

WRITER
STACEY McLACHLAN
PHOTOGRAPHER
TRACEY AYTON



Dream Big
An oversized print plastered onto salvaged tin celebrates the homeowner's childhood dream of being a race car driver—a cool custom art piece, done on a budget.

True Grit

Chinatown street art and industrial treasures pair perfectly with hits of feminine charm.

"Popcorn. Rainy days. Lavender plants. Race-car drivers."

When commercial real estate agent Hannah McDonald tapped Jamie Hamilton and Greer Nelson of Oliver Simon Design to reinvent her new Chinatown condo, she probably wasn't expecting to kick off the process with a free-form writing exercise. But the results of her assignment ("write down a list of things you love") provided Hamilton and Nelson with the jumping-off point they needed, race-car drivers and all.

The resulting design is what Hamilton describes as "an industrial, rustic, woodsy cabin with a hint of femininity." Though that may sound incongruous, in practice the space is tightly focused and well curated, a celebration of exposed and weathered textures in soft browns and greys with lush fabrics and fresh-cut flowers thrown in for good measure. "She's a very strong woman with a striking and classic style," says Nelson. "We wanted to nod to that girly side of her while still embracing those rustic elements."



McDonald kept a few meaningful pieces from her previous home—like a childhood stuffed rabbit, displayed on the recessed wood shelf in the bedroom—but for the most part, Nelson and Hamilton were starting from scratch. “I looked at a ton of their work and loved all of it, so I had a lot of trust in them,” McDonald says. “I gave them kind of free rein to do whatever they wanted.” (She reneged on her hands-off policy only once, after falling in love with a rich, worn-leather sofa she found at West Elm.) They looked for items with history to pepper among newer designs: a vintage wooden birdcage displayed alongside skull sculptures from The Cross; McDonald’s surfboard propped up against the wall behind a row of grey West Elm saddle chairs. “We wanted it to be casual but interesting and artful,” explains Hamilton.

The long, narrow space hosts an open plan that makes the most of the modest 600 square feet; a partial wall, dressed in silvery Cole and Son’s Wood wallpaper, divides the cozy bedroom from the kitchen and living area. McDonald, a talented cook with a social streak, is always entertaining, so it was important to design a flexible dining space to accommodate hungry guests. “Space was

Finders Keepers
This bold stencilled artwork (this page) was discovered in an alleyway. Skull sculptures (opposite, top) and a collage from local artist Ronan Boyle (opposite, bottom) add to the edgy vibe.





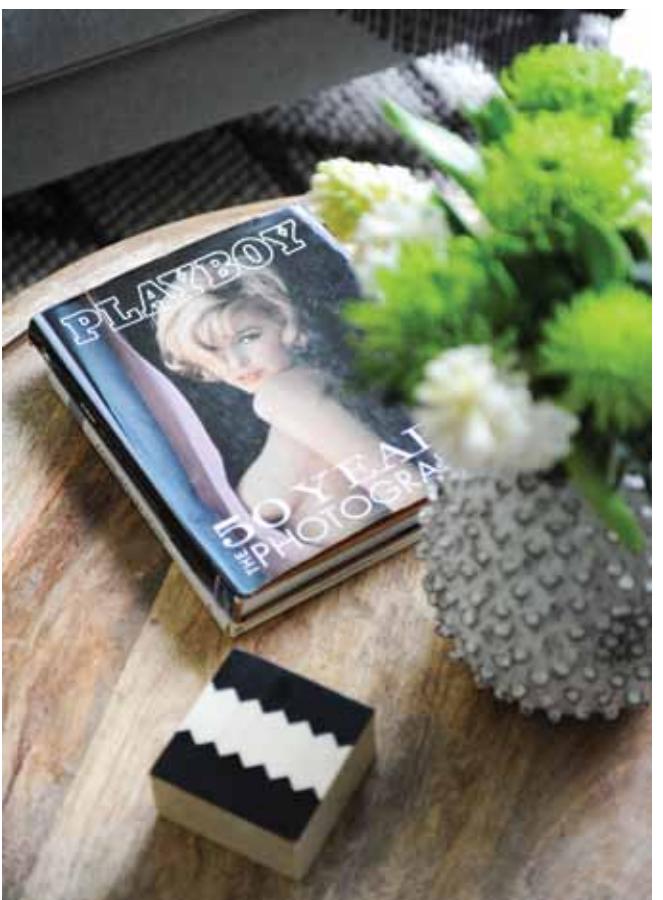
Masterful Misfits
The bed is flanked with mismatched nightstands and table lamps from West Elm, but the bedroom isn't entirely devoid of coordination: the grey and yellow hues nod to the hues in the salvaged corrugated tin headboard.

the number-one challenge for me with this place," she says. Luckily, the designers came up with some smart solutions. A long wooden bench seats six, but tucks easily under the custom Union Wood Co. table when not in use; the kitchen island, too, is on caster wheels to move out of the way in a snap.

