

Continental



IT'S HARD TO FIT IN and stand out at the same time. The classic Georgian architecture Mark and Skye McLean chose for their new-build home blends with its tony Mount Royal neighbours in Calgary. But after designer Nam Dang-Mitchell reviewed the plans for the 4,000-square-foot house, she felt the interiors should look more like the owners themselves: hip, energetic and young. Candidly, she told the couple: “Whether you hire me or not, please don’t fill this house with typical taupe-y stuff. You’re too young for that!” They quickly agreed, and she set about creating youthful, bright, unfussy spaces for the busy parents and their two children Caden, 7, and Keira, 5.

TOP LEFT: In the foyer, designer Nam Dang-Mitchell mixed limestone and Bianco Carrara marble, cut into parallelograms, to create interest underfoot. **Tile, Stone Tile; artwork, RH Restoration Hardware.**

Stepping inside reveals an expert fusion of historic and new — Nam’s specialty. “We wanted the inside to complement the exterior,” says Nam. “But we were also inspired by those European apartments where the walls are painted white, creating a modern sparseness that everything else pops

shift

DESIGNER NAM DANG-MITCHELL UPS THE COOL FACTOR IN A CALGARY FAMILY HOME WITH AN INFUSION OF EUROPEAN STYLE.

Text by **MATTHEW HAGUE** | Photography by **COLIN WAY**



Homeowners Mark and Skye McLean, with children Keira and Caden, in their sunlit living room. A coffered ceiling gives the space historic charm, while ottomans reupholstered in kid-friendly vinyl add contemporary texture. **Chairs, ottomans, 1stdibs; sofa, RH Restoration Hardware; ceiling fixture, Apparatus; wall colour (throughout), Swiss Coffee (33-5), Pratt & Lambert.**

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RIGHT: Dark inset shelves provide contrast, while a marble Empire mantel — one of two in the house — is a salvage find from France. “They really are room-makers, adding so much gravitas,” says Nam. **Sconces** by Aerin, *Visual Comfort*.

against. You can pull off minimal when you have a good envelope: tall ceilings and great light.” As a point of departure, Mark, Skye and Nam — all big travellers — envisioned historic London flats and Parisian townhouses (think elaborate crown moldings and inlaid floors) made vibrant by well-curated contemporary art and iconic modern furniture.

Translating that across-the-pond refinement to a just-built Calgary home wasn’t as difficult as it might seem. In the light-filled living room, where the couple quietly unwinds at the end of the day, the coffered ceiling, classic French doors and elegant Empire fireplace create a stately setting for vintage 1960s sling chairs designed by modern master Pierre Paulin and curvy 1950s Serge Mouille lighting. “Both Skye and I love mid-century modern furniture,” says Mark, who works in the tech industry, while Skye is a mortgage broker. “We knew those pieces would look at home here.”

The large, open kitchen has the same irreverent mix. It’s swathed in marble like a kitchen in a grand European estate, and boasts riveted nickel accents that recall old world craftsmanship. But a mod table, Wishbone-style stools and wire chairs keep it casual enough for everyday dinners. The space is now their go-to spot for entertaining and spending time as a family. “Even when we have guests over, we’re mainly in the kitchen,” says Mark. “The design matches our lifestyle perfectly,” adds Skye.

Entering the principal bedroom through the tailored vestibule is like checking into a suite at a fine hotel. The spacious room occupies half the second floor and is spare and serene, decorated with little



more than white walls and a bed. The windows overlook the neighbourhood treetops, and there’s no TV or other unnecessary distractions. “It’s calming and subtle,” says Mark. A true oasis.

Mark and Skye had previously lived in a suburban home without custom touches. The difference is “amazing,” says Skye, simply. “This is our long-term house,”

adds Mark. “It’s designed for us to stay in.” Maybe so, but they still find themselves daydreaming about going through the design process again. Every time Nam posts a new project on Instagram, Skye considers building another home. For now, she’s dreaming of a cottage — and another opportunity to breathe new life into a space.

Mark and Skye both come from big families, so the dining room needed to have space for a crowd. A large, contemporary table, ringed by graphic chairs, can comfortably sit up to 14. **Light fixture**, Apparatus; **artwork** by Bence Bakonyi; chair **upholstery fabric**, Pierre Frey.





