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design story

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In pursuit of happy endings with Patricia Gray

"If you want ruffles and florals then I'm not your girl." So says interior designer Patricia Gray to *Homefront* from her Vancouver office. Distinguished by her signature warmth and use of custom furnishings, Gray is known for maximizing every square inch. And she's even got a touch of the clairvoyant when it comes to satisfying her eclectic list of worldwide clients.

Q How would you describe yourself in three words?

Patricia: I think clean, minimal and appropriate likely say it best.

Q Could you explain your work in two sentences to an eight-year-old?

Patricia: Sure. Lots of people are living in spaces that they aren't happy in. I teach people how to live in their homes and make everything work for them.

Q What's the most fun: starting or finishing a job?

Patricia: I love every bit of the process. The creativity and planning part is 20% and the rest is the nuts and bolts. I suppose it's more of a high at the end because I can see and experience a client's excitement and also their gratitude.

Q If I came to your house, what would you hide?



Patricia: Nothing. I don't have clutter or anything in my home that's not working. I can even remember rearranging the toys in my crib until they felt right. I like to share the concept of minimalist living with my clients, too.

Q What trends are you seeing today?

Patricia: The biggest change I'm seeing these days is people wanting technology in every room. They want to control the world, or at least their homes, from their iPads. Until about five years ago I was still hiding TVs behind sliding doors or in cabinets.

People are living more casually these days, but not in a negative sense. They want to make use of every square foot; there's no formal living room anymore.

Q How is your work "green"?

Patricia: It's been a *fait accompli* in my work for years. Most of my clients



Photos: Patricia Gray Inc.





these days don't need to be educated on the meaning of "low VOC." For me, being eco-friendly means whole-house lighting systems, natural fibres such as leather, linen and silk, wool for carpets, natural flooring, on-demand hot water systems, recycled drywall and even bathroom tiles created from pop bottles. In addition, we do our own research and insist that our contractors

recycle 85% of what they take out of a home during a renovation.

Q You can have breakfast with a famous designer at the location of your choice. Who and where?

Patricia: French designer Andrée Putman in Paris, of course, in her favourite neighbourhood restaurant.

Her interiors are every bit as stylish as she is. I have her book on my shelf at all times. One of the most amazing things about her work—which spans three continents and includes work for fashion designers such as Yves St. Laurent and Karl Lagerfeld, as well as signature collections—is the way she looks at the whole interior.

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Q Tell us a “magical” design story.

Patricia: We were working for a lovely couple and struggling to find the “perfect” piece of art as a finishing touch for their dining room. After searching everywhere, I finally found a large painting that I loved and managed to convince the gallery owner to let me

have it on loan. I hung it in place and it just seemed to click with the rest of the room. When the couple walked in, they both went silent. I didn’t know what to think—perhaps they didn’t like it? Looking up, I saw they were standing cheek-to-cheek, speechless. It turns out the painting was of Foreshore Park in Vancouver, at the exact spot where they got engaged.

I seem to get into a groove with my clients and often make uncanny, almost intuitive selections on their behalf. I almost have a sixth sense. **H**
www.patriciagrayinc.com



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