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THERE'S NOTHING QUITE LIKE WINTER. No other season arrives with as much festivity and celebration. I'm grateful for it. If not for the twinkling lights

and social events, I'd be persuaded to hibernate until spring.

This year, I'm looking forward to the holidays with more excitement than usual. I'm not the only one. My kids' vice-principal has been telling me about his holiday plans for weeks. His family puts up nine trees in their home! Maybe it's because lockdowns are no longer looming over our plans. For the first time in two years, we are free to gather and truly rejoice in the holiday spirit. Even Mother Nature seems eager to get on with winter, ushering in fall with frigid temperatures, and in some places, snow.

At the moment, I'm picturing how I'll close out 2022. We'll visit the tree farm, and the kids will search for the best Christmas tree they can find. I'll dress everyone up for a family portrait and send it out with our holiday cards. My husband and I will shop for presents and wrap them while the kids are asleep. We'll load up the car and visit extended family.

For those of you who are ready to deck the halls, this issue is full of great ideas. Designer Danielle Nicholson has sound advice for preparing for the season (page 46), and we offer a glimpse at how other families celebrate the holidays (page 54). This issue is also packed with design-related content, including a gorgeous home that infuses natural elements with Mid-century-inspired style (page 26).

However you spend the upcoming season, I wish you a warm and wonderful winter.

Donna Luangmany, Managing Editor
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ON THE COVER

Step inside designer Danielle Nicholson's home as she gets ready for the holidays. Story, page 46
Photography by Devon Pastorius.



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Winter Vibes

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GATHER 'ROUND

Designer **Tamarisk McNalty Stephens** shares her ideas.

FEW THINGS ARE MORE WELCOMING IN A HOME THAN A FIREPLACE.

What was once a necessity for the daily functioning of a household (heating, cooking, baking, boiling water, etc.) has become somewhat redundant with advances in mechanical systems. However, it is difficult to substitute the sensory experience of the warm glow, flickers and crackles of an authentic wood-burning fireplace. The hearth remains the centre of a home and is a hallmark of emotional comfort to the human psyche.

Whether renovating or building new, installing a fireplace (wood burning, gas or even electric) creates a natural focal point and gathering place. The ideal location is logically within a common area, but it is also nice to view and enjoy the fireplace from adjoining spaces, such as the kitchen. The location of the chimney and venting requirements may dictate placement.

Many argue that the heat from a wood-burning fireplace is unrivalled, but it also comes with a certain level of commitment. Firstly, you need to cut or purchase a supply of seasoned firewood and have a place to stack and store it that is protected from the elements, such as an outdoor storage shelter or attached garage. You also need a storage rack or containment unit inside that can hold a supply for a day or

two. Although there are endless images of beautifully curated stacks of firewood inside homes, the reality is quite different! Firewood is messy – and so is the process of emptying and disposing of the ashes. Chimney cleaning and maintenance are also a must. However, an often-overlooked benefit of a wood-burning unit is the opportunity to slow down and create a daily ritual of getting the fire going in the late afternoon or early evening during the colder months – a good excuse to take a moment of repose while you do it!

There are parameters regarding the appropriate clearances of various units from combustible materials, often making the footprint of a wood-burning stove or fireplace considerably larger than a gas fireplace (and

PHOTO: SANDY MACKAY



OSBURN: Duplex Fireplace Tool Set and Equiss Freestanding Log Holder

much more than electric). For wood burning and gas stoves, there are also requirements for the surround to be faced with non-combustible materials, including honed natural stone, slate, porcelain tile and metal. Always plan ahead and work with a professional to ensure you can accommodate the unit of your choice.

One obvious advantage of a wood-burning unit is that it provides a heat source in the event of a power outage, which can offer peace of mind. This isn't always the case with a gas unit. However, for day to day, a gas stove provides heat at the touch of a button and doesn't require cleaning or managing of wood. Just be sure to select a unit with realistic-looking logs. The temperature of a gas or electric unit is set with a thermostat and is much easier to regulate than a wood-burning stove.

Traditionally, an authentic chimney breast will extend from the floor to the ceiling (avoid stopping it above the firebox). Balance the chimney breast in the space, while keeping the centre bay the widest/largest. If installing a gas or electric fireplace that is horizontal in proportions (wider than it is tall), ensure that it is raised off the floor. The design of the fire surround should take into consideration the scale of the unit, the chimney breast and overall space to ensure the proportions are harmonious. The design of the mantel and surround will be affected by the unit you select, as manufacturers provide specific dimensions regarding clearances.

Even though the iconic and substantial traditional masonry chimneys are no longer commonplace (a lovely addition to a new build – albeit costly!), it is still important to be sympathetic to traditional architectural design if you're installing a wood or gas fireplace. If you can afford a chimney, be generous and make it look as authentic as possible by cladding the exterior in brick or stone and using traditional proportions.

Always consult a professional when installing any type of fireplace. Also, check with your insurance company about extending coverage. **OH**



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4



3



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6 THE ROOM AT COULTERS

Chair and Side Table
Curl up with your favourite book in this sleek and cosy leather chair. A side table with a gold base and bubble-glass top provides a stylish spot to place your glass of wine. Complete the look with a moody floral print by Floris Verster.

1324 Windsor Ave., Windsor
519.977.9998 | theroomatcoulters.com **OH**

good taste

Fig and Thyme GIN AND TONIC

RECIPE AND PHOTOGRAPHY
JENELLE MCCULLOCH

The figs give this gin and tonic a sweet honey-like quality and beautiful purple hue. Enjoy at your next holiday party!



FIG AND THYME SYRUP

- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup water
- 4-5 fresh figs
- A few sprigs of thyme

In a saucepan, combine sugar, water and figs. Heat gently for 5-10 minutes, stirring until the sugar dissolves and the figs begin to soften and break down. Remove from the heat and add the thyme. Allow to infuse for 30 minutes. Strain into a clean jar. You can keep any of the unused fig syrup for 3-4 weeks in the fridge.

PER COCKTAIL

- 2 oz. gin
- 1 oz. fig syrup
- ½ oz. fresh lemon juice
- Tonic water to top it off

To make your cocktail, fill a glass with ice and add gin, fig syrup and lemon juice. Top with a neutral tonic. Stir well, then garnish with a sprig of fresh thyme and enjoy! **OH**



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Easy and affordable ways to ACCENT WITH BLACK

STORY **AMANDA SHIELDS**
PHOTOGRAPHY **KEILY RAMOS**



Black is definitely having a moment right now. There are a zillion different ways to insert black into your décor. Personally, I like using black as a stylish accent colour rather than an all-over application and since I almost always use white as my backdrop, it acts as a nice contrast and really anchors your overall design. A long time ago I learned the classic 60-30-10 rule for decorating, which says that 60 per cent of the room should be your dominant colour, 30 per cent should be your secondary colour and the last 10 per cent should be your accent colour. Now I'm not one to follow all the rules, but I do believe if black is your accent colour, it should be kept somewhere under 20 per cent, otherwise it's going to come on too strong and you won't consider it an accent. I've seen some very cool all-black rooms, complete with black ceiling and black trim, but that's for another post.



Here are my favourite ways to use black as an accent:

SWITCH UP YOUR CABINET HARDWARE AND/OR PLUMBING FIXTURES

This is a great way to incorporate a little bit of black into any room without going overboard. Changing out your hardware is an easy and affordable way to make a quick update. Don't be afraid to mix your metals. Just try to limit your metal finishes to no more than two per room.