Luckily, many of the built-in design elements of the condo—like the dark tile flooring, a modern kitchen and neutral bathroom—didn't need to be touched. "We just had to add some texture to the hard finishes," Nelson explains; a knotted wool rug softens the main living area and a thin cowhide rug warms the floor by the bed. Built-in

cabinets throughout the hallways and bedroom keep clutter hidden away, and the partial wall that separates the sleeping quarters from the kitchen features built-in millwork. The home office was gutted and outfitted with mirrors and rolling racks to create a walk-in closet.

The condo's Chinatown location provided plenty of inspiration to the designers as they set out to plan the space. "We wanted to bring the beauty of the gritty streets into the space in an artful sort of way," says Hamilton. Reclaimed corrugated tin, found in a Ladner shipyard, became a piece of art; Hamilton and Nelson blew up a



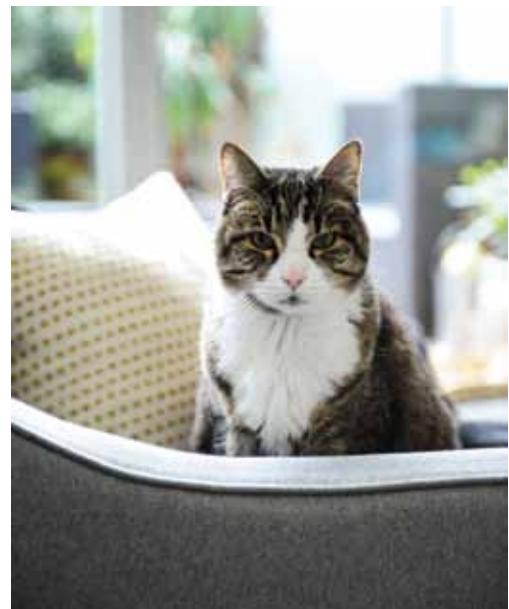
Feminine Touch
After seeing Oliver Simon's work with bachelor pads across the city, homeowner Hannah McDonald was keen to incorporate their penchant for masculine cool into her own space—though plenty of femininity still shines through. Alongside metallic skull sculptures from The Cross (near right) and a custom industrial-chic wood-and-metal table (opposite, bottom right), Oliver Simon tucked in more lady-like touches: a lamp made from natural materials like glass and linen (this page, bottom right) and plenty of fresh flowers (this page, top left; opposite, bottom left).



Going Green

The lush green patio that lies through the patio doors turned out to be one of McDonald's favourite parts of the redesign, to her surprise. "I've never really cared about gardening, but since I moved in, I'm always playing with plants," she laughs. "It's my messy jungle garden oasis."

Many of the built-in design elements of the condo—like the dark tile flooring, a modern kitchen and neutral bathroom—didn't need to be touched. "We just had to add some texture to the hard finishes."



vintage photo of a race-car driver (inspired by McDonald's list of favourite things), printed it on bamboo paper, and plastered it onto the tin. "It was an inexpensive way to do a custom piece," says Hamilton. "Creative juices just started to flow when we started thinking about the local street art." Another bold piece of artwork, hanging in the dining nook, was discovered in a back alley during the Walk for Reconciliation. The stencilled piece of wood has particular significance for McDonald, who is First Nations herself and studied Aboriginal law. There are other reclaimed treasures throughout the home, too: another slab of salvaged tin appears in the bedroom as a headboard; a rescued cabinet was refinished and now acts as a credenza and liquor cabinet along the wall of the living room.

From her list of favourite things has emerged something that McDonald herself never expected. "It's way better than I had even pictured in my head," she says. **CONDO**

Work-Life Balance

Award-winning fashion designer Lorraine Kitsos and her family turned a modern townhouse into a celebration of both work and play.

It's become a rite of passage for homebuyers in Vancouver: that endless search for the right space, finally discovering said perfect place, submitting an offer—only to lose out along with multiple other unsuccessful, crestfallen bidders. And so another dispiriting round begins.

