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*Urbane Edge*  
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## SILVER CEILING

Thousands of sheets of silver leaf were hand applied to the recessed ceiling, reflecting the crystal chandelier, sunlight through the floor-to-ceiling windows and the water of False Creek.



# Patricia Gray Inc.

AN UPFRONT INTERVIEW PROCESS ALLOWS THIS VANCOUVER DESIGN FIRM TO MEET ALL THE DESIGN NEEDS OF BUSY PROFESSIONALS

by Romy Schafer

For nearly 30 years, Patricia Gray of Patricia Gray Inc. has been creating one-of-a-kind residential installations for individuals too time-pressed to contemplate their design wants and needs, much less deal with the inherent challenges of renovating a room or entire home. “Most of the clients I work with are busy professionals, so I handle all the details for them,” says Gray, principal of the Vancouver-based design firm, which has executed projects in the United States, Canada, Japan, Singapore and Africa.

“All the details” typically range from ascertaining a client’s needs and wants to designing custom furnishings to arranging amenities. “I offer a complete service for my clients—everything that’s required in making a space personalized for them,” she says, noting that she also does full design-build project management.

Gray’s recent installation at Vancouver’s The Erickson—a 17-storey residential tower designed by and named for world-renowned architect Arthur Erickson—illustrates her complete-service approach. When a busy San Francisco couple commissioned Patricia Gray Inc. to turn their spacious two-bedroom, three-bath condominium into a second home for impromptu visits, the designer looked to a luxury, five-star hotel for her inspiration. “They wanted a home that they could come to on the spur of the moment and everything would be ready for them,” she explains. “I set up flower delivery, maid service, laundry service and concierge service, so the clients can just send emails [to these service providers] when they decide to come to Vancouver. When they leave, the maid service cleans everything up.”

So how does Gray, an award-winning designer who studied at the Parsons School of Art and

## *An Erickson Residence*

“They saved the very best site for their last building,” says Patricia Gray about The Erickson, an urban waterfront community built by Vancouver-based developer Concord Pacific ([concordpacific.com](http://concordpacific.com)) on the site of the 1986 World Exposition. The urban development is comprised of town-home residences and an eye-catching residential tower featuring three suites per floor. It was one of these suites that Gray recently furnished completely for a San Francisco couple.

Accessible via a private elevator that opens directly into the suite, the residence features an open floor plan and floor-to-ceiling windows that allow the homeowners to enjoy a spectacular view of False Creek, a nearby park, and the Vancouver skyline. Custom case and upholstery pieces designed by Patricia Gray, as well as leather sofas by Roche Bobois ([roche-bobois.com](http://roche-bobois.com)), and lighting by Harco Loor ([harcoloor.nl](http://harcoloor.nl)), and Axo Light ([axolight.it](http://axolight.it)) complement the airy space.

Adjacent to the living room and dining room are, respectively, a media room with a custom walnut-and-marble-topped media cabinet from Patricia Gray Inc., and a kitchen with 20-foot-wide accordion doors that provide easy access to a balcony. Two bedrooms, a den with a custom walnut wall unit that serves as a desk and Murphy bed, and three bathrooms complete the suite.



#### FLOW FROM KITCHEN TO BALCONY

Limestone countertops and backsplashes, SieMatic cabinets (siematic.com) and Miele (miele.com) appliances give the kitchen a modern, European look. Adjacent to the kitchen, accordion-style doors open the entire 20-foot width of the balcony (below). Views of the downtown Vancouver skyline and the mountains can be seen in the distance. Patricia Gray Inc. custom pillows in Sunbrella fabric (sunbrella.com).

Design in Paris and the University of Ferrara in Italy, determine clients' design preferences and needs—something they often don't know themselves? "I arrive at that through my extensive interview process," she explains. "I ask them how they're going to live in their space, what their entertainment requirements are, what their family requirements are [and so on]. Then, I get to know them, and the style evolves by osmosis."

Thoroughly acquainting herself with clients' lifestyles at the project's onset enables Gray to develop a complete design concept for them, "so they know exactly what their home is going to look like when it's finished, before we even start," she says. "Everything's designed and priced. Then, they approve the concept and the budget, and I proceed from there," ultimately handing over a completed, customized new home.

But, as every experienced designer knows, the journey from the initiation of a project to its completion can be filled with challenges. "There's a lot of coordination to do with all the different suppliers and sub trades involved," Gray explains. "It's one thing to be able to design something very beautiful, and it's another thing to be able to execute it. The great challenge is in the execution—it's like putting together a gigantic jigsaw puzzle. All the pieces have to fit together, and everybody's got to work together to bring it to fruition."





#### HOTEL-STYLE ACCOMMODATIONS

The master bedroom is on a corner, with windows along two walls. Patricia Gray Inc. custom motorized silk draperies and roller shades control the natural light reflecting from the silver leaf ceiling. The linens are by Frette bedding (frette.com) with an Hermes throw (hermes.com) and Patricia Gray Inc. pillows made with Jim Thompson fabric (jimthompsonfabrics.com).

*“What I do is very unique and very specific for each client. I like to think of my design as couture.”*

**PATRICIA GRAY, PRINCIPAL**

For Gray, working with high-level tradespeople and artisans is key to a successful, problem-free renovation. “I have quite a wonderful group of people that I’ve built up over the years that can execute my designs,” she says. “I think that’s one of the bonuses my clients have in me—my intellectual knowledge, all the years of experience I’ve had and having the right people working with me. I have a wonderful contractor who I can totally count on. Everyone I work with shows up when they’re supposed to and completes their jobs on time and on budget.”

Creating custom-designed furnishings like tables, seating, media and wall units, pillows and artwork further enables Gray to create personalized spaces for clients. “I have a millwork company, an upholstery workroom, a drapery workroom,” she explains, adding, “What I do is very unique and

very specific for each client. I like to think of my design as couture. Everything is custom-designed and made specifically for each client.”

This penchant for designing home furnishings has led to a new business venture for Gray: a line of custom furniture based on some of the limited edition, custom pieces that she’s created for past projects. At press time, possible manufacturing partners and marketing initiatives for the line were still being worked out, according to Gray.

Creating elegant, personalized spaces will no doubt continue to be Gray’s métier. When asked what she considers the most rewarding part of her job, she quickly responds, “When I hand over the completed project to my clients—when all the months of work are finished, and they see everything in its beauty and perfection.” ■