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A TALE OF TWO CONDOS

Located just a few floors apart in the same building, these two Vancouver condos employ colour in drastically different ways to achieve the similar urban-fresh look requested by their homeowners. Here's how designer and master of colour Karla Dreyer did it.

1 CONDO NO.

Add gold for richness

Throughout the cool condo, designer Karla Dreyer introduced warm metal accents both big and small. Here, an ornate gold mirror creates an eclectic vignette with a more traditional sideboard, while sleek gold lanterns jazz up the Mid-Century Modern-style dining table and chairs.

URBAN RETREAT

This airy, 900-square-foot condo in Vancouver's trendy Yaletown neighbourhood acts as a pied-à-terre for the owners – empty nesters who have a house in the suburbs. But the two-bedroom crash pad isn't just for weekend fun: One homeowner works nearby and often stays here during the week. So for designer Karla Dreyer of Karla Dreyer Design, the objective was twofold: "First, we wanted to take a different approach from what we did in their permanent home, which has a more traditional look," she explains. "And second, this place needed to be practical but also have energy and vibrancy to represent a downtown lifestyle." Karla achieved just that by filling the space with comfy furniture, warm metallic accents and a classic white, grey, blue and gold palette that has staying power. Now the condo is down to earth enough for busy weeknights and perfectly inviting for weekends of shopping and dining out – and that's the best of both worlds.



Use restraint

The sunny yellow toss cushions were Karla's finishing touch in the open-concept condo. The bright hue echoes the light flooding in through the tall windows, as well as the gold accents carried throughout the living areas and into the master bedroom. "In a small space, it's about staying cohesive," says Karla.

Trick the eye

A white open-framed bar cart disappears against the wall of windows, visually expanding the space.



Stay neutral with big pieces

A tailored sectional and graphic rug in muted shades of grey allow the open living area's indigo armchairs and yellow accents to stay in the spotlight and be the true heroes of the room.



Reinforce colour with accessories

Two blue vintage books stacked on a gold metal side table reference the pair of armchairs in a subtle way without overwhelming the eye. The cage-like table allows the chairs' bold blue upholstery to be visible from any angle.



Mix your metals

For the walls in the master bedroom, Karla found a tone-on-tone wallpaper in a light shade of grey. "The cool grey plays well with the warm, yellowy gold colours and proves you can mix silver and gold," she says.





METROPOLITAN GLAMOUR

When the soon-to-be owner of this 750-square-foot condo first toured the space, she had a big decision to make: To keep or not to keep the existing glossy red kitchen?

Enter designer Karla Dreyer, who helped her client, a professional woman in her 30s, figure out this design code red. "Oh, it's a red red all right," says Karla with a laugh.


"But we decided it made the place fun and young. This was really her chance to go a bit glam, girly and urban, which is what she wanted." How did Karla accommodate the striking hue? She dressed the rest of the one-bedroom, one-bath space in a soothing neutral palette of white, cream, grey and beige—with the occasional splash of charcoal for emphasis. "The condo is open concept, so when you walk in, you see the whole thing.

We had to consider the sightlines and the overall package," says Karla. "But when the rest of the scheme is neutral, it all works and flows together." It's a happy yet unexpected juxtaposition. Keeping the red kitchen was a bold decision, but clearly the correct one.



Don't ignore the elephant in the room

Because the glossy red kitchen is a large and undeniable focal point, designer Karla Dreyer avoided repeating the colour anywhere else in the condo. "I know it might seem counterintuitive, but you won't see a splash of red anywhere else," she says. Instead, Karla kept the walls and furnishings muted for balance.



Have fun with neutral artwork

The oversized horse print is ideal for this space for several reasons: First, the grey, white and cream hues suit the room's subdued tone-on-tone scheme; second, it acts as a simple graphic counterpoint to the damask-patterned wallpaper; third, it imbues the area with a sense of whimsy.

Use glass and mirror to expand space

In a small space, every square inch counts. Karla made the open-concept living area feel more grand with a modern glass coffee table, which disappears against the furniture and floor. She also wisely hung a mirror above the sofa, which reflects light and almost looks like another window in the already bright room.

Add interest with monochromatic prints

Karla stuck with whites, creams and greys in the petite living area. "Calming neutrals make a room seem bigger," she explains. But the neutrals are far from dull. Here, she had fun layering solids with large- and small-scale patterns in the wallpaper and toss cushions.





Use florals to liven up dead space

Flowers and plants – fresh, faux or dried – are always appropriate for an empty nook you're unsure how to treat.

Keep a light room grounded with black

To balance out the dark TV screen mounted on a partial wall, Karla employed the rule of threes, placing two charcoal occasional chairs underneath. The resulting triangular vignette feels stylish and orderly. The fluffy white mohair toss cushions keep the space from feeling too masculine.



When using red, keep it simple

Karla kept accessories to a minimum in the show-stopping kitchen, letting the red cabinetry and the elegantly veined slabs of marble take centre stage. All of the homeowner's dishes and utensils are neatly tucked away, keeping the emphasis on the kitchen's architecture and bold palette.