Rob and Lorraine Kitsos were no strangers to this despair. Along with their two young children, they were living in a basement suite in Kitsilano and “kept looking at houses, inevitably falling in love with places but losing everything we bid on,” says Lorraine. Just when she and Rob had all but given up on finding their dream home, they received a call from their realtor, who told them they needed to get to Fairview post-haste for a new listing—they’d hit the jackpot.

The catch: it was a townhouse, not a house—but it was the gorgeous Choklit building by Arthur Erickson. (They had long admired the style of Erickson’s nearby Waterfall building, but not its smaller condo square footage.) The townhouse was large, airy and contemporary—“a very New York feel,” says Lorraine of its soaring ceilings and industrial live/work vibe. They had felt so claustrophobic in their temporary Kits home that the new space’s 2,800 square feet felt large enough for everyone to carve out their own corner to

Continued on page 70



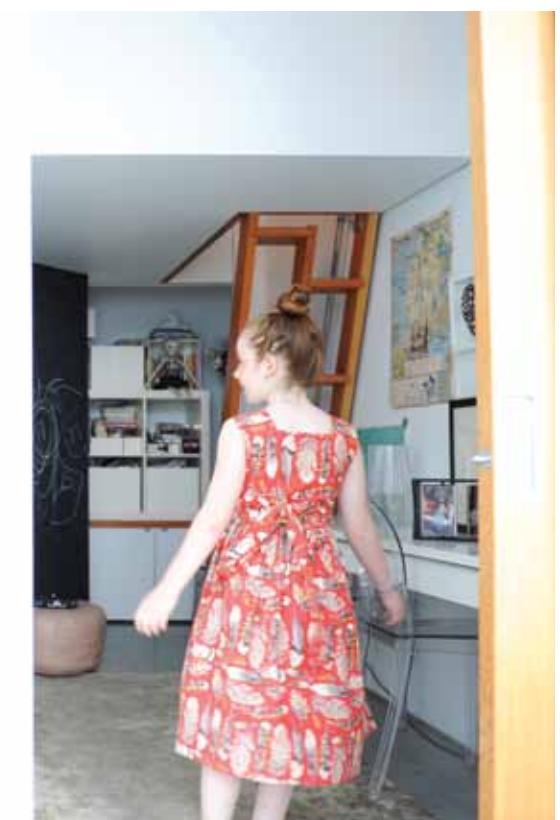
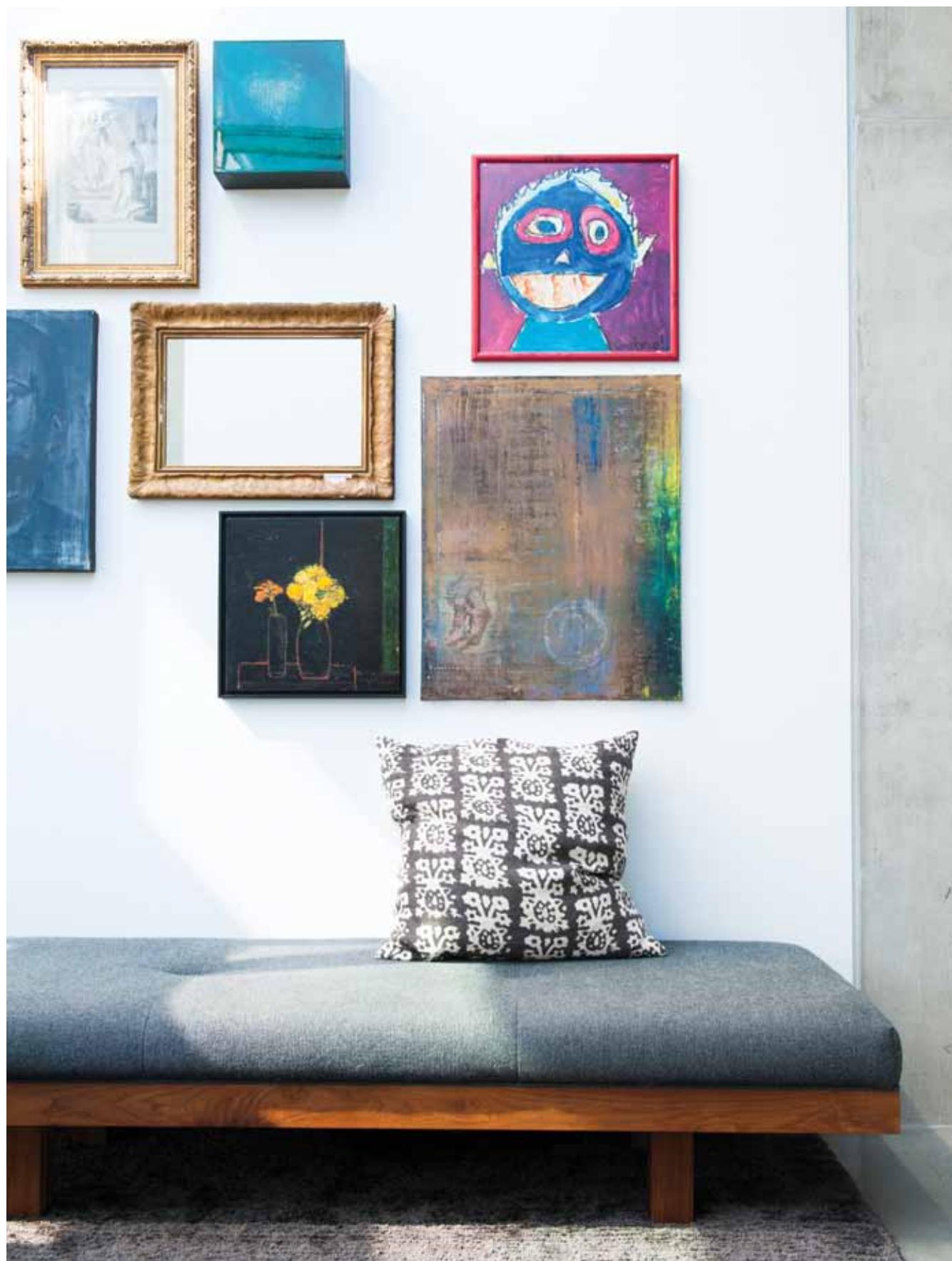
Living Simply
Clothing designer
Lorraine Kitsos’s
recipe for successful
work/play spaces:
clean the clutter
and only own what
you love.



