

• CALGARY •

DESIGNER *of the* YEAR

Calgary designer
Nam Dang-Mitchell
masters the
art of standout
spaces with
luxe-but-edgy style.

Text by WENDY JACOB
Photography by COLIN WAY

NAM DANG-MITCHELL came to the Prairies by way of Paris (she was born there while her mother was studying at the Sorbonne), and it shows. Scroll through her Instagram feed and you'll see countless examples of the same effortlessly chic style that all French women seem to have built into their DNA. What sets Nam apart, though, is her unique ability to recreate that sumptuous glamour in interior designs that still read as approachable and livable.



STATEMENT MANTEL
In contemporary spaces, Nam lets traditional antique mantelpieces inject a touch of history.

NAM'S SIGNATURE MOVES



LUXE PRINTS
Nam relies on wallpaper — like this hand-painted beauty by Gracie — to animate accent walls or highlight an architectural feature.



BLACK LIGHT FIXTURES
Nam has an affinity for Serge Mouille-style chandeliers and articulated sconces.



GRAPHIC TILE
From punchy backsplashes to high-contrast flooring, Nam embraces lively tile patterns, especially in her own kitchen.



Adopting an orphaned baby elephant in Kenya.



ABOVE: Boho camping in Tulum, Mexico.

RIGHT: On point at the Capitoline Museums in Rome.



LEFT: Showing off a Distilled Beauty Bar pedi. RIGHT: Blending in at a Beverly Hills cactus garden.



"I THINK A HOME CAN INSPIRE SOMEONE TO BE THE BEST VERSION OF THEMSELVES"

Nam studied fine arts as a photography major at the University of Calgary but she wasn't sure what career path to take after graduating. "I loved magazines; I'd had a complete obsession with them since I was a teen," she says. "But there weren't many in Calgary, so I went to the library to pore over old issues of *Communication Arts* — and that's how I fell in love with graphic design." She made some layout mock-ups using her own photography and soon landed a job as a designer at an ad agency, eventually becoming its youngest VP of design.

After leaving the agency to co-found McKinley Dang Burkart, an interior design and architecture firm, Nam got her wish to work in magazines, serving as creative director of *Avenue* in 2001 as a five-month project. Then, in 2015, she founded her eponymous interior design firm; it wasn't long before the business was flourishing. Nam's passion for interior design is undeniable. "I love

the aspirational aspect of building a dream home; it feeds into the romance of an ideal life," she says. "I think a home can inspire someone to be the best version of themselves."

House & Home took note of Nam's talent in 2011 and, since then, she's become a staple on our magazine's pages. Last year, Nam won *H&H*'s People's Choice Award for Home of the Year after wowing readers with a character-packed new-build in Calgary. Nam's kitchens are especially outstanding — she says they reflect a homeowner's essence — and often feature details such as custom faceted islands and nickel-trimmed vent hoods. "I can't design a house until I figure out what the kitchen looks like," she says. "It informs the rest of the house. I also get insights from the way a homeowner dresses: are they casual or more formal?"

To be clear, in a NDM-designed home, "casual" may read "effortless," but it's always as polished and photogenic as the designer herself. Whether

Photography courtesy of Nam Dang-Mitchell via Instagram (Kenya, Mexico, Rome, skateboarding, Beverly Hills, Nam at desk)



NAM AND H&H THROUGH THE YEARS

2011



In November, we call out Nam as a designer to watch.

2012

The following January, we feature her entire Calgary home.



2013



Nam's living room is highlighted in October's "Design Lesson."

