



decade of dreams

Patience pays off for a Calgary couple who finally see their contemporary vision materialize

TEXT WENDY GOLDSMITH PHOTOGRAPHY TRACEY AYTON

The night before Veronika Kainu went into labour, Calgary was covered in heavy, wet snow. Her husband Wayne remembers waking late, looking out the bedroom window of their just-10-days-old home and saying, “Hey Veronika, look! Someone’s shovelled our walk!” Only his very-pregnant wife wasn’t there.

Wayne followed the shovelled trail with his eyes, along the cleared sidewalk, past the brushed-off parked cars to where Veronika was finishing up the neighbour’s walkway. “And there were two loaves of banana bread sitting in the kitchen,” he remembers, laughing.

Not to mention the fact that in the week since moving in, Veronika had already directed the unpacking and setup of every room in the house. “It was the nesting instinct, I just went crazy,” she says.

But it wasn’t just the imminent arrival of a first baby that had Veronika on such a mission. Taking possession 10 days before her due date doesn’t sound ideal, but after more than a few hiccups along the way, Veronika and Wayne were thrilled. The newly built house was actually one half of a double-wide dwelling known as an infill—a divided house on one standard lot split into two narrow rectangles. When Wayne first bought the land 10 years earlier, the lot had held a standard post-war

bungalow similar to others in Calgary’s northwest. The bungalow was rented while he and Veronika lived in a condo closer to the downtown financial district where they both worked.

The couple was captivated by the spectacular view of the Rocky Mountains and Sarcee escarpment from the lot and always planned to construct an ultra-contemporary dream home on this property. Unfortunately, after hiring a builder to level the old house and break ground on a new home, the contractor went bust. It was a tough lesson, but in the midst of planning their Banff wedding, they decided to worry about it later.

The property remained undeveloped for 18

months until Wayne received a call from Rob Hryszko of Veranda Estate Homes: Hryszko had a buyer for part of the property if it included a townhouse-style home by his company. Would the Kainus sell?

Sensing an opportunity to finally see their contemporary vision materialize, the Kainus agreed to sell the land and then buy back one completed half—this time with plenty of paperwork and a great deal. This option gave Veronika and Wayne the chance to choose all their fittings and fixtures, with the help of Hryszko’s wife and business partner, Melissa, an experienced interior designer.

She quickly came to understand the Kainus’ style: modern warmth. “We like a lot of clean lines, but we also want it to feel homey,” explains Veronika. “A lot of modern homes these days feel cold. Especially having a family, it needed to be liveable. That’s what we hadn’t seen in any other house that we looked at.”

The result is a home with soft, deep greys. A sense of luxury comes from the gleam of high-end materials, rather than fussy fabrics or ornate patterns. Comfortable warmth results from a judicious use of bold, solid colours, personal treasures and the shining maple-stained hardwood floor, a perk of having a luxury-home developer in charge of installation. These days, most flooring arrives on site pre-finished with stain and varnish. But in this case, the builder laid the floors down “old-school,” says Wayne, starting with raw



A MAPLE-STAINED FLOOR paired with accessories such as a sleek, red espresso maker from Italy gives the kitchen a modern warmth.



The monochromatic palette is both peaceful and welcoming

wood and then finishing afterwards when each plank is in place. The effect is a shining surface unmarred by joins, extending over the entire open-plan first floor. "People always ask, 'Is this real?' because it's so smooth. There's not one groove in the whole floor," says Wayne.

Enthusiastic hosts and cooks, the Kainus are particularly pleased with the kitchen. "We're house-proud, I guess you could say," laughs Wayne, "and you see it right when you come in the door. It's our favourite feature."

"Yeah, the kitchen is number one," agrees Veronika. "That's where we spend most of our time, entertaining . . . and with the baby now."

