

CANADA'S

style at home

inside:
DESIGNERS
SHARE THEIR
**SMALL
SPACE
SECRETS**

make a
**BIG
IMPACT**

DESIGN DRAMA FOR
EVERY ROOM

seating,
STORAGE
& style!
WE ♥
WINDOW
SEATS

HOW TO GET
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tips FROM
THE **pros**



Office Space

Hidden Gem

When jeweller Leah Alexandra went in search of studio space, she found a diamond in the rough tucked inside a historic Gastown building *by Felicity Stone*

Until two-and-a-half years ago, jeweller Leah Alexandra and her employees worked out of her Kitsilano home. When they finally outgrew the space, Alexandra started an office search—looking at one depressing specimen after another before settling on an 870-square-foot unit for sale in Bodega Studios on Carrall Street in Gastown. “When I bought it, it had actually been on the market for six months,” she says. “No one wanted it.”

One of the oldest brick buildings in Vancouver, the Bodega Hotel was built in 1889 and converted to live-work lofts above street-level commercial space in 1992. Alexandra—who says she could “see past all the dumpiness”—decided to retain the wood floors but gutted everything else, installing a new kitchen, bathroom and lighting, and creating an open work space. “Everyone who works here gets along,” says Alexandra. “We have a really great energy. I feel like being in a space that’s so beautiful, it fuels the creative process.”

Alexandra—who celebrates the 10th anniversary of her business in 2016—has three full-time staff: two jewellery makers plus a studio manager who handles orders and shipping. Luca, her six-year-old chocolate Labrador retriever, is a regular fixture.

The floor plan is straightforward: production and shipping stations line up along one wall, tools hang from pegboard over the desks, and drawers of all sizes hold jewellery in various stages from in progress to ready to ship. Gems are organized by colour, and coloured sticky notes indicate orders for different retailers.

Flex tables in the centre are used for meetings, and Alexandra designs new prototypes at her desk beside the window. “I’m not the best drawer,” she says. “I just like to play around with the stones, actually hold things and play around with different combinations.” ■



Corner Office
Alexandra’s inspiration board is “ever-changing,” as is her desk, which adjusts for sitting or standing



Make an Entrance
With the business expanding, the sitting area may be converted to an office for a new employee



Work Stations
In the jewellery-making and production area, tools hung from pegboard are in easy reach



Old Style
Next to the gas fireplace, an antique card-filing cabinet holds finished jewellery filed by style and colour

Design Studio
Alexandra planned the studio renovation herself, giving her a new appreciation for interior designers

A TALE OF TWO SISTERS

A pair of sisters with different spins on style bought condos across the hall from each other - and it was the best of times.

TEXT
BETHANY LYTTLE

PHOTOGRAPHY
TRACEY AYTON

WHEN THEY WERE LITTLE GIRLS, Lauren and Mariel Armstrong shared everything: secrets, clothing and the flair for style they inherited from their mother. "We ended up working together in fashion," says Mariel, referring to PartySkirts, an online shop full of fun and flirty clothes she co-owns with her sister. "But we had no idea that we'd also end

up buying condos in the same city, let alone in the same building and across the hall from each other!" They both hired designer Gillian Segal to imbue their homes with styles that reflect their fashion savvy and personal tastes. The result? Striking spaces that are as similar as they are different: the yin and yang that only the closest of sisters can achieve.



PLAYFUL ROMANCE

Bright and sparkly, Mariel's 1,100-square-foot home is all about fun, with cool tones, shiny objects and bursts of girly colour everywhere. She's the little sister – and her playful personality shines through. "I live in a state of organized chaos," says Mariel with a laugh. "One minute, it's fine. The next, it looks like a bomb went off." Having few furnishings and accessories helps her keep clutter at bay, creating a stylish Parisian-chic aesthetic that feels refined and romantic.

1

MARIEL'S
CONDO



2

LAUREN'S
CONDO



DRAMATIC GLAM

Dark and moody, Lauren's 1,100-square-foot home is the epitome of sophistication and the yin to Mariel's yang. "I wanted this place to be stylish, but not overly feminine," she explains of her penchant for polished style. Rich deep hues provide the perfect backdrop for elegant and edgy furnishings. "I love mixing high with low," says Lauren. She mixes big-box-store finds with custom pieces for an unabashedly glam look.



