



Keeping it simple

LUXE FINISHES CALL FOR CLEAN ELEGANT DÉCOR IN BENNINGTON HOUSE'S HIGH-END SHOW SUITE

Stephanie MacDonald

NCG: When you were deciding on a design theme for this suite at Bennington House, what did you want the focal point to be? Was there a particular aspect of the space that you wanted to highlight?

Cristina Oberti: One of the biggest selling features of interior suites are the finishes. They add significantly to the overall value of a home, and so we do our best to highlight them as much as possible. For this project we particularly wanted to focus on the luxurious Carrara marble that runs throughout the bathroom and kitchen areas. Marble is an elegant and timeless material, and when implemented in the right way,

can also be very modern and striking. We didn't want to compete with the finish, so we used off-white and grey colours and airy furniture to accentuate and compliment the marble surface's natural beauty.

NCG: For people who are staging their homes to sell, how do you strike the right balance between making a place look homey and comfortable while still encouraging prospective buyers to envision themselves and all their belongings there?

CO: The key for designing an effective display suite or show home often lies in

the subtleties. Unlike private residential projects, which carry the distinct character of the space's occupants, display suites are almost entirely interpretive. Our job as designers is to strike a balance between inspiration and individuality: the designs need to be strong enough to inspire, and yet subtle enough to allow for an individual 'vision'. The goal is to create a space where people can envision and interpret their own lives taking place. My advice for designing for buyers is to keep things subtle: statements shouldn't be too loud or overbearing. Sticking to neutral tones and timeless furniture pieces is usually a



safe way to go: you need to leave some room for the buyer's imagination.

NCG: It's always interesting to find out what kind of person you were thinking about attracting when you began this interior. Did you have a particular person or type of person in mind?

CO: We typically base our designs around an imagined owner or resident. This not only helps make the end result more realistic and 'human', but also gives us a concrete conceptual direction to follow. In some cases we create these characters ourselves, basing our imagined resident on location, building type and price range. For some projects, such as Bennington House, the client will provide us with an in-depth marketing strategy which often contains the buyer's demographic and likely lifestyle choices. In the case of Bennington House, the predicted buyers were trendy urban professionals and young modern families.

NCG: There is a certain mid-century look to the living and dining areas, which is very chic. Where did you source the furniture and accessories?

CO: What I love most about mid modern furniture is its versatility: it's a classic choice, and yet timelessly contemporary. Mid modern pieces work especially well when mixed in with more sleek, and minimalist designs. The soft curves and warm character of mid modern design brings a human touch to an otherwise austere space. The pieces we selected for Bennington House

were sourced from various suppliers, and they are as follows: Style Garage, CB2, and Moe's Home.

NCG: With the very large dining/living area, you did a great job of delineating the different spaces. Could you explain how you did this? Are there other, different approaches you could take to separate areas while still embracing the open-concept?

CO: Furniture layout has a significant impact on both the flow and zoning of space. This is especially true of open floor plans, which are free of partitions or closed areas that traditionally help define a home's zones. In these cases, furniture groupings are what define each area. A dining set is a good example of how a grouping can 'define' the function of a space. In the case of the living room area, a sectional with an armchair placed to the side will often distinguish and enclose the living area as a distinct space. Decorative accessories can also help give a visual grounding to spaces, such as area rugs and pendant lights. The rule of thumb is to place furniture groupings around a centre. In the case of a dining area it would be the dining table and pendant light overhead that provide the central point. In the case of a living area, it's usually around a coffee table, fireplace or entertainment system. It also helps to look at zones as groupings of people: when we socialize we like to form a circle and face each other. Furniture groupings should be built around this idea to reflect and accommodate our social nature.



BIO

Upon enrolling in BCIT's interior design program, Cristina worked at her father's firm Oberto Oberti Architecture and Urban Design Inc. Since 2000, Cristina continues to live her passion under the banner of Cristina Oberti Interior Design Inc. She has taught interior design courses at BCIT and has been an active board member of the Interior Designers Institute of BC (IDIBC) where she also served as vice-president.

Bennington House is a collection of 42 exquisitely-crafted homes coming soon to King Edward Station, on King Edward near Cambie. See the stunning Bennington House show suite for yourself when it opens later this spring. Check out benningtonhouse.ca for more information as it becomes available.