



Westcoast style

Meets modern elegance on the West Side

By Stephanie MacDonald

THE LEVESON, a posh new building on the West Side of Vancouver could get by on its address alone, but it's the interiors that are really the selling feature here. Using natural materials to reflect the beautiful natural surroundings, award-winning interior designer Cristina Oberti makes the most of these generous spaces while creating a modern, clean aesthetic. How does she do it?

Q: As lifestyles change, so too does the "heart" of the home. Years ago it was the living room, then it moved to the kitchen, has it moved since then? How do you express where the heart of your

home is through the design and flow of the house?

A: The heart of the home is where people gather and spend time together. It's really more about people than space, I think. That being said, I think that the kitchen is still taking on that role. Kitchens are increasingly adopting the comforts and consideration that have traditionally been applied to living rooms. In fact we're seeing less and less of a distinction between the living and kitchen areas. I think this is due to the fact that urban dwellings are getting smaller; making open plans not only ideal, but necessary. The boundaries



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we used to apply to common or shared residential areas don't make sense anymore.

I think flexibility is key. The 'heart' of a home needs to promote interaction. It should accommodate a variety of seating options for various occasions, as well as feel comfortable and open.

Q: Aside from the location on the West Side, what was the most distinctive feature of the Leveson project for you? Is it one big design thing, or a number of special little touches?

A: Apart from location, what I love most is the concept of combining comfortable



and spacious low-rise homes with the luxury and sophistication of urban living. It's very Vancouver.

Q: How do you use natural materials like wood and granite and still maintain a crisp, modern aesthetic?

A: A modern 'natural' look is achieved by keeping things clean and minimal. Simplicity is key: it's best to stick to a few materials and not have them compete for attention. The materials should speak for themselves. I often like to pair natural materials such as marble or wood with modern elements in contemporary finishes such as chrome or glass. The juxtaposition between glazed or metal surfaces and 'raw' material is very effective.

Q: For downsizes, storage is especially important. What are some of the most

clever storage solutions you have seen?

A: Storage can be a challenge, but it doesn't have to be. There's a lot of wasted space in homes that people don't often think about. The staircase as storage space is one of my favourite examples. There's a lot you can do with a set of stairs.

Q: Having two colour schemes to choose from is a great idea, (though it's twice the work for the designer). How do you envision the same space in two different shades? Do you always tend to favour one colour scheme over another as a personal preference? Do you consider one masculine and one feminine, or one more modern and one more traditional?

A: I think it's important to give the option. No one scheme will work for everyone. I start off by envisioning two very different

potential owners and what their lifestyle and interests might be like and design around that. Often that will lead me to a 'modern' and a 'traditional scheme, but not always. Sometimes it's a bold scheme versus a soft scheme, or 'warm' versus 'cold', or even a combination of things. Regardless of the scheme directions, the goal is to create palettes that will appeal to and accommodate different personalities and tastes, maintaining "timeless" for both schemes.

The Leveson will be located at Granville & 62nd Avenue in Vancouver. For more information visit online at LevesonLiving.com, or call 604.880.8312

Beginning her career at her father's firm, Oberto Oberti Architecture and Urban Design Inc, since 2000, Cristina has continued on her own 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.