1
MARIEL'S
CONDO

COMPANY'S COMING

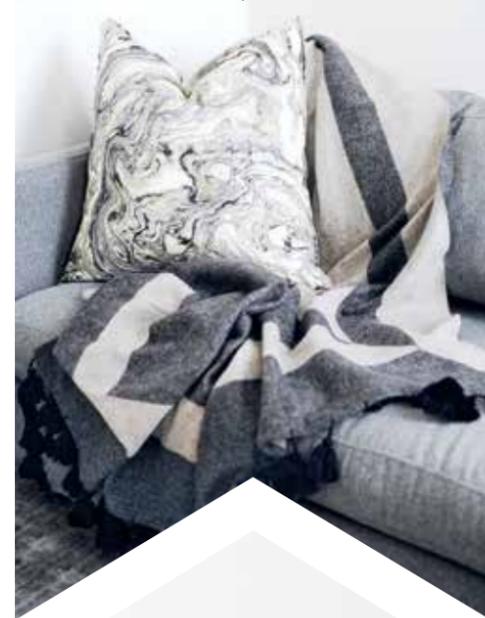
Whether Mariel is hosting friends for cocktails or simply enjoying snacks with her pooch, Herb, the living room is party central. The condo is small, so designer Gillian Segal chose flexible furnishings. The tête-à-tête can be accessed from both the living and dining areas. Meanwhile, the airy sidechairs keep sightlines open and can be moved around as needed. The look is girly modern: sleek and simple but still oh-so ooh-la-la.

PICTURE THIS

"I love photography and fashion," says Mariel. "A shot taken backstage at a fashion show seemed perfectly fitting for me to hang over the fireplace." The blue jacket in the photo became the inspiration for the living room accents – Gillian had the toss cushions made out of a velvet the exact same shade.

LIGHTS, CAMERA...

Nothing says movie star like a pink telephone and a faux fur scarf. But the sculptural spoke-backed sidechairs, with their polished chrome bases, are the real stars of the show, picking up on the shimmery details deployed throughout the rest of the condo – even in the bedroom, where the tufted headboard's trim and toss cushion beading shines.



“EVEN MY DOG SEES
THE CONNECTION
BETWEEN OUR HOMES –
HE OFTEN RUNS
ACROSS THE HALL TO
MY SISTER’S!”



MINIMAL MOMENTS

Since Mariel dines, lounges, entertains and daydreams all in one open-concept space, she wanted it to be refined and adaptable. Gillian paired a neon PartySkirts sign with no-nonsense minimalist pieces, such as a sleek white Saarinen-style dining table (the counterpart to her sister’s black one) and sculptural dining chairs.

PET SMART

The apartment is as much Herb’s place as it is Mariel’s, so the sofa needed to be practical. Gillian opted for a washable slipcover for the seat cushion and suggested an inexpensive rug for the room in case the dog is naughty.



DESIGN, Gillian Segal Design, gilliansegaldesign.com.

LIVING ROOM: Custom **SOFA**, Toss Cushions; Gillian Segal Design; **SIDECHAIRS**, Rove Concepts; **COFFEE TABLE**, The Cross Decor & Design; **FLUSH MOUNT**, Inform Interiors; **CIGAR TABLE**, Peridot Decorative Homewear; **RUG**, Crate and Barrel; *Trenched Glam ART-WORK* (above fireplace) by Ulrich Knoblauch, These-FineWalls; *Kadozia ART-WORK* by Kristen Giorgi, NG Collective Studio.

DINING ROOM: **SIDEBOARD**, The Cross Decor & Design; custom Life is a PartySkirt **NEON SIGN**, Endeavour Neon.

BEDROOM: **BED FRAME**, Jonathan Adler; **PENDANT LIGHT**, Robinson Lighting & Bath Centre; **TABLE LAMPS**, The Cross Decor & Design; **TOSS CUSHIONS**, Peridot Decorative Homewear.

FOR SOURCES, SEE
OUR WORKBOOK

2 LAUREN'S CONDO

DINING DARE

Bold oversized artwork defines the dining room, at once standing out and blending in with the blue undertone of the grey walls. The high-gloss black dining table was another daring move. The reward? A reflective surface that "doubles" everything that's set on top.