Mix Master
The high-modern kitchen cabinets—made by Snaidero in Italy—look right at home with a distressed wooden table from an antique store in Seattle, flea-market cushions and dining chairs from one of Rob Kitsos's SFU performance collaborations.

Serendipity was at play when they discovered the building was commercially zoned. Their ground-level room now serves as a design studio as well as the family HQ. "When you're a creative person, you tend to work all the time. You never stop," Kitsos explains.





Split Personality

Lorraine and Rob fell in love at first sight with their contemporary townhouse, despite the fact that it had only had one bedroom for both their son and daughter. Their solution: split the large room in half to create mirror opposites that are perfect for the kids.

Photos and memorabilia are constant reminders of the family that lives here. "There are little bits of us everywhere."



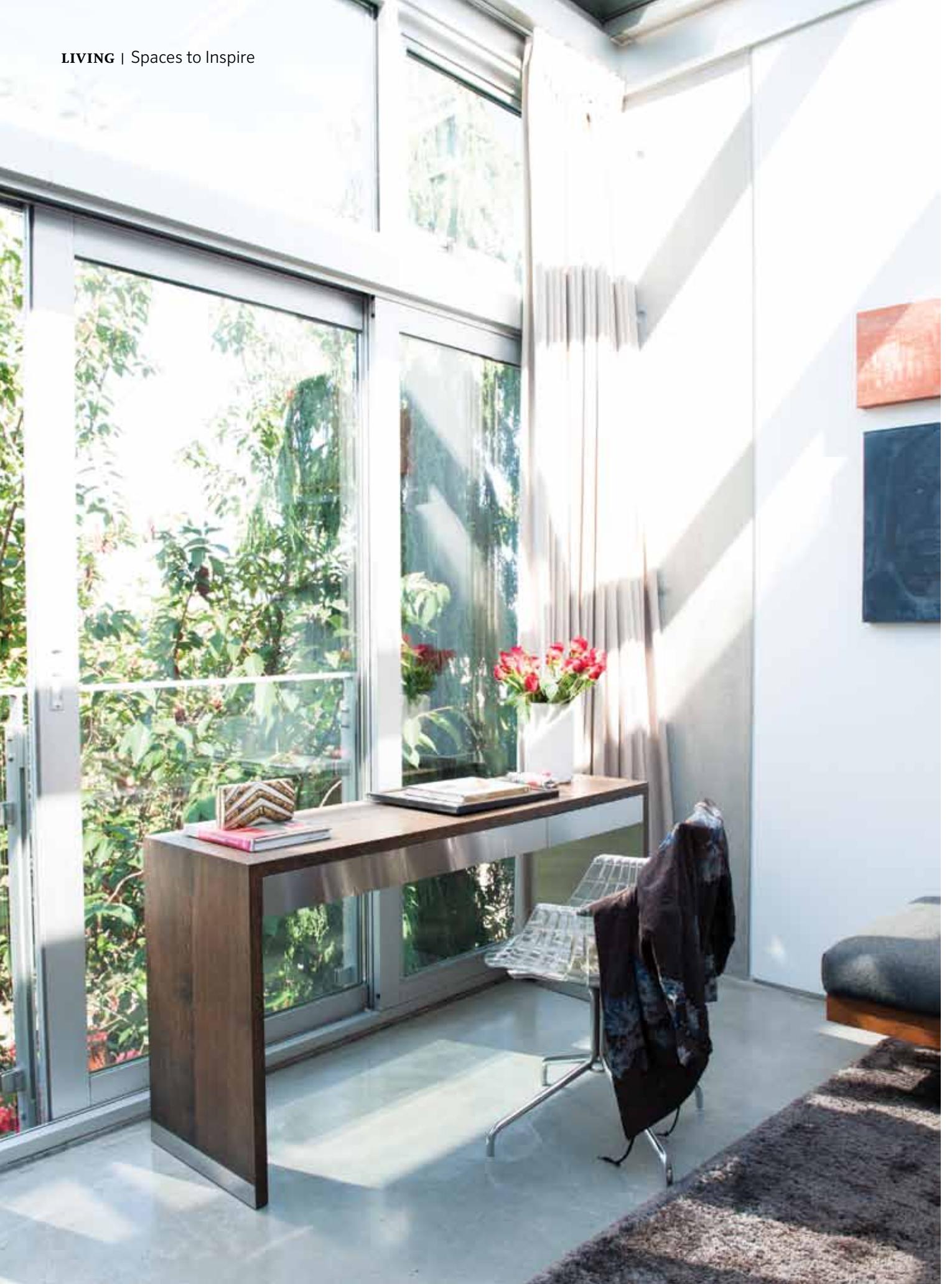
Continued from page 64

create "a strong sense of place," but not so big that it interfered with their busy lifestyle. "We don't need 4,500 square feet, because we couldn't maintain that with our focus on so many other crazy things," adds Lorraine. It was the perfect fit for the family of four.

It also happened to be the perfect space for a couple that works from home. Rob, a professor at Simon Fraser University in the contemporary arts department, is also "a painter, the family cook and a dancer who also plays in a band and is writing a book," laughs Lorraine—though she has a busy schedule of her own, as the creator and designer (named *Western Living's* 2014 Fashion Designer of the Year) behind children's fashion label Redfish Kids. "When you're a creative person, you tend to work all the time. You never stop," she explains, so serendipity was at play when they discovered the building was commercially zoned. Their ground-level room could now serve triple duty as a retail space and design studio as well as the family HQ.

