option inside the front door. “We’re in Calgary, so we’ve got melting snow and wet shoes, and this is a really durable surface,” says Alanna. Shiplap, installed up the stair wall when dated faux stone was ripped out, injects texture and depth.

INTERIOR DESIGN, Alanna Dunn, Reena Sotropa In House Design Group; **LONG GOLD PULLS** by Lewis Dolin, Banbury Lane; **KNOBS, PULLS** (on blue cabinet), Anthropologie; **SLATE FOR FLOOR,** Stone Tile West; **BASKET,** The In House Shop, Reena Sotropa In House Design Group; **GREY CABINET COLOUR,** Rockport Gray HC-105, **BLUE CABINET COLOUR,** Gentleman’s Gray 2062-20, Benjamin Moore; **QUARTZITE** (for countertops), Mondial Granite; **COUNTERTOP INSTALLATION,** The Granite Guys.

RIGHT To amp up the kitchen’s functionality and storage, Alanna replaced a wall of cabinetry with new floor-to-ceiling millwork. The open-backed chaise adds seating without hampering sightlines in the open-concept space. “I focused on creating a living room seating arrangement that’s inclusive of what’s happening in the kitchen,” she says.

STOOLS, RH; **MILLWORK REDESIGN, HOOD DESIGN,** Alanna Dunn, Reena Sotropa In House Design Group; **QUARTZITE** (for countertops), Mondial Granite; **COUNTERTOP INSTALLATION,** The Granite Guys; **CABINET COLOUR,** Rockport Gray HC-105, Benjamin Moore; **BACKSPLASH TILES,** Tierra Sol; **FAUCET,** Watermark.

A whole-home reno – that, fair warning, started with “just the kitchen” – transforms how a Calgary family lives in and feels about their home.

TEXT KATIE HAYDEN | PHOTOGRAPHY PHIL CROZIER



ALANNA UPDATED THE LOOK OF THE EXISTING CABINETRY BY REFINISHING THE DOORS IN A VELVETY *“warm greige”* AND OUTFITTING THEM WITH LONG, *luxe brass handles.*





Alanna built the home's quiet backdrop with a palette of cool neutrals the colours of stone, sand and sky. The white walls – some paneled in shiplap for low-key textural interest – seem to riff on the breezy hue of the painting's billowy white clouds, while the soft grey of the restyled and refinished kitchen cabinetry echoes the clouds' shadowy underbellies. Judicious pops of blue and yellow remind you of the canvas's sky and lake, and of the sunlight seeping through the clouds at the horizon. And, as in nature, a few hits of inky black anchor the spaces and give the eye a place to rest.

While the aesthetic sounds perfectly planned – and the results appear effortless – the process was anything but straightforward. "It was the ultimate snowball project," says Alanna. "Leanne reached out originally for help with a renovation of their kitchen, which had outdated maple cabinets, granite counters and this slate tile floor that was very bossy. They were looking to give it a facelift to hold them over for a couple of years until they moved. Over the next 18 months, we proceeded to basically renovate their entire 1,950-square-foot house."

While the dining room features the owners' existing trestle table, bench and graceful white Windsor chairs, it looks thoroughly different thanks to the new pale wood flooring and a modern chandelier. Throughout the main floor, new engineered white oak flooring replaced a mix of outdated orange slate and carpet. "It gives the rooms more cohesive flow and visually opens them up to one another, creating the illusion of larger spaces," Alanna says. She had sheer white studio blinds installed all across the back wall of the house to add privacy without putting a damper on the ample natural light.

TABLE, CHAIRS, BENCH, Country Living Furnishings; **BLINDS,** Global Shades; **CHANDELIER,** West Elm; **ENGINEERED WHITE OAK FLOORING,** CDL Carpet & Floor Centre.