TIP: Matte black looks great with brushed gold. *Continued on page 24*

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PAINT YOUR INTERIOR DOORS

I absolutely love this idea because literally anybody can do it regardless of budget and it makes such an incredible statement. Black hides a lot of dirty, grimy little fingerprints. So, buy a can of black paint and get to it my friends. There are plenty of great tutorials online to help with your technique and choosing the right tools. A designer favourite is Tricorn Black by Sherwin Williams and I'd go with a satin finish.



PAINT AN ACCENT WALL

I get that black is not the first colour that comes to mind for many when they are choosing paint colour for their home, but I would love you to reconsider. Just as white is a designer favourite, and literally goes with anything, I'd like you to consider black as the new neutral and try it out on an accent wall. It's moody, dramatic, cosy and can anchor a room in the best way possible. It works best if the rest of the room is white and you keep your furniture on the lighter side, too. **OH**



Amanda Shields is the creative director and principal designer for Amanda Shields Interiors.

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GO DARK WITH ART

You want to choose artwork that is heavy on the black. Simple right? There are lots of options out there ranging in price from high to low. Make a serious impact with something high contrast or go moody with an all-dark palette. Either way, tie it back to one or two of the other options on this list and your décor is going to look so pulled together people will think you hired a designer.



CHANGE UP LIGHT FIXTURES

I especially like this option in the kitchen, but changing out light fixtures anywhere in the home is a great way to add some black. An all-white kitchen with black pendant lights is a rising trend. Even though there's no sign of black anywhere else in the design, it just seems to work very well. That little hit of contrast gives a much more polished look by staying away from the dreaded "matchy-matchy."



PHOTOGRAPHY DEVON PASTORIUS
STORY LOGAN MCQUEEN

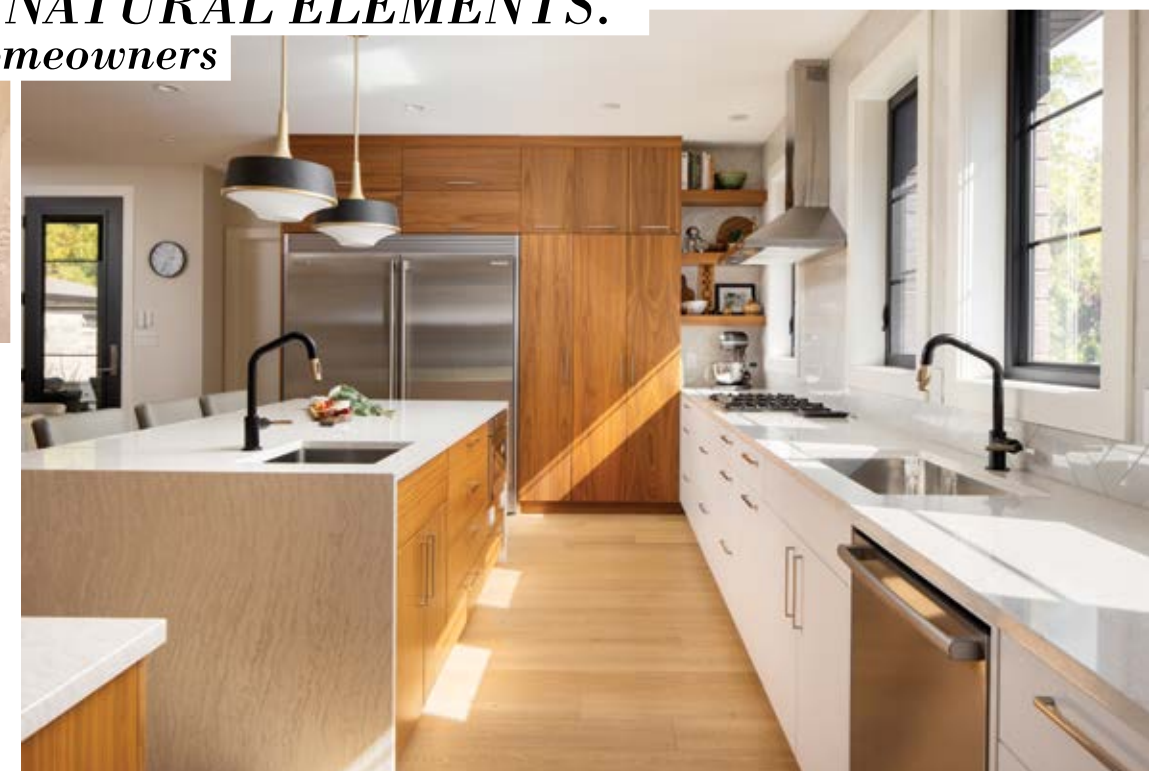
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OFTEN WHEN THE KIDS MOVE OUT, POTENTIAL MOVES IN. TO MAKE THE MOST OF A NEW PHASE IN THEIR LIFE, THE HOMEOWNERS IN THIS STORY DECIDED TO BUILD A NEW HOME THAT WOULD LAST A LIFETIME — AND EXPRESS THE ONE BEFORE IT. *Continued on page 28*

The main-floor design is inspired by the clean lines of Mid-century modern style. Wood textures and earthy tones add warmth.



“IT NEEDED TO BE MODERN, BUT NOT COLD OR STARK. MORE LIKE A FRESH VERSION OF MID-CENTURY, WITH A LOT OF NATURAL ELEMENTS.”
~Homeowners



They craved a stylish space that was timeless and comfortable. When they found a plot in a wooded area just outside of Windsor, they knew they had found a peaceful and inspiring place for their next chapter.

“I call this the grown-up home,” the homeowner tells us. “Kids kind of destroy a house. This is for us to enjoy as adults, and to have a bit more refinement. Basically, it’s a palette for art and things we’ve collected over the years.”

Avid art enthusiasts, they envisioned a clean yet warm backdrop to complement their collection. They explained, “it needed to be modern, but not cold or stark. More like a fresh version of Mid-century, with a lot of natural elements.”

Having completed home projects in the past, the homeowners knew

they needed the right expertise to bring their project to life. They hired **Tony Rauti Luxury Homes** to build their home. And they decided to call in a designer to bring it all together. “I felt we could make many decisions right, but a few wrong might ruin the whole thing,” they say. Their search for a designer led them to **Andalieb Abu-Zahra** of **Aha! Interiors Inc.**

The homeowners contacted Andalieb in 2019, about a year after they initially bought the property. “I saw some of her work online and contacted her. Andalieb was able to do many different styles and she had a great vision in terms of understanding where I wanted to go. I really liked the way that first meeting went – after that it was easy to make a decision.” *Continued on page 30*

ABOVE: Black accents are repeated throughout the house. In the kitchen, modern lighting from Aha! Interiors complements the cabinets. **TOP RIGHT:** Andalieb makes clever use of space between the cabinets and wall by adding open shelving. **RIGHT:** A large island topped with a Cambria quartz counter is the star of the show in this open-concept kitchen.



Andalieb describes the role of a designer as bringing the clients' ideas to life. "The biggest part of my job is to listen to people, understand what they want – however they're able to communicate it to me – and make it real in a functional way," she says. Along with many ideas, the homeowners brought 30 years of collected art, and a desired lifestyle.

Everyday ease was a driving force in the home's design. They wanted the house to work for them, and not the other way around. So Andalieb proactively worked with the homeowners to ensure tedious cleaning and repairs didn't dominate their home life. The kitchen cabinets (**Windmill Cabinet Shop Ltd.**) feature a flat door style that easily wipes clean. Large format floor tiles (Aha! Interiors) with minimal grout lines are also simple to maintain.

