

*VANCOUVER  
INTERIOR  
DESIGNER  
STEPHANIE  
BROWN  
TRANSFORMS  
A '70s CONDO  
INTO A WHITE  
AND GOLD  
STUNNER.*

*by STEVEN SCHELLING  
photographs by JANIS NICOLAY*



# BRIGHT MOVES





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ike many Calgary transplants, when interior designer Stephanie Brown moved to Vancouver three years ago, she assumed her coastal-living fantasy would include a pad in the beachside neighbourhood of Kitsilano, one just the right size for her and Jasmine, her black-and-white rescue cat.

Then she met her partner, John Stimac, and found herself part of a blended family that included his goldendoodle, Sophie. Ultimately, square footage trumped geography and Brown purchased a 900-square-foot condo on a quiet cul-de-sac in the city's Arbutus Village. Built on a former golf course in the mid-1970s, the planned community of brown-brick apartment blocks and wood-framed townhomes was constructed for empty nesters who were looking to downsize from their historic mansions but were equally determined to stay in the neighbourhood.

For almost a year, she lived in the space—with its stippled ceilings, 1970s shag carpet, papered walls and walled-in kitchen—while she and Stimac, a contractor, renovated his bachelor townhouse across town. "I still don't remember why his place got to go first," she says jokingly of the Townhouse 15 project that won her an Interior Designers Institute of British Columbia Award of Merit in 2013. "But then living here in this space really allowed me to envision what I wanted to do with it. John and I make a good team—it's like a hobby for us."



**Into The White**  
Though there are many white accents in designer Stephanie Brown's home, a mix of textures keeps the space looking anything but plain: a marble-topped table from The Cross Restoration Hardware

(opposite), and in the living room, monochromatic Chinese screens bring sculptural interest to the wall (this page)—though Brown broke her own rule when she first painted the cherry-wood screens white. "I always tell my clients, 'You can't paint the wood!'" she laughs.

*"I just love gold on white," Brown says. "It mimics what's happening in fashion and I think it will always be a classic combination."*



**Midas Touch**

White marble kitchen countertops and a glass tile backsplash (opposite) provide an elegant blank slate for future design experiments. Gold drawer pulls from Anthropologie and a gold faucet from Robinson Lighting and Bath

act as glamorous accents. Golden touches pop up elsewhere in Brown's home, too: an accent wall decked out in gold-flecked wallpaper elevates a simple work station (top right) and provides a pretty backdrop for a gallery of treasured white-framed photographs.

For her own space, Brown chose a light, airy and decidedly feminine theme, in contrast to the dark, masculine decor of the previous townhouse project. The wall separating the foyer from the natural light of the west-facing living room windows was the first to go. The demolition also revealed her first major obstacle: a metal telephone conduit that ran through the building from top to bottom. She didn't want or need a home phone, although the building's entry system is dependent on a land line.

Brown's solution was to encase the phone lines inside a three-foot-wide dividing wall that plays double duty. On the foyer side, the wall features a floor-to-ceiling mirror flanked by sconces. On the reverse, recessed shelves, also flanked by identical sconces, are perfectly centred to the inch on the combined living and dining room. "I'm a slave to symmetry," Brown says with a smile—though she admits she was still determined to keep the open, natural beach feeling she had pursued from Calgary to Vancouver. To that end, walls were painted in a pure white with accents of golden-sheened grasscloth. A few feet from the generous entry hallway were requisitioned to create a glassed-in

# Q&A

## How would you describe your personal style?

It's an eclectic mix, but there's a formula to it. I start with a bright, open and modern backdrop. Then I add random things I love: art, textiles, furniture and sculptural pieces. They could be splurges or flea-market bargains, modern or traditional, it doesn't matter. It seems the things that speak to me all coexist nicely together.

## What are the key ingredients for a perfect night in?

A relaxing bubble bath, making dinner with my partner, then settling in for a Netflix marathon. All with wine.

## What's your favourite piece?

My bed. I love the traditional, feminine lines of it.

## What's an item that's still on your wish list?

A shagreen-clad tray for the coffee table. I love the textural quality, and it would help corral other objects.

## What's one design trick you often come back to?

Open shelving in the kitchen. It's nice having dishes and cookware ready at hand, and it helps break up the monotonous look of upper cabinets.

## What three things are always in your fridge?

Sparkling water, prosciutto and cheese.

## What are three of your favourite design stores in town?

Peridot, The Cross and Provide.

## What do you like most about living and working in the West?

The year-round green spaces and amazing views make it special. It's inspiring to have the ocean and mountains at my doorstep, especially as a born-and-raised prairie girl. Here, we embrace indoor-outdoor living to a greater degree, and let stunning views be the star of the home.

## Off The Wall

Brown lined the wall behind the headboard with Ikea mirrors to increase the light in the small space (right). For the feature wall in the bathroom (below), she selected an angular chevron pattern that contrasts the oval free-standing tub.



spa tub and standing shower, complete with a two-toned grey marble tile feature wall in a chevron pattern and brushed gold fixtures.

White appliances, cabinets and a porcelain sink were installed in the newly opened kitchen for a feeling of space and openness. Some of the brass drawer pulls are modelled on nautical rope ties, while others have white bone handles. "I just love gold on white," Brown says. "It mimics what's happening in fashion and I think it will always be a classic combination."

In the living room, the feature piece is a vintage glass-topped table supported by four brass mounts attached to faux elephant tusks—an online find from Miami. Three Chinese window screens hang on the main living room wall. They were originally dark cherry red, and Brown "hemmed and hawed" for weeks about painting them white.

"It's funny because I say to so many of my clients, 'You can't paint the wood! Don't touch the original wood!'" she laughs. "But I eventually convinced myself that the screens were better suited as sculptural elements that played on light and shadow. Now I can't believe I ever hesitated!" **ML**