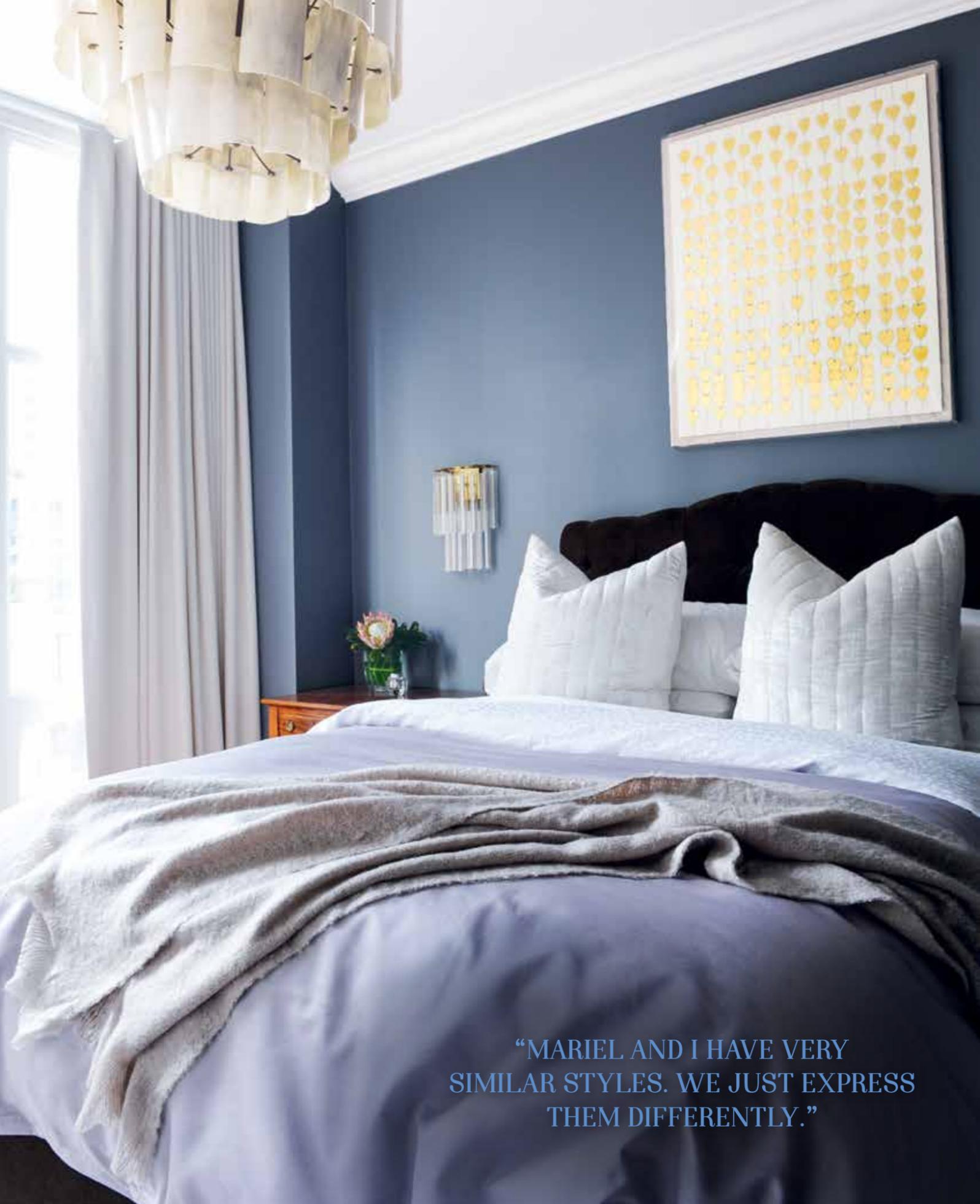
BYE-BYE BORING

"Great design is about taking risks," says Gillian. Lauren agrees. Together they defied convention by using deep hues, though the condo is small, and mixing metals like brass, chrome and bronze (rather than keeping the accents uniform). The result is a space that looks layered, collected – and stylish.

BREAKING RAD

Luxe adornments, such as the neon Love sign (a birthday gift), framed vintage Hermès scarf (used as artwork in the entryway) and crystal and cut-glass collection (displayed on one of the Alexandra von Furstenberg trays that the sisters collect) amp up this condo's cool factor.





“MARIEL AND I HAVE VERY SIMILAR STYLES. WE JUST EXPRESS THEM DIFFERENTLY.”

BEDROOM BLISS

Glimmering gold-leaf heart artwork over the bed reflects Lauren’s romantic nature, while the soft velvet-upholstered headboard from her childhood speaks to her nostalgic side. The bedding’s varied textures lend a luxurious look, as does the warm linen drapery.

CHAIR CHOICES

There’s at least one unexpected element in every room of Lauren’s condo, but in the living room, the über-angular mid-century-style lounge is one of several eclectic pieces. “The chair was Gillian’s idea,” says Lauren, who was thrilled with how well the designer understood her aesthetic. “Working with a professional lets you be you...but better.”



DESIGN, Gillian Segal Design, gilliansegal-design.com; Trout Gray 2124-20 **WALL PAINT** (throughout main living area), Benjamin Moore.