Each design decision was a product of thoughtful collaboration. "Andalieb always had a basket with our samples in it," say the homeowners. "It was very easy to see the storyboard as it was evolving. We brought the look that we wanted and she brought the hardware and expertise to make that happen." *Continued on page 32*



EACH ROOM STANDS ALONE AS A BEAUTIFUL SPACE, YET THE HOME IS COHESIVE AS A STORY OF THE HOMEOWNERS' OWN LIVES.

TOP LEFT: The fireplace from Marquis Fireplaces is a stunning focal point in the living room. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Two large sofas and chairs provide plenty of seating in the living room. The furniture was sourced from Aha! Interiors. **OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT:** A custom rolling ladder provides easy access to the homeowners' library. Both the ladder and built-ins were made by Windmill Cabinet Shop Ltd. **TOP RIGHT:** Andalieb Abu-Zahra from Aha! Interiors. **BOTTOM:** Outfitted in rich colours, the den is a cosy place to curl up with a book.





The owners kept many elements from their previous home. Andalieb measured a traditional rug and incorporated it into the den. Its deep, rich colours set the stage for a cosy place to curl up with a book or enjoy the sounds of the grand piano. By pairing the rug with neutral walls and custom built-in shelving (Windmill Cabinet Shop Ltd.), Andalieb has breathed new life into the beloved piece.

The designer enlisted the talents of many local businesses during the creation of this home. In addition to supplying the cabinetry, Windmill Cabinet Shop Ltd. also made the rolling library ladder in the den. The piece glides across the custom built-ins with ease, fulfilling every book lover's dream.

Other local collaborators include **Nancy Johns Gallery & Framing** and **International Art Designs**, which provided framing and new art for the home. The homeowners have curated a unique art collection over the years. A mix of pieces by local and international artists is on full display throughout the home. Each one tells the story of a time in their lives. *Continued on page 34*

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TOP LEFT: Wood tones are carried into the primary en suite. **TOP RIGHT:** The luxurious primary en suite is a peaceful place to begin each day. **RIGHT:** Andalieb incorporated a rug from the homeowners' previous home into the design of the primary bedroom.



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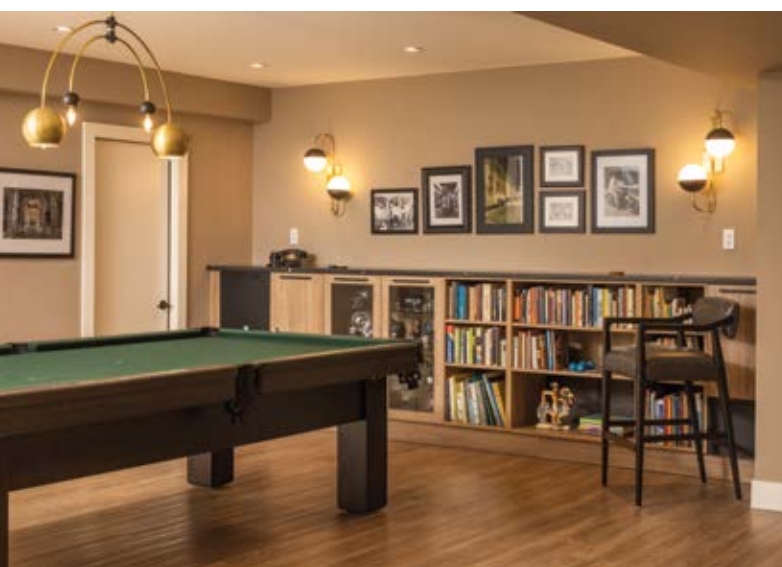
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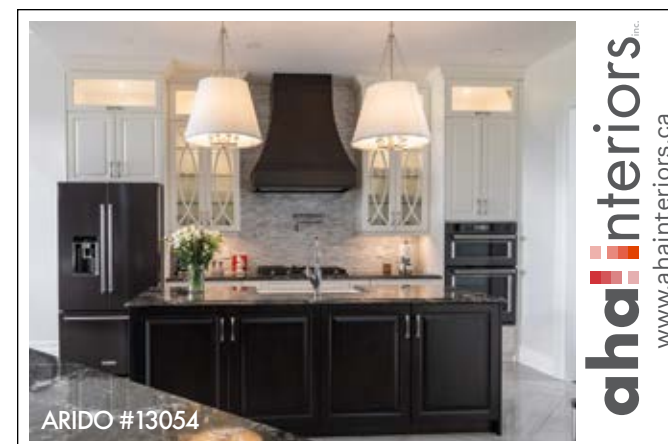
home & designer

Andelieb expresses how each decision was informed by a mixture of trust and taste. “They’re confident and have a good eye for art,” she says. “They took a few leaps of faith that others might not have the confidence to do, and we both enjoyed that.” Each room stands alone as a beautiful space, yet the home is cohesive as a story of the homeowners’ own lives.

This house is a winning example of how personal and authentic a space can be. “I would have to say this is my favourite home,” the homeowner declares. “I don’t look at anything that I’d want to do differently. It is totally a reflection of us.” **OH**



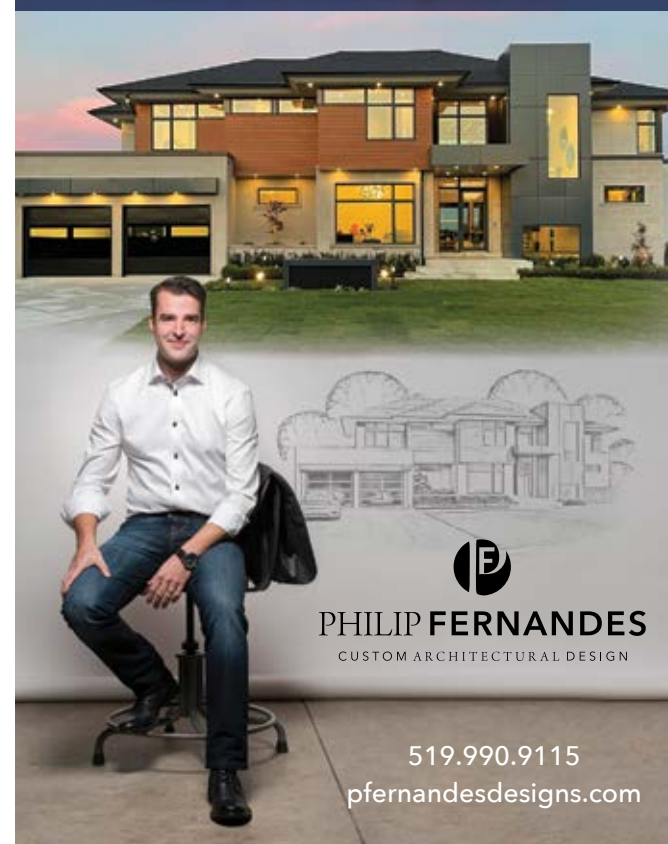
TOP: Complete with a large sectional sofa, billiards table and kitchenette, the basement is perfect for entertaining. **ABOVE:** The bathroom showcases a bold shower tile that repeats colours seen throughout the house. **LEFT:** Modern lights hang above the billiards table.



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'TIS THE SEASON TO BE *Brrrding*

STORY **LYNNE RICHARDSON**
PHOTOGRAPHY **NIGEL EVES**

STAY WARM AND KEEP ON BIRDING

Winter birdwatching? Yes, it's a thing. A really big thing. A season to look forward to with much anticipation. As winter descends, some may not feel any great urge to leave the warm sanctuaries of their homes and head out into the cold. But not birders. For them, the birding doesn't stop with the onset of winter weather. It simply brings another aspect to birding with a focus on the birds of winter.



