

ABOVE & BEYOND



Montreal designers
Alexandre Blazys (standing)
and Benoit Gérard of
BlazysGérard.

A PAIR OF MONTREAL DESIGNERS TRANSFORM A
FACTORY LOFT INTO A RETREAT FOR A BUSY ACTRESS.

Text by **BARBARA SGROI** | *Photography by* **ADRIEN WILLIAMS**

Produced by Valérie Morisset/Portrait by André Ridier



A-LIST STYLE

Velvet Sofa

The Old Hollywood glamour and sink-in luxury of a velvet sofa makes it the best seat in the house.

A plush cobalt sofa provides a hit of soft texture. "Our client is very sensitive to how things feel against her skin. She likes sensual fabrics like velvet and cashmere," says Alexandre. **Chandelier**, Anthropologie; **sofa**, Élément de Base; **tree trunk side table**, MA Mobilier Actuel; **drapery fabric**, Kravet Canada.

OPPOSITE: A tall bookcase creates a sense of intimacy in the living area and provides a tidy way for the homeowner to display personal treasures. "She's not one to hide things away," says Benoit. "She likes to be surrounded by beautiful things." To create a more private principal bedroom, Benoit and Alexandre added a wall behind the bookcase, which also allowed them to build in a two-storey walk-in closet. **Coffee table**, CB2.





she had fallen *tête-over-heels* for a space in a converted turn-of-the-century factory.

Located in Montreal, the roughly 1,500-square-foot loft with a second-storey crawl space felt like a dark, edgy men's club. Nevertheless, Alexandre and Benoit's client was willing to overlook the faults and embrace what she loved most about the space — nearby restaurants, a neighbourhood farmers' market, large windows — and fantasize about what it could become. "She wanted something comfortable, airy and luminous, and she got cement floors and black marble instead," jokes Alexandre. The BlazysGérard team set out to infuse the space with its new owner's modern feminine style.

Not surprisingly, the loft's 14-foot-high ceilings proved to be both a blessing and a burden, the challenge being creating warmth and intimacy in the large, open space, while retaining the light-filled loft feeling. The designers began by dividing the main floor into zones to define different spaces, which entailed adding a wall to separate the principal bedroom from the living area, as well as installing a glass partition at the entryway. To make the space feel cosy, the bedroom's slick, epoxy-painted cement floor was covered in oak and teak herringbone parquet that had to be painstakingly matched to the floors throughout the rest of the loft.

It's not always easy to align your dreams and desires with practical considerations, even for a star. Although the original plan was to totally erase and redesign the dark kitchen, jettisoning the lacquered

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MANY WAYS, ACTORS seem like rare creatures; the demands of fame and their luxury lifestyle can be difficult to relate to for most people. In other ways, though, they're just like us: at the end of a long day, celebrities want to come home to a place that

feels perfectly and uniquely like *them*.

For Montreal designers Alexandre Blazys and Benoit Gérard of BlazysGérard, working with star power is familiar territory. Their client list contains more than a few boldface names, including radio and TV personality Isabelle Racicot and actress Sarah-Jeanne Labrosse. But last year, when an award-winning star asked them to check out her new loft, they were surprised to see that

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A-LIST STYLE

Oversized Chandelier

Swapping a puny light fixture for a showstopping chandelier amps up both the wattage and the wow factor.

The homeowner found this antique wooden dining table in Québec's Eastern Townships. Alexandre and Benoit added custom white-lacquered benches to complete the sleek look. "We chose benches rather than chairs because we didn't want to overcrowd the space," says Benoit. "It's like a modern picnic table." Large-scale art, casually placed on the floor, and pendant lights give the dining area a "country vibe that reflects the client's casual, market-to-table approach to cuisine," says Alexandre. **Bench fabrication**, Niels Jensen; **artwork** by Nadia Myre; **acrylic box** (on dining table), Encadrex; white **plant holder**, Finnish Design Shop.

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A-LIST STYLE

Spiral Staircase

Part sculpture, part space-saver and all drama, this iron staircase creates a focal point that guarantees a dramatic entrance.



TOP LEFT: A sculptural staircase leads to a guest bedroom and office. In the lower-level lounge, an antique settee was updated with white paint and sage green velvet. *Sofa fabric, Kravet Canada; glass partition, Portes Sésame; rug, Tapis H. Lalonde & Frère.*

TOP RIGHT: The lively wood grain of quartersawn oak cabinetry adds warmth to the kitchen. To complement the loft's new light and airy look, Bianco Gioia marble replaced the original black honed marble countertops.

Countertop, backsplash tile, Italbec.

BOTTOM RIGHT: A metal shelf suspended from the ceiling provides extra storage and defines the kitchen area without blocking the natural light that pours in through a skylight. Details such as velvet-covered barstools and unexpectedly delicate light fixtures inject glamour. *Millwork, Ébénisterie JDL; custom metal shelving, Serge Cantin; pendants, Atelier Anaka; stools, Industry West; stool upholstery fabric, Kravet Canada.*





black cabinetry proved difficult. “The quotes were way too expensive, so we got creative,” says Alexandre. They opted to keep the dark lower cabinetry to ground the space, but introduced quartersawn oak uppers and panelling to warm things up.

Using the transformative power of paint, Alexandre and Benoit had the loft’s walls, black beams and columns, and dark grey ceiling painted white to give the space a more luminous look.

Fortunately, their client sought out and brought in several key pieces, which not only kick-started the mood and the design of the interiors, but also reflected her vibrant personality. There’s a cinematic quality to the spiral staircase she found while antique shopping in Quebec’s Eastern Townships, which leads to a guest bedroom and office. A dramatic chandelier she fell in love with now dangles from the ceiling in the living area like a giant, red carpet-worthy earring. And, just as soon as it was rolled out in the living area, the large, traditional Kuzak-style rug she bought while shooting on

After a day on set, the homeowner retreats to a tranquil bedroom with dark green feature walls (inspired by a hue in the living area rug) and a streamlined four-poster bed piled with handmade blankets and oversized pillows. **Wall colour**, Hunter Green (2041-10), Benjamin Moore; **bed**, CB2; **lamp**, Aero Studios; **bench**, Anthropologie; **rug**, Crate & Barrel; **nightstand**, Montréal Moderne.



location became a star player. The rug also provided the inspiration for the entire loft’s soft, natural palette.

“She was very involved in the design process, participating in countless meetings and discussions about how to use the space,” says Alexandre. “She also approved all the fabrics and paint colours.” A hundred Post-it notes and phone calls later, particularly regarding the loft’s stunning new kitchen, the four-month-long renovation was complete. “She wanted a home that reflects who she is and what she likes,” says Alexandre. “I want people to walk in and think: this is so her.” **H&H**

TOP LEFT: Large ceramic tiles and an ornate pendant light are a play on scale in the bathroom. **Pendant**, Flos; **tub, fixtures, tiles**, Ramacieri Soligo.

Photography by André Rider (kitchen, bedroom)

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To see inside Alexandre Blazys and Benoit Gérard’s own condo, visit houseandhome.com and click on the current issue

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