LIVING ROOM: SOFA, The Cross Decor & Design; **LOUNGER**, Rove Concepts; **COFFEE TABLE**, West Elm; white **SIDE TABLE**, CB2; custom **DRAPERY & TOSS CUSHIONS**, Gillian Segal Design; Designers Guild **RUG**, tassel **TABLE LAMP**, Kelly Wearstler lips **SCULPTURE**, Peridot Decorative Homewear; **POUFFE**, Da Vinci’s Home; *Konfiguration VI* **ARTWORK** by Kristen Giorgi, NG Collective Studio.

DINING ROOM: Saa-rinen DINING TABLE, Arper **DINING CHAIRS**, Livingspace; *Maria Tallchief in Turquoise* **ARTWORK** by Dana Claxton, Winsor Gallery; **PENDANT LIGHT**, West Elm.

ENTRYWAY: Zebra-print BENCH, Da Vinci’s Home.

BATHROOM: Pigeon Gray 2133-50 WALL PAINT, Benjamin Moore; **PRINT**, Ashley Woodson Bailey.

BEDROOM: Dior Gray 2133-40 WALL PAINT, Benjamin Moore; **BED FRAME**, white and gold **NIGHTSTAND**, The Cross Decor & Design; custom **DRAPERY**, Gillian Segal Design; **RUG**, Burritt Bros. Carpet & Floors; **PRINT, PENDANT LIGHT, SCONCES**, Peridot Decorative Homewear; custom **LOVE NEON SIGN**, Endeavour Neon.

FOR SOURCES, SEE OUR WORKBOOK

A Vancouver jewellery designer crafts a multi-faceted workspace featuring all the domestic comforts.

HOME AWAY from HOME

TEXT CHRISTY WRIGHT | PHOTOGRAPHY TRACEY AYTON



BELOW Antique-look schoolhouse chairs pack a colourful punch in this Vancouver workspace, while the reclaimed-wood table echoes the casual warmth of the original wood floors. "I think every office should have a large table for communal tasks and meetings," says owner Leah Belford.

CONTRACTING, Pacific Solutions Contracting; Simply White OC-117 **WALL PAINT** (throughout), Benjamin Moore; custom **TABLE**, Folkart Interiors; white **STORAGE UNITS**, **DESK LAMPS**, IKEA; **PRINTS** (all except diamond), The Cross Decor & Design; diamond **PRINT**, Angie Crabtree; **PENDANT LIGHTS**, Barn Light Electric Co.; **PEGBOARD**, The Home Depot.



Look quickly at Leah Belford's office, and you'd be forgiven for thinking it's where she lives. "You won't find any expected elements like fluorescent lighting and cubicles here," she says. "My office is definitely efficient, but it's also cozy, inviting and inspiring."

Three years ago, Leah's company was headquartered in the den of her house (featured in Style at Home's March 2014 issue). The rapid growth of her jewellery business, Leah Alexandra – as well as her desire to augment it with a bricks-and-mortar shop – prompted her to hunt for a workspace away from her home. "I searched online, and it was frustrating," she says. "At best, the places I saw were uninspiring; at worst, they were depressing." But then she spied a posting for an 870-square-foot space in Vancouver's bustling



LEFT, TOP Crisp white with bright pops of colour shift Leah's office into style overdrive. "I love working here," she says.

SHELVING UNIT, IKEA; **WREATH**, The Cross Decor & Design; **STRING LIGHTS**, Rejuvenation.

LEFT & ABOVE Leah (pictured opposite) ditched the space's old beige cabinetry in favour of black-painted maple

with elegant brass pulls. The new L-shaped bar cleverly delineates the kitchen from the work-space while maintaining an open feel that's furthered by clear bar stools. Hard-working materials like the Caesarstone countertops and a subway tile backsplash stand up to everyday wear and tear, and can be easily wiped clean.

CABINETY, Caesarstone; **COUNTERTOPS**, Kitchen Cabinets for Less; Kitty Kitty 8253; **CABINETY PAINT**, Cloverdale Paint; **BACK-SPLASH TILES**, HL Tile Depot; custom **SHELVES**, Pacific Design Lab; **OVEN, REFRIGERATOR**, Trail Appliances; **FAUCET**, Emco Corporation; **STOOLS**, The Cross Decor & Design; **PENDANT LIGHT CORDS**, Restoration Hardware; **PENDANT LIGHT BULBS**, Finnish Design Shop; **CABINETY HARDWARE**, MyKnobs.com.