Pine Grosbeak



Snowy Owl



Evening Grosbeak

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Way back in 1900, an honoured Christmas-week tradition was to hunt in competitions and see who could bag the most birds in one day. An American ornithologist at the time sought to break this convention by replacing it with a holiday Christmas Bird Census. This census would cover a day when people would count, rather than shoot, each and every bird found throughout the chosen date. The city of Toronto participated in this original census along with 25 other cities across North America. Impressive communication for an era without email, chatlines, Messenger and all the rest of today's media!

Today, Christmas Bird Counts are held between December 14 and January 5 across hundreds of communities in Ontario and throughout North America. They are organized by a naturalist club or a coordinator and involve teams of birders who head out to record every bird – species and numbers – in all parts of a designated 24 km diameter circle of land. Neither wind nor rain nor sleet nor

snow stops the count. It can be a blizzardy birding adventure!

Count day is generally wrapped up with a tally dinner where each team reveals the birds they have found, all hoping to have discovered the day's best bird – a lingering migrant, the winter specialties, or even a bird blown in from far off its normal range. Being winter, there are usually stories to share about mini-mishaps on snowy sideroads, slippery shorelines, in wild winds and weather and through all the other extremes winter may throw at you. And then there is usually one group that will confess to the always-embarrassing stopping for a Snowy Owl, only to zoom in on a white plastic bag caught up in a tree. The fun, the challenges and the rewards of a Christmas Bird Count can make a brave winter birder out of you! And there is the added bonus of knowing that the data collected from your heroic effort provides vital long-term information used to assess the health of winter bird populations, and helps guide conservation action.

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH

Ok, so I haven't convinced you to get out and freeze your fingers off focusing your binoculars in a blizzard, as fun as that may be? The thought of brrrding on the coldest days of the year still doesn't appeal? Well, never mind then; set aside the coldest days for watching your feeders from inside your cosy home. The worst days of winter can be the best days for feeder-watching. Feeders will be hopping with birds fuelling up before a winter storm or refuelling after one. Blizzards bring in birds looking for an easy, energy-saving snack.

Observing the action at your feeders will while away a cold winter's day. The energy, life and colour against a backdrop of snow that birds bring to your yard can't help but warm your spirit. And once again you can contribute critical information for environmental research by counting the birds you see for science. Simply enter your sightings in the Project FeederWatch database and contribute to the scientific body of knowledge on wintering bird species, distribution, and abundance. Birds are the barometers of the health of our environment so count every bird. Every bird matters.

So, when winter gets you down – get up and go birding! Beat those winter blues and awaken your senses with the cheery call of the Chickadee, the bright blue of a Blue Jay or the blushing red of a Cardinal. Merry winter brrrding! **OH**



Rough-legged Hawk

WINTER BIRD LIST

Winter is a time to find a range of birds that you won't see in the spring or summer. So, come December, birders start tackling their annual Winter Bird List. Over a period starting December 1 and running throughout the dead of winter to the end of February, we head out to find the winter specialties (Grosbeaks, Redpolls, Siskins, Snowy Owls, Rough-legged Hawks and more) along with our hardier year-round residents (Cardinals, Chickadees, Nuthatches, Woodpeckers and more) to round out our tallies. This fun and occasionally competitive activity motivates birders to grab their binoculars, scopes and scarves and head outdoors for a winter

treasure hunt of sorts. You never know what you may come across. The number and variety of birds are certainly lower in the winter, but the unique-to-winter species make up for that and add to the challenge.

Master lists are kept by ornithological organizations, and it is common to cumulatively rack up sightings of over 200 different species of birds across the province through these three bleak and seemingly barren months! No wonder many take up the challenge of winter bird listing. And as a bonus, winter listing is a good warm-up for one special, big day of birding – the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count.



Snow Buntings



Blue Jay



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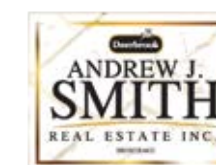


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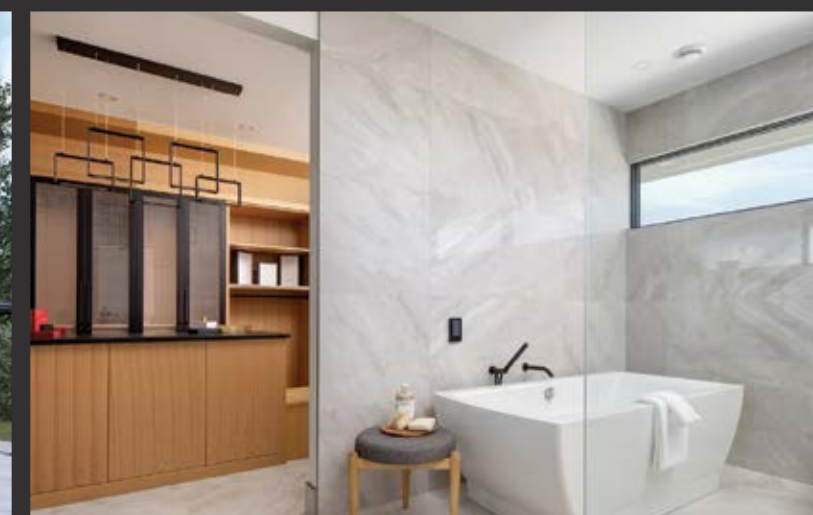
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POWER *clean*

PHOTOGRAPHY TED KLOSKE



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A clean home sets the stage for a beautiful home. Before you decorate, head to **Windsor Vacuum**. This family-owned business has been helping people maintain their homes for over 83 years. Conveniently located in south Windsor, the store offers a wide selection of affordable products and exceptional customer service. The newly renovated showroom is fully stocked with household cleaning products. It's no wonder Windsor Vacuum has been a trusted source for all things vacuum-related since 1939.



Jon Zakoor



WHAT'S HOT

Miele vacuums remain popular, thanks to their exceptional quality and build. The new bagless Boost canisters and the Triflex three-in-one stick vacuum are worth a look. The Roidmi lineup is also an absolute must-see. Lightweight and versatile, these stick vacs make cleaning fun and easy. The latest model, the X30 Pro, is as sleek as it is powerful. Want to improve your air quality? Eliminate pollutants in your air with a Cyclovac air purifier. These units are portable, quiet and will blend right in with your décor.

WHAT'S IN STORE

Whether you're in the market for a portable upright or canister vacuum, you'll find it all here. The shop has high-quality products made by reputable brands like Sebo and Miele. Prefer the convenience of a central vacuum? Check out products from Beam and Canadian-made companies like Cana-Vac and Cyclovac. You can also buy filters and add-on accessories. From floor to ceiling, Windsor Vacuum has everything you need for a clean and healthy home.



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Navigating the showroom is a breeze, thanks to owner Jon Zakoor. His extensive knowledge can guide you to the right selection. Jon also serves customers long after a sale. He offers repairs, tune ups and even house calls. Whether you purchase a vacuum from the shop or not, Jon will keep it running for years to come. **OH**

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STORY
LISA KOOISTRA

PHOTO: BLYNDA DACOSTA

3 REASONS Designers Love SCANDINAVIAN STYLE

If you've seen my work, then it should come as no surprise that I'm a big fan of Scandinavian décor. This distinctive aesthetic is also popular among many of my clients, who are seeking a home that is defined by simplicity, warmth and comfort, with contemporary flair. These happen to be the very qualities that encapsulate what has been affectionately dubbed "Scandi style" and from an end-user perspective, are what home goals are made of. From a more technical designer's perspective, here are three reasons this unique aesthetic has been at the forefront of interior design since the 50s, and it isn't likely to fade anytime soon.



