> HOME

- > NEWS
- > YOUR TORONTO
- > OPINION
- > SPORTS
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- > AUTOS
- > PHOTOS
- > DIVERSIONS
- > CLASSIFIEDS
- > OBITUARIES

Inside the Star



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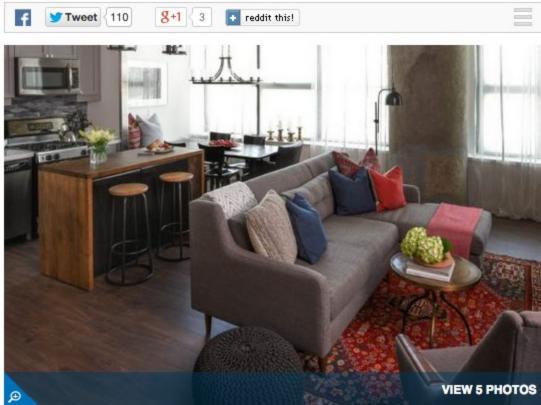
'Dust Lady' Marcy Borders, featured in haunting Sept. 11 photo, dies of cancer



Vaughan homeowner desperate to find resolution

Transforming an industrial designed condo into a mid-century modern apartment

Toronto-based designer and contractor Melissa Davis redesigns a downtown apartment into a Mad Men inspired condo.



TORONTO STAR / STEPHANI BUCHMAN

A tightly controlled palette means the eye moves easily through this condo, making it appear larger than it is.

By: Vicky Sanderson Decor, Published on Fri Jul 24 2015

Owners of small condos may have to settle for less space than their bungalow dwelling friends, but that doesn't mean they have to give up on big design dreams, according to Toronto-based designer and contractor Melissa Davis

townhouses. But they still have their wish lists and they want a bit of them in their smaller home," she says. Davis brought a big dose of style to the recent redesign of an 865-square-foot, loft-style

"People who can't afford the dream home just yet will invest in or rent condos or

condo in the Merchandise Building on Gould St. in downtown Toronto - formerly a merchandise warehouse for Sears. When the homeowner, who frequently travels for work, bought the space a decade ago,

he loved the exposed ductwork, concrete ceilings and large windows. His decor reflected a raw industrial vibe; he used, for example, cinder blocks for wine racks.

"But he woke up one day as a 40-year-old professional and decided that it wasn't going to cut it anymore," explains Davis. He's also considering doing short-term rentals, either to visiting executives or for film and television shoots, so he wanted a sophisticated, streamlined look.

Asked about his decor style, he simply showed Davis episodes of Mad Men and Masters of Sex - both set in the 50s and 60s - to illustrate a fondness for mid-century modern design.

Davis's challenge was to achieve that look, while ensuring that the space functioned well and that she stuck to a "fairly tight" budget. With almost two decades experience as an interior designer, including several seasons on television shows that focus on delivering great design on limited funds, Davis was able to deliver.

An efficient floor plan and a controlled palette of medium grey, black and white was the starting point. Wood accents warmed the space, both playing to and softening its industrial edge.

In the living area, a floor to ceiling fireplace surround became a standout feature simply by cladding it in a stained 1/4-inch maple plywood. Materials costs were a mere \$300.

"People think you have to spend so much money for wood. You don't — stain out maple the right colour and it has a very similar look to walnut."

As the homeowner is an avid reader, Davis wanted to incorporate a "library feel, but in an unconventional way." Floating wood shelves and another lower "book bench" were installed and a bulky, view-limiting sofa was traded for a comfortable vintage chair in a textured grey fabric that ties in with the sectional.

A design dividend to open shelving for books was an injection of colour into the room's otherwise neutral palette. A patterned rug and woven toss cushion added more hue.

In the kitchen, a wooden island replaced a stone-topped model with cabinetry below. "It's not something you would usually see in the kitchen, so it reads more like furniture," says Davis.

Affordable heavy duty workroom cabinets were placed below. Not only does the dark grey metal fit in with the colour scheme, the units are lockable, a feature the homeowner will use to secure valuables when he rents.

Choosing affordable options where appropriate meant Davis was able to spend on one of her favourite splurges — backsplash tiles. She chose a matte glass tile with a wavy grey and white pattern that ties together kitchen colours.

"Spending more on the backsplash is worth it. Either you're going to spend \$300 or you're going to spend \$500. The difference is the cost of dinner out with a few friends, and you will have this beautiful feature that will be a talking point, that everyone will

Like many condo owners, this one assumed he had no room for a dining room, an item that had suddenly become part of his wish list.

"His friends are getting married and having kids and he wants to have them over for dinner parties," says Davis. Installing a media console as a bench allows space for a generous table placed parallel to the kitchen, around which eight people can now gather.

Window treatments consist of plain roller blinds close to the glass, paired with lengths of simple cheesecloth - yes, cheesecloth - clipped to a track system.

"I love how the light softly filters through," says Davis, "and the imperfection in the style of the weave. Funny, because that's what you're getting for \$400 a metre silk sheers — you're paying for those perfect imperfections."

Vicky Sanderson is also the DIY editor for Reno and Decor magazine. Follower her on Twitter: https://twitter.com/vickysanderson @vickysandersonEND or email her at vswriter@sympatico.ca.

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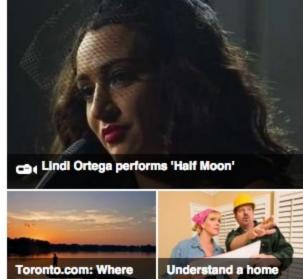
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