The monochromatic palette is peaceful and welcoming, with tall custom-built cabinets, a silver-flecked marble mosaic backsplash and



WARM AND COSY: Colour and character, like the throw pillows on the couch, prevent this contemporary esthetic from feeling cool.

matching grey marble countertop. A deep white double-basin sink in the island means dishes can be rinsed while chatting to guests or keeping a watchful eye on baby. And the Kainus treated themselves to an industrial-sized stove so meals for friends and family are easier to prepare.

Veronika also appreciates the open shelves at the end of the island. Here, they display favourite colourful pieces such as a red espresso maker





warm grey
cabinets provide
contrast and depth

CALM AND COLLECTED: Clean lines and plenty of white make the master bath (above) a spa-like retreat.

from Italy, celadon cake stand, and rustic wooden wine case, a souvenir from a Napa Valley winery. “It just adds a bit of character to show a little of yourself.”

Hints of personal history have also lifted the master bedroom from showroom to private dwelling. What appear as black and white graphic prints are actually the original rolling route sheet from the tram car that Wayne’s grandfather conducted in Dublin, Ireland. For display purposes, Wayne cut the long page in half and framed each piece to hang above the bed.

The headboard – which looks expensive and reclaimed – is actually another Wayne project: he built the cherry-stained backrest himself from hardware-store planks. “They’re not specialty pieces at all; that’s what makes them look



personal punch

Let's face it, contemporary style, with its minimalist furnishings and light neutral palettes, has the potential for appearing a bit vanilla. Add some flavour by revealing some of your own personality.

COMMISSION GRAPHIC ART: The Kainus hired a graphic artist to create orange, red, green and brown trees in a similar style to the logo of their favourite New York eatery, The Four Seasons Restaurant, to hang over the dining table.

COLLECT IN THEME: In addition to the colourful tree prints, the Kainus also picked up a pretty tree pillow for the sofa and a laser-cut metal tree for the living area. The latter – a keepsake from their second-year anniversary trip to Banff – has a heart with their initials etched into the trunk. Remember: a few special pieces are charming; a houseful shouts gimmicky hotel room.

RE-WORK YOUR PLAY: The Kainus love checking out vineyards on their travels, so it wasn't too much of a hardship buying a whole case of wine just for the wooden box. Consider using interesting boxes, bags, jars or tins for storage with a story.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES: The old pages above the master bed once toured the streets of Dublin via tram – the one conducted by Wayne's grandfather. Plus, Route 2's terminus, Sandymount Green, was the birthplace of his mother! Vintage signage slips easily into contemporary decor – often more easily than vintage landscapes. Consider framing old maps, advertisements or even sheet music. □



ROOM TO PLAY: Horizontal stripes in baby Ethan's room are a fun way to play with the chic and contemporary palette that colours the rest of the house.

rustic." Wayne is also responsible for the floating wooden shelves flanking the main-floor fireplace. Both elements add those touches of liveable warmth that the Kainus were seeking in a contemporary home.

The one place where signs of personal clutter and baby toys are kept strictly at bay is the master bathroom, Veronika's sanctuary. "It's somewhere I retreat at the end of the day and unwind: somewhere that's mine, not my baby's." Wanting to create a spa atmosphere, the Kainus originally planned every element in white. However, with Hryzko's help, they later decided on warm grey cabinets for contrast and depth. The deep free-standing tub, walk-in shower and glistening pale grey tiles still deliver the esthetic Veronika desired.

Ethan's baby room is an example of how the same simple palette can be tweaked for different purposes. Here, the room is wrapped in fog and granite-hued stripes and accessorized with stylish white pieces, such as an adorable Eames-inspired rocker. "I wanted something a little chic for my little prince – something fun and different but not too boyish."

Still, Veronika insists she'd never choose horizontal stripes again. "I'm a perfectionist, to say the least, so those lines were the death of me. We were up all night!"

Despite the hassle, the effect is a room that suits parental tastes without neglecting a child's-eye view. It's a balancing act that the Kainus maintained admirably throughout the 2,000-square-foot finished home. ■

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