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**GLAMOUR ON THE HILL
CENTURY-OLD WAREHOUSE
BUNGALOW REVIVAL**



SPACE & TIME

A couple enjoys time's slow march in their first home, a century-old Gastown warehouse they bought on a whim

TEXT WENDY GOLDSMITH PHOTOGRAPHY TRACEY AYTON



First, it's the vast space that takes you in: crates and crates of airy volume unhampered by walls or unnecessary decorative whatsits.

Next, the brick, a crumbling mosaic of deep reds, pinks and dust-shaded mortar that stretches from the sleeping nook in the northwest corner 40 feet east to the living area and wraps around the east wall to the kitchen. And third, the original wooden sash windows, wide enough to frame all the North Shore Mountains and Vancouver Harbour, and so tall you have to reach down almost to your knees to lift them off the sill.

But the ceiling is the clincher – heavy, rough-hewn timber constructed to bear the weight of heavy equipment, the grain still not rubbed smooth by over a century of gentrification. The loft is on the fourth floor of the historic McLennan and McFeely Building, a massive brick-and-stone warehouse where hardware and building supplies for gold rushers, blacksmiths and loggers sat briefly before being transported on ships or trains. A sign proclaiming “Logging Supplies” still runs down the north face of the building. Proximity to the rail line was essential for this importer, so much so that the

INDUSTRIAL APPEAL
Brick walls, antiques,
and commercial-style
kitchen fixtures and
appliances fit finely into
the former warehouse,
giving it an urban and
eclectic look.



The space, in short, is
beautiful unpolished and rich
with history.



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“Mc and Mc” building isn’t rectangular: its design allowed for the CPR right-of-way track to slice off the northwest corner. (Peer through the gate on Cordova Street and you’ll see a triangular garden landscaped over the original tracks, which residents now use for barbecues and reverie.)

The space, in short, is beautifully unpolished and rich with history, and it’s the reason Jude Popp and Tavia Cosper took a flying leap when reason dictated holding steady. “We looked at this place on a whim,” says Cosper. “It wasn’t really in our price range, but as soon as we walked in, we were like, this is exactly what we’re looking for. We made it work.”

While the couple had been together for 13 years and married for six, this would be their first home purchase. Until now, it had made sense to rent. Popp started a new career in law only three years ago, and Cosper launched a home-based marketing and communications consultancy after nearly a decade in Rogers’ marketing department. And though they loved the older character home they were renting, they were tiring of the nook-and-cranny-shaped rooms and longed to stretch out. The loft in the Mc and Mc seemed to be it.

Cue the First-Home Purchaser’s Drama: on Thursday, with boxes packed and in the midst of a final cleanup, Popp received a fax saying the seller was unable to close. The movers were booked for Saturday – the day after close. Homeless and disappointed, the pair squeezed – quite literally (Popp is six-foot-five) – into a friend’s basement. “For 50 days,” says Popp, “I lived in a place where I couldn’t stand up.”

They looked half-heartedly at other condos around town, but none measured up to the space they lost. After six weeks, Popp called the seller’s agent back with a now-or-never ultimatum. Miraculously, the deal went through.



ROOM TO MOVE Tavia and Jude have lots of space to cook, relax and enjoys view of the North Shore Mountains. Furniture is kept to a minimum, and each piece fits into the overall esthetic of old-meets-new.



While their former rental had a cramped gallery-style kitchen built for one, the loft has a long stainless-steel topped island where several people can easily sauté and season without bumping spatulas. Cabinetry floats above the fray. Appliances are stainless and space saving. A range hood is attached to the long arm of an aluminium duct. Everything is modern and lab-like – a professional kitchen made for TV. While not at all old-world, its commercial-quality fixtures fit in with the ex-warehouse’s industrial look.

Throughout the room, real antiques mingle with repurposed pieces and brand-new look-alikes, but match because of a shared rough-around-the-edges sensibility. The sofa, for example, is new, but looks

like the sort of couch a turn-of-the-century dockworker would have picked too. It’s huge: seven-feet long and four-feet deep, puffed with real down and covered in hand-tanned leather.

And now a year on, slouched into their beloved couch, how does the couple make use of 1,400 square feet, a space large enough for a rowdy speakeasy or a staid volleyball game? “You’re looking at it,” says Popp, snuggled up beside his wife, with his feet on a heavy I-beam-inspired coffee table. “Except if you weren’t here, we’d be laying down.” Adds Cosper, “We don’t like to have a lot of people over; one or two people is perfect.”

But open-concept living does lead to an awkward question. There’s scads of space,



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SEXY SPACE Keeping the space open meant that the shower and tub aren't exactly closed off. But the condo is so large that privacy isn't an issue.

but not very much of the private variety. For instance, the shower is a large tiled walk-through with a curtain at either end. Sexy and contemporary, yes, but precludes your partner rinsing off after the gym while you host an early client meeting in your home office. Could there be too much togetherness?

Cosper admits she was apprehensive about having the bed – an antique iron number with scrolling pattern – on public display at first. “I was really bent on adding a wall in front of the bedroom – a curtain, a sliding door, something. But I found it wasn't an issue at all. When one of us is in bed and the other is on the couch, it's quite a big distance.”

“We're lucky because our lives are kind of parallel,” Popp says. “We get up at the same time. We go to bed at the same time. And I don't want to paint this like our relationship is perfect, but at least with each other, neither of us is really conflict-seeking. You can't really get away. You're here together.”

Cosper adds, “When we first moved in and were still really excited about the place, what made it nice about not having a wall, was when he'd wake up in the morning, from the bed he'd say, ‘Ahh, I can see my entire domain.’ You get the whole view.” ■

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Look to
INDUSTRY

ANTIQUES ARE AWESOME – except when they look grandmotherly. Using heavier industrial furniture is a surefire way to infuse a place with history, doily-free.

SHOW YOUR METAL The simplicity and sturdiness of an iron bedstead can suit both macho and feminine tastes – especially when paired with crisp white linens.

UPSIZE In high-ceilinged condos, choose those mammoth pieces that make movers shudder. Their gravitas will help delineate separate “rooms.” Try a solid oak banker's desk for the office. An oversized sofa with thick arms is just the ticket for the living area. Pair with a solid wood coffee table, or lay your hands on a factory cart for more industrial style.

MAY-SEPTEMBER ROMANCE Keep modern comforts without losing sight of the past. The couple chose shelves made of reclaimed wood on a welded frame to hold both their flat screen TV in the living area, and food-processing gizmos in the kitchen.

TAKE THE FLOOR It's tempting to line up chairs and tables, backs to the wall, like junior highers at a school dance. “Tethering” this vintage drop-leaf table to the fir beam and laying a rug below makes a miniature tableau and prevents the furniture from looking adrift. □

