

feature



We typically associate bright, bold colour with drama. To make a statement, we use colour in very specific ways. But, as this white condo proves, it's possible to create visual drama without an inch of colour.

That's exactly what Ruth Beninger was after two years ago when she bought a brand new condo. For a person with artistic ambition like Beninger, it was one big, blank canvas. Beninger and her husband Bob decided to downsize and buy a penthouse suite in a new condominium building in Waterloo. It turned out to be the perfect opportunity to complete a project she'd been thinking about for years. Beninger loves white. A lot. And she knew she wanted her 1,500 sq. ft. condo to be decorated in top-to-bottom whites. "With almost 23,000 whites, who needs colour?" she says.

Prior to taking possession of the space, Beninger called David Boyes, Partner and Lead Designer at **David Boyes Home Concepts** and enlisted his help in executing her vision. "I wanted an all-white scheme but it was my impression most designers would say, 'That's nice, but it's not livable.' But David said, 'I've always wanted to do all white,'" says Beninger. The two had worked together on smaller projects before, so Beninger knew they understood each other conceptually and she was excited Boyes was so enthusiastic to take on the project.

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BY ADRIENNE BROWN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON HARTOG

50 shades OF WHITE

Warm sunlight floods the main living space for most of the day, illuminating the spectrum of whites. **LEFT:** The art above this custom bench is called "Under Construction." The homeowner, Ruth, created it with found objects from the condo building's construction site.



LEFT: Designer David Boyes with homeowner Ruth Beninger. **ABOVE LEFT:** High shelves make the most of every inch of space in the laundry room. **ABOVE:** Boyes found the perfect grey textured fabric for the dining set, which sits in front of sleek white cabinetry. **RIGHT:** White appliances with a few hints of stainless steel and a grey textured counter maintain the white colour scheme in the kitchen.

The move came as a result of wanting to downsize and simplify. Bob had a stroke and it was important to the couple to eliminate stairs in their home. It was also important to Ruth that they keep only what they love. According to Boyes, seeing Beninger's all-white vision come to fruition "was the upside of downsizing."

When you first walk into the sunlit penthouse, the all-white scheme is striking. It's clean, but not sterile. Beninger's friends ask her how she can live in an all-white space. Her response? "My friends are colourful enough," she laughs.

The Beningers opted for a two-master bedroom layout with one at each end of the penthouse. Both open onto the 60-foot balcony that

runs the length of the condo. In between, there's an open kitchen-dining-living space, a laundry room, bathroom and a studio where Ruth paints and plays. Natural light floods the whole home through floor-to-ceiling windows where the couple can look out over their Waterloo neighbourhood. "It's our Central Park and mini-Manhattan," says Beninger. "Watching the changing skies during the days and seasons is like being on perpetual holiday."

Boyes designed the linen wall-to-wall draperies and had Elora's Ellen Wilson, owner of [Sew Original Custom Draperies & Design](#), bring them to life.

Beninger says she and her husband make use of all the space in the

penthouse, unlike in their previous home where they had rooms that were seldom used.

In her new home, Beninger was able to pick, choose and customize almost everything. She particularly loves the polished concrete floor, which she says is functional and very forgiving. At the front door, she also had Boyes design and install a custom bench covered in men's suiting fabric – primarily for Bob's needs, but it also suits the gallery space perfectly.

"I like the fact there's lots of space and very few walls," says Beninger, who does yoga in the open, spacious area near the entrance, looking out over her city. *Continued on page 28*