“The hood fan is the focal point of kitchens these days,” says Nam. “We decided to hide all the seams with polished nickel and a riveted detail,” balancing classic craftsmanship and clean-lined design. A mix of dark-stained walnut and white cabinetry is crisp and tailored. **Large pendant** by Thomas O’Brien (over table), Visual Comfort; **glass pendants** (over island), Niche Modern; **range**, Wolf; **table**, Rove Concepts; **wire chairs**, West Elm; **barstools**, Bungalow 5.



FRESH INGREDIENTS

Known for her standout kitchens, Nam dishes on the unique features of this space.

1. BOLD FRIDGES

“I love that you can custom-panel these Sub-Zero fridges. We tricked out this duo with walnut panelling and polished-nickel trim.”

2. HISTORICAL HARDWARE

“The inset ring pulls on the topmost cabinets are so classic — they’re similar to the ones that were originally in my own 100-year-old house.”

3. REEDED-GLASS CABINETS

“Glass-front cabinets can be a nightmare to keep tidy; reeded glass is more forgiving and harks back to kitchens from the ‘30s and ‘40s.”

4. SUPERTHICK MARBLE

“Securing grey and white marble can be competitive in Calgary, so I jumped on these Statuario slabs for the island. They really ground the space.”



Full-height windows and doors surround the kitchen’s eat-in dining area. A mature ficus tree makes the indoor-outdoor transition complete.



TOP LEFT: Double doors and graphic photography instill a gallery vibe in the entry to the principal bedroom. **Flooring** (throughout), Nu-Way Floor Fashions; **photograph** by Billy & Hells, Lumas.
TOP RIGHT: In Mark's office, modern furniture and limed oak built-ins create a handsome space. **Desk, bentwood stool, Inmod.**
BOTTOM RIGHT: The second-floor guest bath has a refined look thanks to a pair of slim brass sconces and herringbone-patterned wall tile. **Sconces** by Thomas O'Brien, Visual Comfort; **wall tile, Daltile; mirror, RH Restoration Hardware; faucet, Aquabross.**

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 - Nam Dang-Mitchell, designer



Nam chose Cole & Son's Circus wallpaper to complement the clean-lined, custom-made mantel in Mark's office. **Armchair**, Homenature; **sconces** by Aerin, Visual Comfort; framed **photograph**, Lumas.





WHEN YOU WALK INTO KEIRA'S ROOM AND THOSE CLOUDS ENVELOP YOU, YOU JUST FEEL LIKE A KID AGAIN! - Nam Dang-Mitchell, designer



ABOVE: A soft pink coverlet, throw pillows and drapes create a pretty, yet serene envelope in daughter Keira's bedroom. **Linens**, RH Restoration Hardware; **throw pillow and drape fabric** by Schumacher, **throw pillow and drapery trim** by Lee Jofa, DWA Interior Furnishings; **light fixture**, Black Rooster; **feather headress** (on wall), Etsy. **OPPOSITE:** "I love using Cole & Son's Nuvolette pattern," says Nam of the statement-making wallpaper. "It adds such a sophisticated whimsy— perfect for the young lady who sleeps here." **Andy Warhol ice cream print**, Posters.com; **chair, rug**, RH Restoration Hardware.



TOP LEFT: A hex-patterned marble floor in the principal ensuite is a nod to design icon David Hicks. The drama is played up by a dark custom vanity topped with a deep apron in heavily veined stone. **Fixtures, Kohler; floor tile, Saltillo Imports.**

TOP RIGHT: The marble mantel and inlaid-frame mirror add quiet glamour to the principal bedroom. White oak floors in a chevron pattern run through much of the house. "It took many tries to keep the raw, natural colour of the wood," says Nam, who used an eco-friendly, nontoxic finish. "We didn't want a 1970s yellow." **Mirror, HomeSense.**

BOTTOM LEFT: "Mark and Skye didn't want a TV in their bedroom," says Nam. "This helped create that feel of a great, luxurious hotel room." A two-armed Serge Mouille sconce contrasts nicely with the traditional chandelier. **Chair, Rove Concepts; chandelier, RH Restoration Hardware.**

The tub in the principal bathroom is placed on a dynamic angle. To make a bathroom seem softer and more luxurious, Nam often frames a tub in lush, floor-to-ceiling drapes. **Tub**, Aquabraxx; **side table**, Jonathan Adler; **drape sewing** (throughout), Bonnie's Blind Ambition; **sconces**, Visual Comfort.

