

ENOVATE! 25 GREAT TIPS

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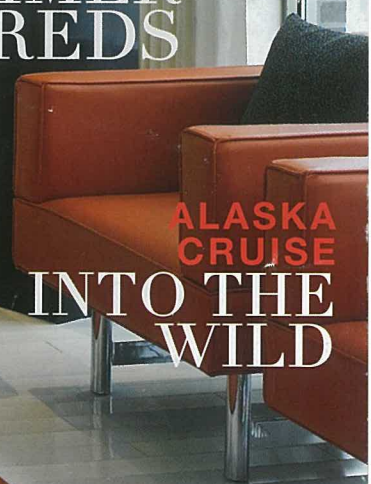
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Rather than leave the area they'd grown to love, a Vancouver couple transform their home into an airy oasis.

BY ANICKA QUIN

Room

REAR EXTERIOR: The wall that sections off the living area continues outside to the front and rear of the home, connecting indoors and out. DINING AREA: Bifold doors slide out of sight, allowing the couple to extend their entertaining area outdoors.

to Move

PHOTOGRAPHS & STYLING BY HEATHER ROSS

space dedicated to the couple's extensive wine glass collection. "We wanted the kitchen to be open, but I didn't want to have a kitchen island in the end of the house," says Marsha Sturges, who has embedded the island in the wall. "I love it," she says. "It's a great piece of furniture." The neighbourly living room is now dramatically transformed.

They had tried to move on. The homeowners had been in their 2,700-square-foot bungalow in Vancouver's Dunbar neighbourhood for six years, but it wasn't meeting their needs. The dark and boxy rooms that carved up the space made it nearly impossible to entertain, and their growing art collection—including originals from Gordon Smith and Bratsa Bonifacho—wasn't given the presentation space it deserved.

But nothing else they found on the market was quite right either: the master bedroom was too large, or the entertaining area too small. So, after a year of dragging friend and designer Céline Pitre to homes all over the city, Pitre took matters into her own hands: over Christmas, she and her husband, design architect Alan Endall, sketched out a plan for a renovation. The homeowners loved it—and the timing was perfect. The two were off for a sabbatical to Australia. Pitre and Endall could tackle the overhaul while they were away.

Two years later, the gallery-like space is now made for entertaining. Light floods the main floor thanks to clerestory windows just under the roofline—achieved by lifting the roof off and adding a couple of feet in height. The now-grand entrance is tiled in basalt and wood-impressioned ceramic, leading the eye through to glass bifold doors at the back of the house. In the summer months the doors slide out of sight, creating a seamless indoor-outdoor connection between the kitchen and al fresco dining on the deck.

The kitchen itself needed more elbow room, which Pitre created by nixing the bathtub in the neighbouring bathroom. (It's now a powder room with a custom wallcovering of a bold poppy, crafted by Toronto artist Miriam Grenville.) Floor-to-ceiling wenge cabinetry includes a shallow



TIP: In an open-concept space such as this one, the television can be a distraction at best, and an eyesore at worst. Here's a clever cover-up in the form of a painting by Bratsa Bonifacho, hung on wires to slide to the side when the TV is in use.



LIVING ROOM: The area is divided into two entertaining zones, each delineated by subtle furniture arrangement and area rugs. **BEDROOM:** When digging out the terrace for the master bedroom, the contractor discovered that it was sitting on solid granite. The blasted rock was used as part of the back garden design.

Reno 911

Docu Drama

PROBLEM: The homeowners were out of the country on sabbatical when the renovation took place—so how to keep track of what was going on back home? **SOLUTION:** Outsource it. North Van's Multivista photo-documents each step of the job—up to 500 shots per visit for a large home—at crucial junctures. A monthly progress archive not only helps apportion responsibility in case of dispute but also leaves you with a record for resale. A house album starts at \$500. multivista.com



Reno 911

Pros & Contractors

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF RENOVATING WITH A CONTRACTOR

Be Clear As in any relationship, communication is key. If you've moved out during the renovation, stop by the building site frequently, and cc your contractor in emails relating to the project.

Mind the Details Stay organized: write down the goals of the renovation, and consider the number of tradespeople that might be involved with each task to gain a better understanding of the scope of the project.

Hire an Expert Even on small projects, an architect or designer can be the ideal liaison between homeowner and contractor.

Chung Tang of Davidson Walker Construction notes that detailed drawings really help: the architect is the client's representative.

Stay Open Surprises are inherent in renovations, and flexibility is the best way to get the most out of your project. For example, consider forgoing plans for travertine floors if your contractor discovers hardwood under the vinyl.



BATH: Oceanside glass tile sparkles around a space-saving Japanese soaker tub. **KITCHEN:** A Martha Sturdy vase embedded in the end of island glows at night. **ENTRANCE:** A Gordon Smith painting is given a place of prominence on the main floor.



TIP: Before going ahead with a major reno—one that involves moving interior walls like this one—make sure the home has good bones. This often means consulting with an engineer to assess structural soundness, and an architect for transformation potential. "It's difficult to work with homes that are filled with load-bearing beams and posts," notes designer Céline Pitre.

space dedicated to the couple's extensive wine glass collection. "We wanted the kitchen to be open plan, but we didn't want guests to be looking directly into any mess or food prep," says the homeowner. Pitre's solution: a Martha Sturdy vase embedded at the end of the island, lit from beneath. "It just glows," says Pitre, "and it effectively stops the eye from travelling beyond and into the kitchen."

The neighbouring living room is now dramatically flanked in travertine on one wall and wenge built-ins on the opposite. Here a painting by Bonifacho is given both a place of honour and thoughtful functionality, too: by means of a sliding system, it conceals the television hidden behind it. Though the space is large, Pitre keeps it warm and cozy by creating two conversation zones—flexible furniture arrangement and area rugs accommodate parties of any size.

The master bedroom is now below ground, but dugout terraces on both ends of the room allow for floor-to-ceiling windows. A reflecting pool on one side brings morning light deep into the room, while the other is lushly planted with evergreens and native plants. In the master bathroom, the homeowner didn't want to choose between a roomy shower or a bathtub, so Pitre installed both. A Japanese soaker takes up less room but still offers a post-workout, head-to-toe soak for the athletic couple. Sparkling one-inch bronze glass wall tiles add a touch of glamour to the space.

Pitre has achieved a fine balance between public and private spaces. And that original sketch, shared over Christmas a few years ago, now holds a place of honour in the reimagined home: it hangs in the living area, which now perfectly suits the homeowners. **wl** See **SOURCES**