PHOTO: BLYNDA DACOSTA

IT WORKS

Function is one of the fundamental values and guiding principles of Scandinavian design. This approach gives precedence to the practical over the ornamental. Looks are important when it comes to design but the utilitarian mindset behind this decorating style focuses on efficiency, maximizing space, the user's energy and the materials used in construction. Aesthetically, Scandinavian-inspired design embraces clean lines, subtle curves and tapered legs, with a "less is more" mindset.

Another important aspect of this look isn't about what's in the space, but rather what isn't there. I'm referring to clutter. Regardless of your home's style, the dreaded "C" word creeps up and captures our home, and with it, our sense of space and sanity. Decluttering is even more critical in Scandinavian spaces to enhance a home's function and simplicity.

Continued on page 44

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IT HAS STAYING POWER

The neutral palette that defines Scandinavian style gives it a much longer shelf life than perhaps the bolder, more “trendy” styles that come – and go – and quickly show their age. This makes it a winning choice for many clients, who don’t want to endure the inconvenience of yet another redesign in a few years, or suffer the cost.

This minimal colour palette commonly includes variations of white, off-white, ivory, beige, taupe and grey, and visual depth is achieved through the layering of multi-tonal neutrals, some subtle (and specific) patterns, and a variety of different textures. Black details bring balance to this neutral backdrop, add emphasis and draw attention as key focal points in the space, such as black-and-white prints or black-framed artwork, black accessories or accent furniture.

Materials also tend toward the neutral and organic, with a big focus on wood everywhere from flooring and furniture to accessories.

PHOTO: MIKE CHAJECKI



PHOTO: STEPHANI BUCHMAN



IT FEELS LIKE HOME

The role of a designer is to make a house (or a condo) feel like a home. A home is intrinsically warm, cosy and comfortable, inviting you to come in, sit down and put your feet up. When a client feels all this in their newly designed home, a designer’s work is done. I love Scandinavian décor because it does exactly that.

The Scandinavian concept of “hygge” is about comfort as a state of mind. So, how does a feeling or a thought materialize in a physical and sensory way? Enter texture. Think oversize cushions, cotton chenille and alpaca wool throws, knotted area rugs and fluffy sheepskin. Now, layer these over hardwood, wicker, leather and linen. If you picked up on a theme, very good! Scandi style leans heavily on organic materials and motifs that instantly warm the heart and body.

Scandinavian style has it all – high function, simplicity and beauty, all priorities in today’s hectic world. A home should be a place to escape and feel embraced by the people, things and emotions that bring you comfort. If you’re in search of a new aesthetic for 2023 or are craving some cosy, give Scandinavian a go.

Lisa Kooistra is the creative director and principal designer for Lisa Kooistra Design.



PHOTO: STEPHANI BUCHMAN

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signature HOLIDAY STYLE



PHOTOGRAPHY **DEVON PASTORIUS**
STORY **DONNA LUANGMANY**



The fire roars, casting a warm glow over the room. Lights twinkle on the tree as Christmas music fills the air. Danielle Nicholson's home provides a serene backdrop for a palette of red and gold holiday décor.

The interior design consultant and owner of **Danielle Nicholson Design** loves the holidays. Whether watching Christmas movies or roasting chestnuts, she looks forward to festive traditions every year. Danielle recently invited OUR HOMES into her Kingsville home, and shared wise advice for preparing for the holidays.

Continued on page 49

LEFT: Elegance made easy: Danielle mixes high and low items to create a beautiful tablescape. Greenery and ribbon tie everything together. **ABOVE:** Comfortable dining chairs from Danielle Nicholson Design invite guests to linger over a meal. **RIGHT:** Designer Danielle Nicholson.



PHOTO: HEIKE DELMORE



ABOVE: Functional and festive. Danielle dresses up everyday items with greenery and ribbon. **RIGHT:** Pomegranate, oranges and chestnuts add a pop of colour. **BELOW:** Greenery brings the outdoors in. Danielle likes to set the mood for holiday parties by playing Christmas records on the Victrola.



OH: *How would you describe your décor style?*

DN: Classic modern. I love timeless looks that aren't going to date themselves in a year or two. I'll infuse a few trendy items, but not too many. That way I'm not committed to something that I'll tire of in a few years.

OH: *What's your approach to decorating for the holidays?*

DN: Keep with the theme of your home. Your seasonal décor should work with your home, not against it. For example, my home is classic and elegant, so I don't have a lot of whimsical holiday decorations.

Start with base colours like gold and cream. Every few years, change out trendy colours or items. Trends are always changing; tap into them lightly. You may only need six bulbs on your tree in the trending colour. Then it's not a big deal to change it later. Stay with the classics and keep it simple.

I'm also a big proponent of functional décor. It's easy to add a seasonal touch to everyday items. For example, a bow around the canister that holds my coffee beans is simple and practical, but festive.



ABOVE: The fireplace is elegantly decorated with greenery, candles, and bells. Danielle found the beautiful dining room rug at Palazzi Oriental Rugs. **LEFT:** Drinks are ready to be served. Frozen cranberries and sparkling water make a festive drink that will delight guests.

OH: *How are you planning on spending the holidays? What are your favourite traditions?*

DN: We'll be seeing our family over the holidays. I'm looking forward to that, and the little things we do every year: watching Christmas movies and listening to my holiday albums on the record player. Whenever we travel, we buy a tree ornament. Those are the last ones to go up on the tree, and I love reminiscing over past trips. *Continued on page 50*



OH: *When do you begin preparing for the season?*

DN: I start decorating outside at the beginning of November, when it's not too cold. I usually finish indoors around American Thanksgiving. I like to have all my decorating done early, so I'm not scrambling at the last minute.

The same goes with shopping. It might feel like you're starting too early, but you're actually giving yourself time to enjoy the season. Get everything when it's in stock and the stores aren't crowded. Then you can fully enjoy the fun things, like holiday parties or family time.

OH: *What décor items do you recommend splurging on?*

DN: Greenery will never go out of style. The smell of live greenery always puts me in the Christmas spirit. You can't go wrong with pine, and cypress is really popular right now. Cedar garland is flexible and easy to work

with. You can put it on focal points in your home: the staircase, on the mantel or around your doors.

As an alternative, artificial greenery has come a long way. **Anna's Garden, Home and Wellness** has a great selection. Investing in artificial greenery is money well-spent. You'll have it forever.

OH: *What are budget-friendly ways to decorate?*

DN: Ornaments are available in large quantities, and there are so many ways to use them. Besides the tree, you can put them in a decorative bowl for an easy centerpiece. Add them to greenery or clear vases. They can go just about anywhere, and they add the right amount of sparkle.

Continued on page 52



ABOVE: Elegant centerpieces on the coffee table nod to the Christmas decorations in the adjacent dining room. **RIGHT:** Throw pillows reference the green holiday décor throughout the home.



DN

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A whimsical nutcracker ties in the reds and greens of Danielle's holiday décor.



OH: *Let's talk about entertaining. How do you prepare your home to welcome friends and family?*

DN: Nothing elevates a dinner party better than a beautiful tablescape. The best part is, you don't need expensive dinnerware to create a gorgeous place setting. I like to mix high and low items: my vintage china goes on top of a charger plate found at the grocery store. I always tell people there's no better time to use your fine china. Add some linen napkins and candles for ambience, and you're done. I also like to put out place cards. Visually, it's very pretty. Plus, it takes away any awkwardness your guests may have over where to sit.