Leanne and Scott Todd, who live here with their daughter, Blake, built the house 15 years ago. "At the time, we loved a 'Canmore mountain' style, with dark walls and slate floors," says Leanne, a vice president of a software company. "But over the years, we found it too dark, and we found we didn't have enough storage. We never seemed to spend time in the living room, and when we entertained, it felt like the island's high breakfast bar cut off guests from the cook." Nonetheless, there were things to appreciate about the house, too. "The bones and layout were working really well for them," Alanna says. That's always good news when it comes to budgeting.

Part of making the kitchen work harder for the family – especially since so much of the space is open-concept – was building in additional storage to hide away all the odds and ends of daily life. So before overhauling the kitchen's aesthetic, Alanna redesigned a second full wall of cabinetry, rebuilt the island to pack in designated functions (from the dishwasher to the garbage-recycling bins to a pull-out shelf for the dog food bowls) and installed a cupboard to hide away the TV – this is, after all, their entertaining space as well. "All the visual clutter now has a home," Leanne says. "I see us actually taking greater care to keep things organized, which is amazing, too!"

Finally, the kitchen cabinets – old and new – were washed in pale grey paint and fitted with crisp quartzite counters, a glittery new backsplash was installed, and the appliances were upgraded. To keep costs down, Leanne and Scott did the general contracting themselves, which enabled them to allocate that budget to interior design and acquiring a few new key pieces.

Once the kitchen was redone, Leanne and Scott took the plunge on further renovations. "We changed the flooring to pale engineered white oak throughout the main floor," Alanna explains. "It's much lighter than the old floor and it helps blur the lines where one room ends and the next begins." Tweaks to the front hall, laundry room and powder room followed, as did redesigns for the private spaces on the second floor.





Alanna expanded the kitchen's cabinetry layout on both sides, rebuilt the island and then overhauled all the finishes in the space. "The island used to have a bar-height counter on one side. We smoothed that out so the kitchen and living room feel more open-concept. The old island was also quite angled, so we cleaned up its lines, then maximized the storage like crazy," Alanna says. "Leanne really wanted to reduce visual clutter in her kitchen, so we fit the dishwasher, a cabinet for cleaning supplies, the compost-recycling-garbage pull-out, and little drawers for the dog food bowls and kibble storage into the island." Then, dark granite counters were

replaced by white macaubus quartzite, which looks like marble but is more stain-resistant. The cabinets were refinished in the palest grey, and the backsplash, floor, hardware, plumbing, appliances and range hood were all updated. Handsome new backless stools look polished but discreet. Alanna updated the look of the existing cabinetry on the kitchen's rear wall by refinishing the doors in a velvety "warm greige" and outfitting them with long, luxe brass handles. The rebuilt island incorporates a pull-out dining shelf for Molly, the family's pocket beagle, plus storage bins for her kibble. On the rear wall, the shallow upper cabinet

hides the main floor's only TV. "When open, the doors slide back into the cabinet so they're fully out of the way," Alanna says. The new cabinet also houses cookbooks, plus storage for "all the miscellaneous kitchen junk-drawer things you don't really know where to put!"

STONE CUTTING BOARDS, TERRAZZO PLATTER, In House Studio Shop, Reena Sotropa; **BRASS BOWL**, HomeSense; **HOOD FABRICATION**, Hammersmith Custom Metal Crafting; **MIELE STOVE**, Trail Appliances; **PLANTER**, West Elm; **CHAISE**, CF Interiors; **PILLOW SEWING**, Kerstin Daly; **PILLOW FABRIC**, Kelly Wearstler; **LONG GOLD PULLS** by Lewis Dolin, Banbury Lane.



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“THEY CAN PULL THE OTTOMAN UP TO THE SOFA for more of a chaise arrangement OR USE IT AS A COFFEE TABLE WITH A BIG TRAY ON IT.”



ABOVE A huge cushioned ottoman is a great choice for the smallish living room; it can work for family games nights, hold drinks and appetizers during a party, or seat extra bodies at a get-together. “We wanted as much seating and lounge space as possible,” Alanna says. “They can pull the ottoman up to the sofa for more of a chaise arrangement or use it as a coffee table with a big tray on it.” A rugged squared-off timber used as the mantel is a thematic echo of the dramatic landscape that inspired the art wall, and a cozy Beni Ourain rug defines the seating area within the open-concept space.