The townhouse's white walls and concrete floors offer the perfect gallery-like blank slate for work to dovetail with their personal lives. "I'm always affected by the beauty in all things—right down to the condiment containers and shampoo bottles," says Lorraine. Dress patterns dangle from an antique Indian door picked up from a flea market in Seattle. Bolts of vibrant Redfish fabrics line the walls, awash in a riot of colour that electrifies an otherwise serene space. Mood boards serve to spark imagination; photos and memorabilia are constant reminders of the family that lives here. "There are little bits of us everywhere."





Bright Idea
Oversized windows and strategically placed skylights (below) fill the space with ample sunshine even on the dreariest Vancouver afternoon. A floating staircase (right) allows light to filter through the space unobstructed.



Elsewhere in the three-bedroom home, the personal and the public, the modern and the historic intersect. An ornate chandelier hangs over the spare living room, while a punch of red comes from an antique chest purchased when the couple lived in Hong Kong. Navy blue velvet chairs from The Cross mingle effortlessly with a Persian rug picked up at an estate sale, all set against the backdrop of modern architecture: a tidy wall of books, floating stairs and lofty ceilings.

While most of the artwork throughout the home is Rob's, the children's works also hang alongside. No heirloom or creative output is too precious to mix with splatter paint or crayons—or toys on the ground. "The kids feel free in all the spaces," says Lorraine. "And it works for everyone because the basic lines are so clean. It doesn't bother me that there's a skateboard or a basketball on the floor, or, worse, right next to something precious of mine."

That relaxed, anything-goes approach works well when you have a dog, two kids and two busy professionals whose day jobs require artistic flow. "I do have friends who worry and fret about scratches and dents," laughs Lorraine. "But I see the therapy that will inevitably come down the road from all that stress. In here, it's the creative unleashed!" CONDO