OH: *What's the best way to make guests feel at home?*

DN: Have drinks ready to go. Wine, cocktails, and non-alcoholic ones, too. Holiday-flavoured mocktails are always a crowd pleaser. Sparkling water with frozen cranberries and pomegranate is really elegant. You could also add orange slices or cinnamon sticks. Finger foods are a must. People may walk through the door hungry, and you can serve charcuterie or a cheese plate immediately.

ABOVE: A playful sign and bells add a touch of whimsy. **RIGHT:** The bedroom is ready for guests. After removing the greenery and throw pillow, Danielle can carry this look into the winter.

OH: *Any final words?*

DN: Preparing for the holidays early will take a lot of stress out of the season. You can even host holiday parties in early December so people aren't trying to squeeze too much in around Christmas. I also don't think there's anything wrong with extending the season a little bit. I actually keep my greenery up into the new year. After I take the tree down, I leave everything else until the end of January. It does wonders for chasing away the winter blues. **OH**



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How Do You HOLIDAY?

MULTICULTURAL HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

Canada opens its arms to people from many different cultures. During the winter months, family celebrations proliferate and many of us raise a glass (or a fork) to mark the arrival of cherished holidays and reconnect with loved ones. Here’s a sampler of holiday traditions from local families.

Bermudian Holiday Breakfast

Sacha Welsh, a fertility nutritionist, originally hails from Hamilton Parish, Bermuda. While attending boarding school at Albert College in Belleville, she met her future husband, Owen Welsh, now a vice-president at the Canadian Football League. The couple have three young daughters: Whitney, 6, Victoria, 4 and Cassia,



her family: boiled codfish and potatoes with tomato and onion sauces along with sides of boiled eggs, banana and avocado slices.

Stockings Hung With Care

Fred Lafontaine grew up in Québec during the depression. Money was tight, so at Christmastime there weren’t a lot of gifts, but he and his siblings always received a stocking with chocolate, a hand-turned wooden top and a tangerine – considered an exotic treat



Josée Lafontaine, who operates a retirement residence, keeps her father’s tradition alive. “At midnight my staff and I hang Christmas stockings on every resident’s door,” she says. “Each one contains chocolate, a tangerine in the toe and a wooden top, hand-turned by my 99-year-old father who still makes these classic wooden toys in his woodshop.”

Kwanzaa

Dewitt Lee, founder and president of Emancipation Month, has celebrated Kwanzaa (a pan-African holiday that began in 1966) his entire life. Every year, Dewitt and his partner, Suzette, enjoy sharing the week-long holiday with their six children. Kwanzaa begins on December 26 and ends on January 1, culminating with the Karamu feast when the family “samples foods from around the Caribbean, Africa and soul food from North America,” says Dewitt. “One of the great traditions we have is shutting down the TV and social media. We focus on reading and writing about the Nguzo Saba, also

known as the Seven Principles or the Black Value System, which include: *Umoja* (unity), *Kujichagulia* (self-determination), *Ujima* (collective work and responsibility), *Ujamaa* (cooperative economics), *Nia* (purpose), *Kuumba* (creativity) and *Imani* (faith).”

Chinese New Year



Kevin, 28, and Robin, 25, she carries on holiday customs she grew up with. “Traditionally, Chinese New Year falls at the end of January or the beginning of February and continues for 15 days,” says Ruowen. “There are dozens of rituals but here in Canada, we follow only a few of them.”

“Parents, uncles and aunts give red envelopes containing money to the younger generation and to anyone who isn’t married. We buy red letters and create lucky words with them.” Her family also eats jiao zi (pork dumplings) before midnight and enjoys vegetable dumplings after midnight, followed by sweets, which symbolize a sweet future filled with happiness, good luck and prosperity.

Hybrid Hanukkah

“I was born Jewish and though I am not religious, I have grown to love the culture,” says Avery Saltzman, co-artistic director of the Harold Green Jewish Theatre. “Hanukkah is a time of giving: the giving of oneself to family young and old. And it’s also a delicious time of potato pancakes topped with applesauce.” Avery and his husband, Kevin Dunlop, celebrate Christmas with Kevin’s extended family, including nephews and nieces who excitedly await the arrival of St. Nick. After celebrating with their respective families, the couple have created their own hybrid holiday. “We plug in our electric Christmas tree adorned with ornaments both Jewish and not, switch on our gas fireplace and celebrate our love for one another by ordering Chinese food.” **OH**



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CHRISTMAS Wishlist

We asked the staff at OUR HOMES what they'd like to find under the tree for their homes this Christmas.

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Wafflemaker



Heather
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Amelia Plates



Tara
KitchenAid's
Blossom
Stand Mixer



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To Rent or Buy?

THAT IS THE QUESTION

STORY **MEGAN SMITH-HARRIS** | ILLUSTRATION **SHEILA BRITTON**

In life and in real estate, timing is everything. With interest rates ratcheting up at an unnerving pace, is it better to rent and luxuriate in a turnkey, trouble-free existence? Or should one take advantage of plummeting real estate prices and jump into the housing market before mortgage rates soar even higher?

WHAT TO DO, WHAT TO DO? As a consumer, it's hard to know the right financial move in the current real estate climate, which is, at best, murky and at worst, highly volatile. These are not idle musings. My American husband and I are in the thick of it. After 20 years living in the United States, we decided to move back to my Canadian homeland. I identified a charming, walkable community for us to live in, one with great restaurants and enviable cultural attractions, but by the time we relocated, house prices had soared an astonishing 40 per cent in a mere two years. Our dream of buying a storybook cottage imploded as pre-emptive bully bids and dog-eat-dog bidding wars became the norm.

So, we've been renting. Don't feel sorry for us – we're in a penthouse condo with amazing views, a private rooftop deck and heated underground parking. After decades of

homeownership, we're enjoying the freedom of not paying property taxes, shovelling the walkway or dealing with maintenance issues. But here's the rub: we miss being the rulers of our own domain. We want a real Christmas tree (only faux allowed here) and crave a big gas barbecue instead of the lame electric one mandated by the condo board. But most of all we want a fenced yard for our dog Duncan, who currently lives with our son because we're in a no-pets building.

I have bought and sold eight homes and done things the right way (made a tidy profit), and the soul-destroying way (sold two houses for less than I paid for them). Why do I keep buying real estate? Growing up, I was indoctrinated to believe that renting was "throwing money away" that could more advantageously be used to pay down a mortgage. That reasoning has merit, but on

the other hand, my husband and I don't want to be chumps and overpay for a house that won't hold its value. I consulted some local real estate professionals to get their take on the situation.

The market is correcting and that's a good thing according to Jodi Hannivan of Keller Williams Lifestyles Realty in London. "Now that prices and expectations are more balanced, buyers can ask for reasonable conditions such as financing and home inspections."

According to a recent study released by in-house economists at Desjardins Group, Ontario has moved from a "pandemic-fuelled seller's market" to more "balanced territory." Housing prices are predicted to drop by up to 25 per cent by December 2023 from their all-time high in February 2022.

Is springtime still the ideal time to buy? According to Jodi, maybe not. "Seasonality doesn't really exist in the way it used to," she says. "We see great properties listed throughout the year." Her advice to homebuyers: "Keep up your search. There aren't as many buyers in the winter so you won't face as much competition."

June Leitch, a realtor at Home & Company Real Estate Brokerage in Stratford concurs. "We're still in a transitional market and prices continue to go down slightly on a weekly basis," June says. "After six years of a seller's market buyers now have an advantage because inventory is high and negotiations come into play with almost every deal."