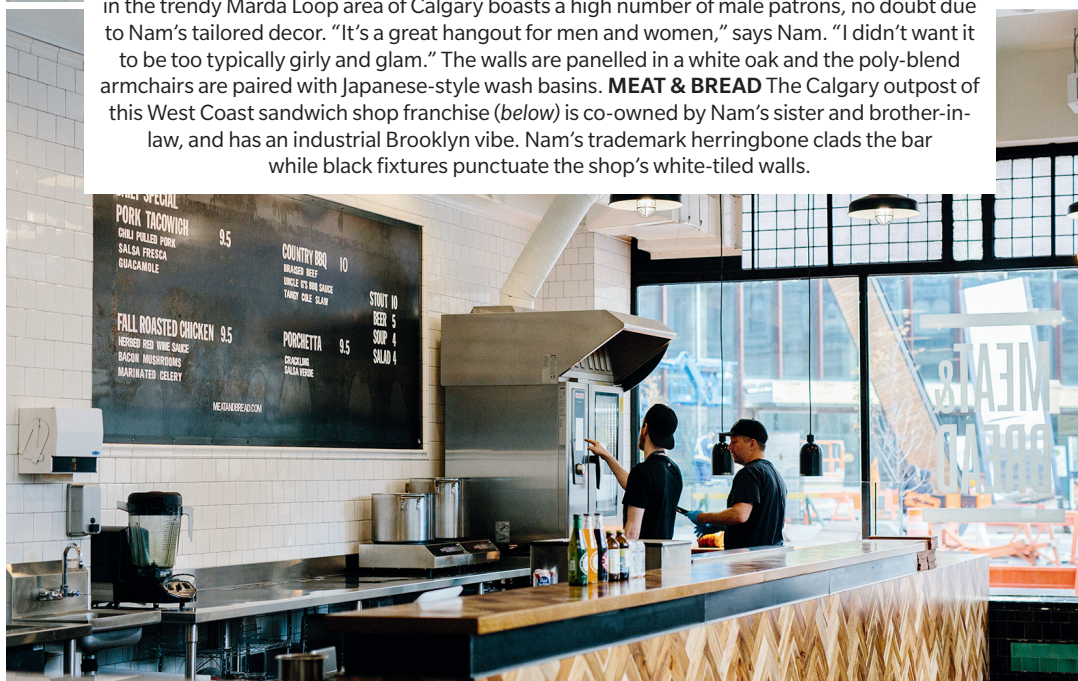
she's at an elephant orphanage in Kenya or floating in a Mexican *cenote* (an avid traveller, Nam's Insta account boasts more than 34,000 followers), her life in pictures is the model of high style.

In fact, travel with her husband, developer James Mitchell, and daughter Hunter, 16, and son Tao, 14, plays a large role in shaping her design work. "In North America, we're so used to massive kitchen islands that are the size of a car," she says. "When our family was in the south of France, we gathered around one that was only two feet wide. It was more conducive to conversation and so much cosier." She's also not afraid to use swaths of white marble, a staple in many French kitchens. "It's so beautiful to see the warmth of natural materials," she says. "They just get better with age and wear. People need to get over it if their marble gets stained with red wine!" Although Nam could even make wine rings look aspirational.



WHERE TO SPEND TIME IN NAM'S WORLD

DISTILLED BEAUTY BAR & SOCIAL HOUSE This chic beauty bar (*above left and right*) in the trendy Marda Loop area of Calgary boasts a high number of male patrons, no doubt due to Nam's tailored decor. "It's a great hangout for men and women," says Nam. "I didn't want it to be too typically girly and glam." The walls are panelled in a white oak and the poly-blend armchairs are paired with Japanese-style wash basins. **MEAT & BREAD** The Calgary outpost of this West Coast sandwich shop franchise (*below*) is co-owned by Nam's sister and brother-in-law, and has an industrial Brooklyn vibe. Nam's trademark herringbone clads the bar while black fixtures punctuate the shop's white-tiled walls.



2016

Nam (in a signature stunning kitchen) is our cover star.



2017

Nam's design of a Georgian-style, new-build home in the May issue drew enough votes to make her The People's Choice for Home of the Year.



2018



The April issue showcases Nam's makeover of her own basement, complete with custom Ping-Pong table and plenty of smart budget ideas.

2019

The Townhouses by NDM will be launched in South Calgary in 2019. "I wanted to create a stylish and unfussy elegance," says Nam. The luxe, three-bedroom homes have rooftop decks and backyard fireplaces.