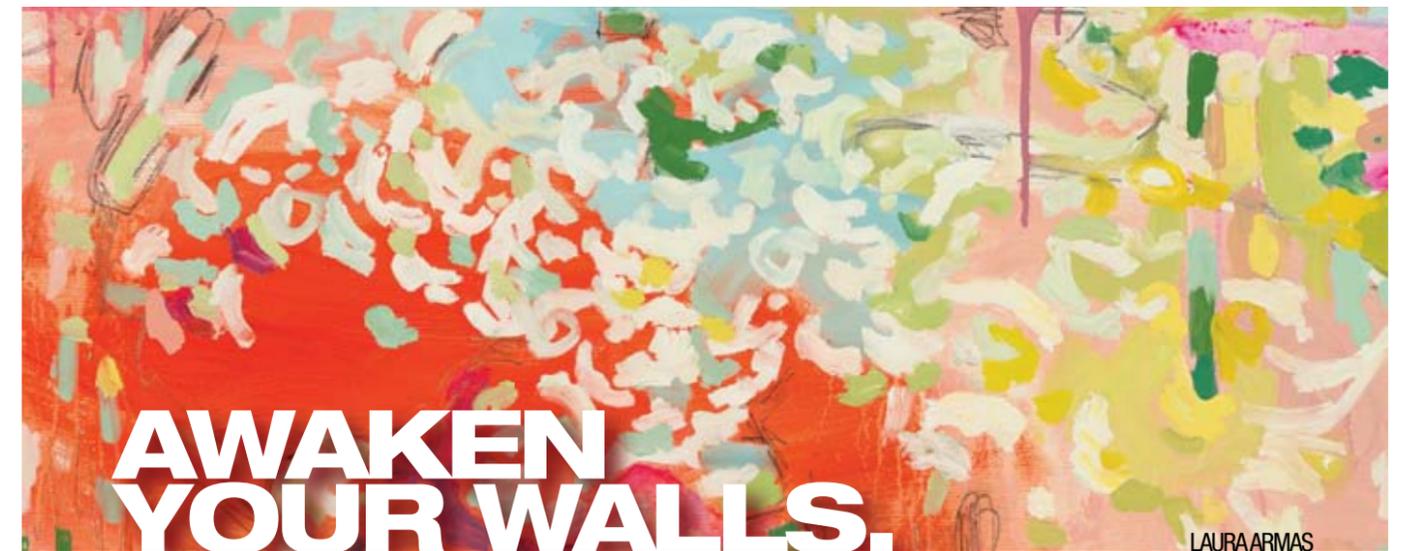
Beninger paints and creates in this space. Her canvases cover the walls. **LEFT:** Instead of a traditional book shelf, the Beningers decided to stack their whitewashed books in the main room.

This is where a concrete support pillar defines the condo's different spaces. "We love to read but I didn't want a bookcase that was traditional," says Beninger. She omitted the bookcase altogether and stacked books against the pillar. She whitewashed the spines to unify the "tower of babble."

On the other side of the pillar is where Beninger does most of her painting. Not surprisingly, she favours whites on her canvases and she builds shapes with layers and textures. She stacks her canvases against the wall and keeps an easel for current projects. A white pedestal table in the middle of the space doubles as a desk and research space.

Boyes says it was fun and interesting to build around Ruth's art. He created a space that's "beautiful in its own right but can also feature her work."

For Boyes, the first challenge was deciding on what whites would work for the space. It was a precise process and at first, the builder painted the condo in the wrong white. "It sounds silly to say, but it threw everything off," says Boyes. "It doesn't sound like it could make much of a difference, but everything looked awful." So they repainted – and the space looked completely different. Once Boyes found the right balance of whites, he had to decide where to pull in some texture. *Continued on page 30*



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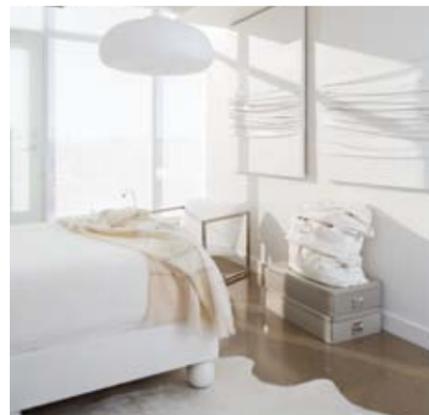
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LEFT: Ruth's art adorns the walls around the penthouse suite. **ABOVE:** The master bedroom is clean and calm. Ruth painted furniture she already had so it would work in her new colour scheme. **RIGHT:** Bob's grandparents received this dresser as a wedding gift.



Boyes and Beninger selected the kitchen counter before the furniture, so that was a jumping off point. Next, they selected other big, permanent pieces and Boyes designed a stainless steel shelf for the kitchen. Waterloo's **J. Psutka Custom Iron Works** fabricated it for them.

Not everything in the penthouse is brand new, though. Beninger brought cherished furniture from her previous home, although it had to be updated to suit her new colour scheme. **Riley Painting Corp.** in Conestogo helped Beninger transform some pieces she already had, including the dressers in both bedrooms.

The timber step that leads from the main room out to the balcony came from a Cambridge farm. "It had probably been in the garage for close to 100 years," says Beninger, who sourced it through a friend. She used a piece of the same wood in the living room as a pedestal to display a raku statue with special meaning to her and Bob.

Boyes calls the penthouse sexy and modern but still approachable and comfortable. "It's not a huge project, but it's one of my favourites," he says. **OH**

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