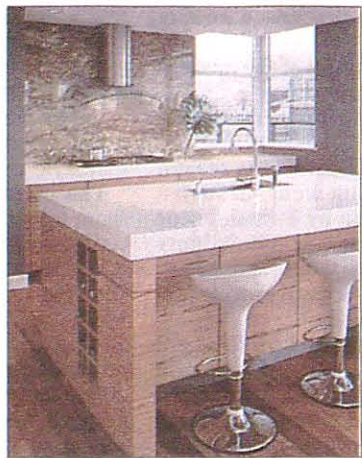




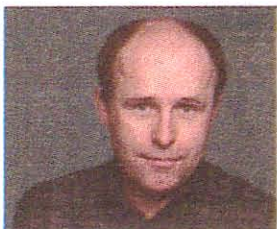
The innovative design style of Patricia Gray is shown with the unique placement of the plasma flat-screen TV in the Yaletown apartment.



Modish chairs at the kitchen counter, a flowing space, a wine rack with an intriguing difference and an upscale lamp standard are Yaletown high spots.

Working wonders

Interior designer Patricia Gray had real challenges with Yaletown condo



JOHN MACKIE
VANCOUVER SUN

The multi-level penthouse comes with million dollar views and an above-the-clouds vibe. But the luxurious Yaletown condo presented some challenges to interior designer Patricia Gray.

Three of the four walls in the main living area are windows, and the fourth is taken up by the kitchen and stairs. So where in the world do you put that sta-

ple of the high-end condo, the flat-screen plasma TV?

Problem two was that the apartment seemed like it was a bit out in space. The view was so great, and there was so much light, it overwhelmed the interior.

Gray solved the TV problem by placing it in the middle of a window, suspended from mullions on either side. Then she

brought the space back to earth by installing a teak floor, and matching it with teak panels in the ceiling.

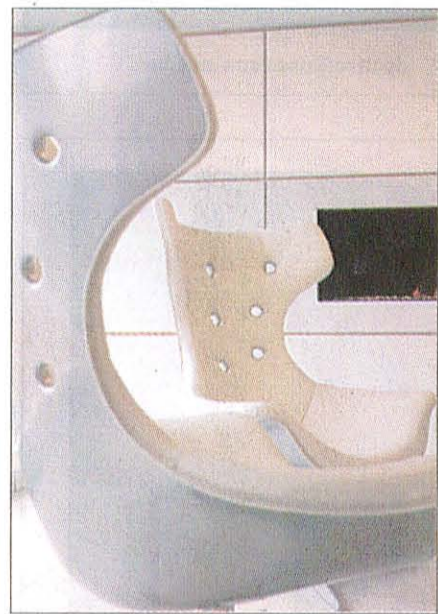
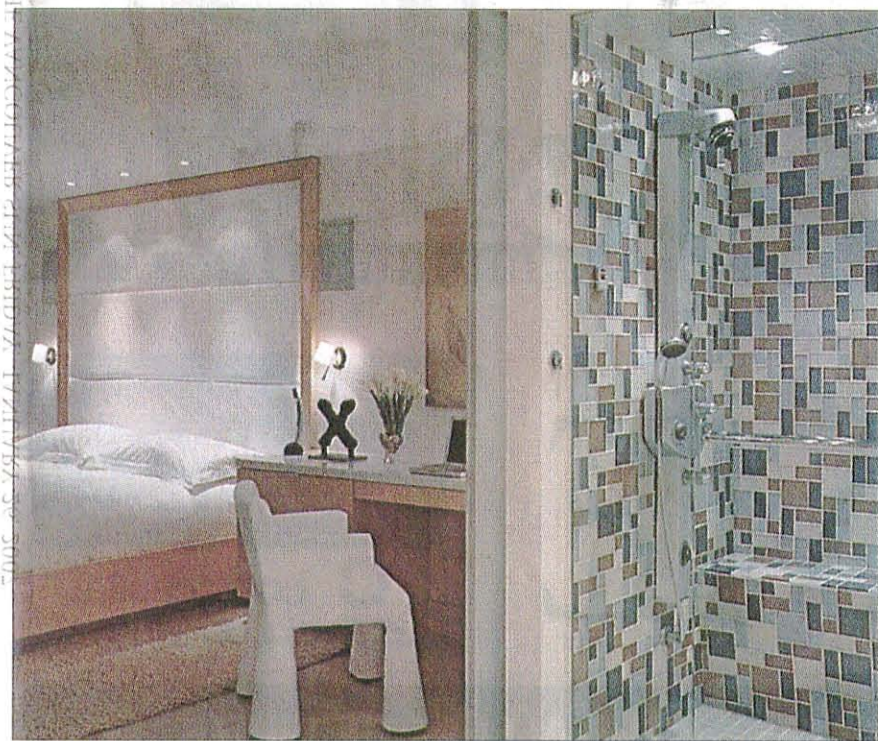
"You walked in and the space was all view and light," she explains.

"But by putting the teak panneling in the ceiling, it helps to ground the space and make it feel that you're not just floating out over the top of the city."

Coming up with imaginative solutions like this is one of the reasons why Gray has become one of Vancouver's elite interior designers. She seems to be able to work wonders with most anything, from a Yaletown penthouse to a Shaughnessey heritage home.