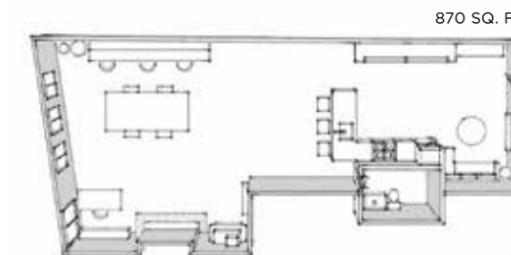
BOTTOM RIGHT The functional gas fireplace cozies up the office on Vancouver's rainy days, and its high-impact wall-paper strikes a dramatic note. The antique cabinets hold jewellery-making supplies and finished pieces.

Rifle Paper Co. **WALL-PAPER**, Hygge & West.

Gastown neighbourhood. "It was zoned as a live-work space, so it had a kitchen, bedroom and bathroom, which appealed to me more than a 'regular' office," says Leah.

The unit, one of eight in an 1893 heritage building, exuded potential, and its less-than-perfect aspects – dated finishes and murky green walls – were eclipsed by the good stuff. "I fell for the original exposed-brick wall, impressive windows that flood the space with light, Douglas fir floors and the open layout." Leah purchased it after just one viewing and immediately began plotting its transformation. "I envisioned Scandinavian serenity: white walls with brass accents first and foremost," she says. "I wanted a practical design that didn't compromise on beautiful details."

FLOOR PLAN



870 SQ. FT.

“I wanted a practical design
**THAT DIDN'T COMPROMISE
 ON BEAUTIFUL DETAILS.**”

LEAH'S
top 5 OFFICE
 ORGANIZING
 TIPS

GET VERTICAL

The pegboard above our work surfaces is a major space saver. It's so helpful to have the things you use the most at your fingertips without cluttering your desk.

LABEL AWAY

Buy a label maker. Never underestimate the power of labelling – it makes finding everything you need so easy.

COLOUR BLOCK

Have a calendar where tasks are listed on small colour-coded Post-it Notes. Being able to move the tasks around to different days – and toss them out when they're complete – is very effective!

ADD INSERTS

I like to separate smaller items in drawers to keep everything tidy. You can buy drawer dividers, or make your own out of cardboard pieces, or repurposed boxes or small jars.

PIN IT UP

I love a pin board because all the collected inspiration becomes its own piece of art. It can also be a useful spot for posting paperwork that needs to be dealt with.



LEFT & RIGHT Outfitted with creature comforts like toss cushions and throws, the lounge area is part meeting space and part rejuvenation station. “There’s no excuse for ugly, utilitarian furniture in an office,” says Leah. “Comfortable furnishings and little touches like artwork and accessories can have such a positive effect.” A fuchsia rug brightens the neutral tones; the geometric table base, which resembles a multi-faceted gem, makes a witty statement in a jewellery design office.

SECTIONAL, IKEA; **COFFEE TABLE**, West Elm; *Je suis à toi* **ARTWORK** by Miriam Aroeste, **TOSS CUSHIONS, THROWS**, The Cross Decor & Design; gem **SCROLL**, Vol.25; **SCONCE**, Cedar & Moss; brass **TABLE LAMP**, Restoration Hardware.

FOR SOURCES, SEE
 OUR WORKBOOK



Six weeks of renovations were required to knock the place into shape. The kitchen, which was ripped back to the studs, saw the biggest transformation. Here, Leah freed up valuable floor space by ditching a cumbersome centre island that had an oven awkwardly placed beside it. Instead, she introduced an L-shaped bar with seating and built-in appliances. “I wanted my team [she has three employees] to have somewhere to comfortably prepare and enjoy lunch as they would at home.” Pendant and pot lights were installed, while white walls were a fresh alternative to the existing drab green.

When it came to the furnishings, Leah avoided the predictable. “I steered clear of the typical office aesthetic at all costs,” she says. The lounge area off the kitchen, formerly a

bedroom, exemplifies her determination to assert a home-away-from-home vibe that is also entirely practical for staff and clients. Instead of a table and chairs, there’s a corner sofa and unexpected accents like cheery toss cushions, a brightly hued area rug and graphic artwork.

Leah then brought this warmth into the workstations without a speck of industrial grey in sight: The desk surfaces are either bright white, channelling the Scandi look she favours, or fashioned from reclaimed wood. “This place is versatile and timeless, much like my jewellery,” she says. “It’s somewhere my staff and customers like to be.” That’s true for Leah, too. “Getting the keys to this space has definitely been the greatest accomplishment of my 11 years in business.”