And renting isn't always the cheaper option. Recent stats from rentals.ca indicate: "The average price for all property types across Canada in September was \$2,043 per month." This is an increase of 21.9 per cent from April 2021.

"In our community we have a shortage of rentals and rents are high so it comes down to supply and demand," explains June. "If someone can qualify for a mortgage, they should consider purchasing because their monthly payments will likely be less than their rent."

Will my husband and I finally be able to buy a Victorian charmer on a mature tree-lined street at an affordable price? That remains to be seen. In the meantime, we're enjoying the perks of being renters but looking forward to the day when we can play with our dog in our own backyard. **OH**



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& Stark



Dr. Suzana Buac
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The Middaugh family



Dr. Phil Wojtasik,
Dr. Hege Wojtasik & little one



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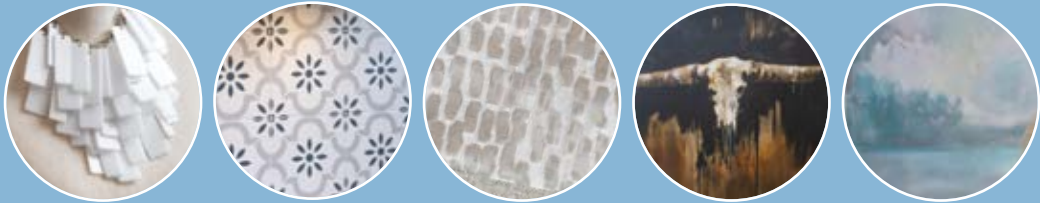
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B. Comm., MBA, JD
Sales Representative

Licensed Attorney w/ State Bar of Michigan



Donna Eugeni
Administrative Leader

Making A LIST



These local experts can help you cross off everything on your wish list.

PHOTOGRAPHY **TED KLOSKE**

NANCY JOHNS GALLERY & FRAMING

Located in Pillette Village, Nancy Johns Gallery & Framing has been celebrating local talent for more than 15 years. Owner and visual artist Nancy Johns is passionate about supporting the community and showcases only artwork created in Windsor and Essex County. Together with fellow artist Dianne Clinton, Nancy Johns offers a variety of pieces, including visual art, jewelry, glassware and more. Thanks to online shopping and shipping, they're able to share this art beyond the local area. Have a piece in need of the right finishing touch? This local business offers custom framing, too.



Nancy Johns & Dianne Clinton

HOW TO PURCHASE ART

Curating your personal collection can be overwhelming. But Nancy and Dianne have broken down the process into three easy steps:

1. Decide on the type of art you want. Consider what's already in the space and whether you want a painting, photography, sculpture or table art.
2. Visit the Nancy Johns Gallery & Framing online galleries for inspiration. Pick out styles that complement the colours and décor style of your home.
3. Share your research and budget. Let the gallery staff take it from there!

ART RENTALS

With over 500 pieces in the gallery at any given time, there's a lot of artwork to discover. If you like to refresh your décor often, the art rental program allows you to rent pieces for three or six months. Switch up your artwork seasonally, or try a piece in your home before committing to it. One-hundred per cent of your nominal rental fee will go towards the purchase price. Nancy Johns Gallery & Framing has the only art rental program in the area and is perfect for businesses and homeowners alike.



"Windsor-Essex has such incredible talent. There has never been a need to showcase work from anywhere else."

Continued on page 64

MASTRO KITCHEN STUDIO

The kitchen is the heart of your home, so why not make it a showpiece? For more than 12 years, Mastro Kitchen Studio has delivered distinct custom cabinetry to Windsor and Essex County. In addition to kitchens, the company offers cabinetry for bathrooms, multi-media rooms, closets and bars. Need a countertop, sink or hardware? This one-stop shop has everything you need to complete your space.



Wade Nelligan and Vito Mastrorocco



DESIGN SERVICES

Mastro handles the entire process from conceptual design to professional installation. Vito and Wade are with clients every step of the way. They boast more than 36 years of design experience and use their knowledge to offer smart solutions. Mastro combines form and function with ease. Their designs are beautiful, too. Whether your style is traditional or contemporary, they can create custom cabinetry that is perfect for your home.

WHAT'S HOT

Simple, transitional door styles are having a moment, and neutrals are more popular than ever. Pairing them with wood accents adds warmth and visual interest. Consider adding quartz countertops to your cabinetry to mimic natural stone design. Or, make a statement with a bold backsplash. Function is top of mind for many homeowners. Hidden walk-in pantries and concealment of small appliances are clever and sleek.



Suzan Mraiheen

SUZIINTERIORS DESIGN STUDIO

Planning a new-home build or renovation? Trust your project to a one-stop studio that can take it from start to finish. Suziinteriors is a multi-disciplinary interior architecture studio that offers a wide range of services. From blueprints to permit drawings to interior design, this company covers it all. Suziinteriors also offers guidance on material selection, sourcing and installing furniture and custom furniture designs. Their focus is creating a holistic interior experience that will bring your space to life.

“Interior design affects the way you live, move, and feel in a space.”

DESIGN STYLE

Suziinteriors creates contemporary classic spaces that will stand the test of time. The company enjoys working with neutral colours and subtle tones. They also love incorporating sculptures and unique décor pieces into their interiors. Each space Suziinteriors creates is one of a kind, and a pleasure to live in.

DESIGN ADVICE

“Be clear on how you would like to feel in your home. What are you trying to achieve, and what style would you like to work with? Think of who will be using the space. It can be overwhelming to select everything in your house. Reaching out to an expert will help guide you in the right direction and make the process enjoyable!”





Richard Pursel

"Our clients are like family – we feel blessed!"

LIONHEART HOME COLLECTION

Your home should reflect who you are. No one knows this better than Richard Pursel. If you want a space that’s perfectly yours, be sure to get in touch with Lionheart Home Collection. This interior design company boasts more than 20 years of experience creating beautiful, functional spaces that reflect their clients’ good taste. No matter your style, Lionheart can elevate it.



DESIGNING FOR PEOPLE

Whether designing for a new build or home makeover, no two projects are ever the same. Thanks to their vast resources, Lionheart can source the finest furniture, fabrics and accessories. The company makes the process easy by working with the best builders, trades, architects and artisans in the business. Plus, Richard and his team cultivate strong relationships with clients that last for many years. It’s no wonder they return time and time again to collaborate with Lionheart on future interior projects.

TRENDING SETTING

Step inside the Lionheart retail showroom to discover the latest décor trends and styles. This season, natural textures like wood, honed marble and seagrass are shining bright. You can add balance and depth to these textures with trending black accents. When it comes to colour, rich tones are taking centre stage. Copper, merlot and amber are replacing the cool greys to create cosy and warm spaces for the colder months.



Lauren Bering & Piotr Bednarek

THE BEDNAREK DIFFERENCE

Throughout his 45-plus year career, Piotr has worked with well-known, reputable jewellery companies. Today, he enjoys serving a loyal clientele that is steadily growing. Through open communication and precise execution, Piotr and Lauren are building trusting relationships with everyone who walks through their door. Bednarek’s unparalleled customer service, rigorous standards, and fine craftsmanship have people coming back again and again.

CUSTOM RE-DESIGN

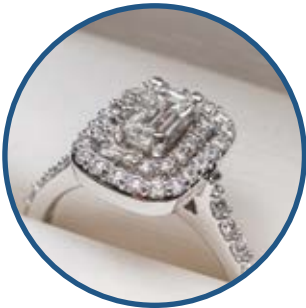
Bednarek specializes in custom jewellery. Bring your vision for an engagement ring or wedding band, and watch it come to life. Piotr and Lauren are also experts in upcycling broken chains and outdated heirlooms. Their custom-redesign service is perfect for those sentimental gold pieces that no longer fit your style. Bednarek can work with you to create a new, unique piece you’ll want to show off.