Her design of a Gastown loft

See **PASTELS ARE** C2



The Gastown loft's stunning ensuite, chairs that are the last word in style and comfort and twin sinks for owner and partner all show Patricia Gray's special touch.



GLENN BAGLO/VANCOUVER SUN

Patricia Gray's current job is the renovation of a Tudor-style house in Shaughnessy.

Space and how to use it is key to success



A TV built into the closet, upward-folding cupboards, are Gray touches at the Gastown residence.



From CI

was recently featured in *Architectural Digest* magazine, only the second time a Vancouver designer has been splashed across its pages.

"In my profession, being published in *Architectural Digest* is the equivalent to receiving an Academy Award," she says.

"It gives you a lot of exposure, and I think some credibility. When you're acknowledged in a magazine like that, [people think] 'Okay, she must know what she's doing.'"

She does. The 54-year-old Gray has been an interior designer for three decades, 25 of them with her own company. She's designed multi-unit highrises, helped redo a former palace in Somalia and even designed John Travolta's Vancouver abode.

Alas, she is sworn to secrecy about Travolta's place. But Travolta gives a glowing testimonial to her talents on Gray's website, which helped her land her most exotic gig, designing a 10,000-square-foot house in Japan.

Through the technological marvels of the modern age, she did all the design from her office.

"I did everything remotely from Vancouver, I never visited there," she says.

"The architect was in Atlanta, Ga., and the designer was in Vancouver. Everything went through a translator, so we did everything by e-mail. I sent samples and everything by courier. The clients owned a shipping company, so we would ship everything over in containers from Vancouver to Japan. They wanted a totally Western look."

Her favourite project was the Gastown loft, where she totally reconfigured a 1,400-square-foot condo for Kevin Louie. Originally two suites, it had been combined into a single apartment by the previous owner, but retained what Louie calls "the standard condo kind of feel."

Louie went into the project thinking he might redo the kitchen and bathroom. But by the time he and Gray were finished, they'd completely remade the apartment into a unique, ultra-modern pad.

Gray designed it with an open floor plan, with floor to ceiling sliding doors that can be opened up

to make it one big continuous space or closed off for privacy. The kitchen blends into the living area, which hooks around into a flex space, which runs into the bedroom. When everything's opened up, the only walls are the bathrooms and a storage area between the kitchen and bathroom.

"Space is everything nowadays, especially in Vancouver with our high real estate prices," she says.

"You want to make full advantage of the space you have. I wanted to make the space all flow. The view [of Coal Harbour] is fantastic, it's just a drop-dead view, so I didn't want anything visually distracting from that view. So everything is clean."

Gray just got a phone call from someone in Alabama who's interested in recreating the fireplace in the Gastown apartment, a custom-built item from Vancouver Gas Fireplaces that is recessed into the wall, centred from the ceiling to the floor and surrounded by panels.

The bed of the fireplace is river rock, which Louie says leads some people to think it's an aquarium.

"It often gets mistaken for a fish tank," he laughs.

"I guess it's because the design is so unheard of, so uncommon people don't even know what it is when they first see it. The shape is so contemporary, it's so unique, it's so different. It was a must to have that style and shape of fireplace in my suite."

The open space concept makes the apartment seem larger than it actually is, and even makes the ceilings seem loftier than their eight foot height. This is key, because Louie is just shy of six foot seven. To keep the ceilings at their full height, Gray put all the wiring and plumbing in the walls rather than the ceiling and installed two and three quarter-inch recessed pot lights that had a minimal impact.

Her current job is a major reno of a Tudor-style house in Shaughnessy. The Gastown and Yaletown designs were modern, but here she is blending old and new, trying to be sympathetic to the heritage character of the 1920s home.

She isn't a designer who needs to impose her look on every nook and cranny. The original living and dining rooms are beautiful, so she's leaving them as is. But the kitchen and breakfast nook were small by modern standards, so she is totally remodelling the

back of the house, opening it up so there is a dramatic 70 foot long space. It was a fairly involved process: Asbestos had to be removed from the old walls and a steel support beam had to be added so the back of the house wouldn't fall down. Gray thinks that when it's finished it will be a much more family-friendly home.

"It will have the modern concept of the 'great room,'" she explained.

"[The owner] wanted everything to be visible, so when she's standing in the kitchen she can see into the eating area, the media room, the solarium. So the kitchen is sort of the middle command post, and everything goes off of that."

"Which wasn't the concept when these houses were designed. It was a separate little tiny kitchen, separate little eating area. What we have retained is the formal dining room and living room at the front of the house. Then at the back of the house will be this great room, open concept."

Her other big job at the moment has proven to be a little more troublesome. She recently purchased a three-level townhouse in Coal Harbour, and is driving herself crazy trying to make decisions.

"Let me tell you, the hardest thing I've ever done is do my own renovation," she laughs. "Even though it's what I do for a living. I can't make decisions for myself. I'm exposed to so much, it's like 'Oh my goodness, I can have anything I want!'"

"So I have a very close girlfriend [Linda Sale] that I went to design school with, and I call her in for consultations. I call her and say 'Linda, I need a design consultation. Come and straighten me out!'"