OTTOMAN, SOFA, ARMCHAIR, SQUARE STACKING SIDE TABLES, BLACK ROUND TABLE by Four Hands, CF Interiors; **BASKET** (holding plant), HomeSense; **YELLOW PILLOW FABRIC**, Avant Garde; **BLACK TRAY**, Wayfair; **ALL BLINDS**, Global Shades; **ROUND METAL-FRAME TABLE, RH; CARAMEL LEATHER PILLOW, WHITE PILLOW, POUFS** (by fireplace), CB2.

RIGHT The focal point of the bright, newly decorated living room is a dramatic gallery wall that lets Leanne display her beloved collection. “It’s an eclectic mix that’s colourful and youthful, like Leanne’s family, but still very stylish,” Alanna says. For durability and a hint of texture, she refinished the gallery wall in shiplap. Leanne couldn’t be happier with the results: “With the kitchen so neutral, we could do a more creative space in the living room – the yin and yang of the design. And it’s so inviting and interesting now. The colours are light and serene, with pops of colour in the art and greenery to make the room feel happy,” she says.

CHAIR FABRIC, Romo; **ART (WITH PINE TREE)** by Charlie Easton, Mountain Galleries; **SEWING FOR YELLOW AND GEOMETRIC PILLOWS**, Kerstin Daly; **geometric PILLOW FABRIC**, Kelly Wearstler; **ART (FAR LEFT)** by Melanie Severin, **ART (TOP LEFT)** by Paper Dahlia, **ART (WITH WORDS)** by Hi-Lighter Inc, **ART (WITH BLUE CIRCLE)** by Mary Gasper, Minted; **FLOOR LAMP**, Wayfair.





ABOVE Rendered in an unexpected blue and silver palette, the powder room's graphic pineapple wallpaper reads as playful and elegant. "In renovating the kitchen, living room and entry, we established a reoccurring blue accent colour, and I thought it would be fun to pick up on that in a whimsical way here," Alanna says. "A powder room is a great opportunity to do something quirky and slightly different from the aesthetic of the rest of a home." Because the room is so tiny, Alanna chose an open-based vanity to show off as much wallpaper as possible.

WALLPAPER, Hygge & West; **MIRROR**, West Elm; **SINK, TAPS, FAUCET, RH**; **PENDANT LIGHT**, Wayfair.

RIGHT The laundry room is classic blue and white, but refreshed in a thoroughly modern way.

OPPOSITE The previous bedroom layout had an awkward angled wall along one side. "I designed a wall of millwork to fill the space created by this wall and create a more symmetrical and streamlined space," says Alanna. "Compared to the rest of the home, we decided to stick with a more monochromatic palette but maintained graphic elements to keep up with the rest of the home." Warm grey wool carpeting softens the high contrast black and white elements.

CARPET, Banner Carpets; **BEDDING, RH**; **DRAPERY FABRICATION**, Global Shades; **DRAPERY FABRIC**, Kelly Wearstler for Lee Jofa; **MILLWORK FABRICATION**, Peppertree Studios; **CEILING LIGHT**, Visual Comfort.

FOR SOURCES, SEE OUR WORKBOOK

Leanne was thoroughly surprised by the results. "You can take a very standard, builder-grade house, and without really changing any layouts – just using design, colour and care – you can make it so much more modern and interesting, and turn it into something you're very proud of," she says. "This was not my dream house, and I didn't think I could love this space. I was wrong!" Leanne says it ended up the family didn't need a bigger home, just one that was brighter and "more alive." She admits that the redesign has actually changed how she, Scott and Blake use their home. "Honestly, we never used to use the fireplace or really the living room, except for guests. And every day, we're in there together now. The rooms are really lived in – I never expected that!" Like an iconic work of art, it seems a great design can transcend time and place, and change the way we see things.