Continued on page 68



BEDNAREK JEWELLERY

Whether you are shopping for a special occasion or simply treating yourself, Bednarek Jewellery is an absolute must-see. Co-owners Piotr Bednarek and Lauren Bering are proud to offer exquisite jewellery that is guaranteed for a lifetime. Visit the boutique to discover engagement and wedding rings, chains, pendants, bracelets and more. Bednarek’s on-site repairs include resizing, tipping claws, soldering chains and more. The company also offers engraving, and a custom design service that is second to none.



"Created with passion. Crafted with pride."

COULSON DESIGN BUILD INC.

When it comes to building your dream home, why not trust a company that’s committed to quality? Coulson Design Build Inc. specializes in unique custom homes and large-scale renovations and makeovers. Headed by Drew Coulson, this award-winning company is known for quality craftsmanship and meticulous attention to detail.



Drew Coulson



CLIENT FOCUSED

The company’s client-focused approach puts the homeowner at the heart of every project. Communication is the top priority, and Drew makes sure to check in with clients on a regular basis. He is well-versed in every step of the building process, and is very hands on. He oversees every aspect of design, building and renovating.

WISE WORDS OF ADVICE

“Give yourself time,” says Drew. “Whether you’re working on a major renovation or new custom build, you have to factor in backorders and delays. We work with talented trades and in-house staff, and we give our clients as much as we can. It’s worth it to take the time to do it right.” **OH**



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OUR HOMES attracts the area’s finest businesses to advertise in our pages, and utilize our unparalleled distribution and coffee-table appeal to market their products and services. We’re making it easier for you, our readers, to become educated as you plan your home- and real estate-related purchasing decisions. View these business ads online at ourhomes.ca. The listings below are organized alphabetically by industry.

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DRIED ORANGE ORNAMENTS

PROJECT AND PHOTOGRAPHY **ERIN ROCHON**

THESE DRIED ORANGE ORNAMENTS ARE A COLOURFUL ADDITION TO YOUR TREE OR TABLE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON. THEY ALSO ADD A FESTIVE SCENT TO YOUR HOME.



MATERIALS

- 3 oranges
- Sharp knife
- Parchment paper
- Cookie sheet
- Hot glue gun
- String & needle
- Star anise
- Cinnamon sticks
- Rosemary sprigs
- Peppercorns
- Wooden beads (optional)
- String & needle

HOW-TO

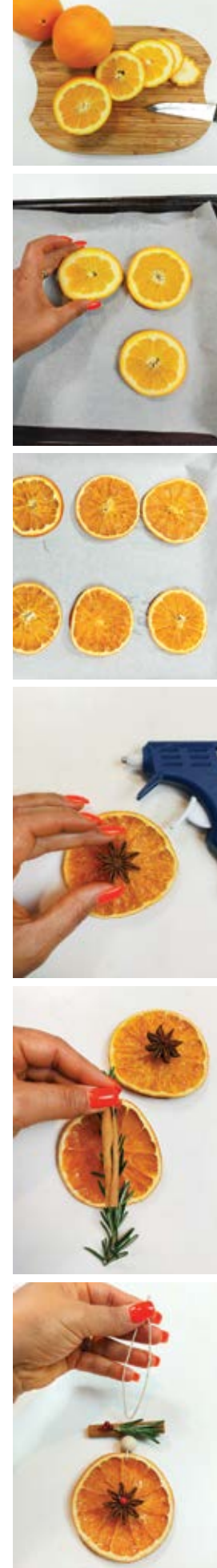
Start by cutting the oranges into 1/4-inch thick slices. Preheat oven to 200°F. Place sliced oranges onto a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Make sure orange slices are equally spaced and not touching each other. Bake oranges for between two-and-a-half and five hours, until slices are translucent.

Next, remove oranges from oven and let cool for two hours.

Then, with a glue gun, start decorating the orange slices. Glue some star anise to the centre, add some pink peppercorns, a cinnamon stick and a sprig of rosemary to complete your ornament. Have fun, get creative and try different combinations!

Lastly, cut some string to hang your ornament. Use a needle to make a hole near the top of the orange and thread the string. Add a wooden bead or a cinnamon stick to the string to complete the look. Knot the ends of the string.

Add these dried orange ornaments to your tree, as a decorative touch to your table or add to a gift for that special someone. **OH**



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Bourbon Caramel CHEESECAKE

RECIPE AND PHOTOGRAPHY
JENELLE MCCULLOCH

WE TAKE
A CLASSIC
CHEESECAKE
AND GIVE IT AN
ADULT-RATED
UPGRADE WITH
OUR BOURBON
CARAMEL SAUCE.

*Tip: For a bold sauce
with hints of bitterness,
try cooking the
caramel to a dark
amber.*

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Ingredients

GRAHAM CRUST

- 1 ½ cups graham cracker crumbs
- 5 Tbsp unsalted butter, melted
- ¼ cup granulated sugar

CHEESECAKE FILLING

- 4 8-ounce blocks full-fat cream cheese, room temperature
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup full-fat sour cream, room temperature
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 3 large eggs, room temperature

BOURBON CARAMEL SAUCE

- 1 cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup water
- ½ cup heavy whipping cream, room temperature
- ¼ cup butter, room temperature
- 2 Tbsp bourbon
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp fine sea salt

Instructions

CHEESECAKE

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Using a food processor, pulse graham crackers into crumbs. Combine with melted butter and sugar. Press mixture into a 9-inch springform pan. Prebake crust for 10 minutes. Once baked, remove from the oven.

To prepare the cheesecake filling, using your mixer, beat together cream cheese and sugar on medium speed until creamy, about 2 minutes. Add sour cream and vanilla until combined. Beat in eggs one at a time, stopping after the last egg is combined to prevent overbeating. Pour the cheesecake batter on top of the crust. Use a rubber spatula or spoon to smooth it into an even layer.

Place in oven and bake for 55-70 minutes, until the centre is set. When it's done, the centre of the cheesecake will wobble slightly if you gently shake the pan. Turn the oven off and open the oven door slightly. Let the cheesecake sit in the oven and cool down for 1 hour. Remove from oven and cool cheesecake completely uncovered at room temperature. Then cover and refrigerate the cheesecake for at least 4 hours or overnight.

BOURBON CARAMEL SAUCE

Combine sugar and water in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Stir once to combine and leave untouched until the sugar has caramelized. The sugar will slowly turn from gold to an amber colour. Cooking the caramel longer will enhance the bitterness and is up to personal preference. Once it reaches an amber colour, remove from heat and slowly whisk in the heavy cream. The mixture will bubble – be careful of the steam. Add in butter and whisk until combined. Add bourbon, vanilla and sea salt and whisk to combine. Set aside and let cool in the fridge until thickened.

TO SERVE

Remove cheesecake from the springform pan. Pour the caramel sauce over top and place back into the fridge to set or until ready to serve. **OH**

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PHOTO: SANDY MACKAY



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Canyon Arched Canopy Bed



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Milo Canopy Bed



UNIVERSAL:
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PHOTO: SANDY MACKAY

COTTAGE CHARM



PHOTO: SANDY MACKAY



CRATE & BARREL:
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ALL THAT GLITTERS...



MADE GOODS:
Laken Canopy Bed



CRATE & BARREL:
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