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HOUSE & HOME

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Done to Perfection

Designer Nam Dang-Mitchell shares the thought process behind a sleek Calgary home, and the signature pieces that make it work.

Text by KATIE HAYDEN | Photography by COLIN WAY

SIGNATURE PIECE The low, open bench is the first thing you see when you walk into the room — and, says designer Nam Dang-Mitchell, it's the piece that makes the space work. It's not welcoming to see the backs of chairs and sofas as you enter a room, she says. "This bench looks like it's embracing you. It enhances the flow from room to room." *Bench, Eisenbergs' Fine Furniture.*



NAM DANG-MITCHELL
Calgary designer

Every colour in John and Cheryl Aldred's three-bedroom home in rural Calgary is perfectly balanced. Every piece of furniture is carefully placed, and every room is imbued with poise and elegance. It looks effortless, but designing and executing the interiors of this six-year-old home was far from easy. "The most challenging aspect of any new home is to make it not feel new — to give it some soul," says designer Nam Dang-Mitchell. "So I used materials that age well: Venetian plaster on the walls of the first floor, and natural materials like limestone, silk, grasscloth."

The owners are prominent philanthropists, so Dang-Mitchell created a main floor that could handle a discerning crowd. "I hate when I go to someone's house and it doesn't suit them. There are a million ways to do pretty, but that's not the goal," she says. "These homeowners travel a lot, especially to Europe, so they wanted the house to be timeless and classic, and have a European spirit."

The end result is a refined oasis that says "luxury" without shouting it — a great example of Dang-Mitchell's signature look. Here, she shares her guiding principles and explains how the key rooms came together.

Luxe Living Room

ADOPT A SOFT PALETTE True to form, Dang-Mitchell washed the house in understated neutrals — a significant part of how she fulfills the quiet side of her iconic "quiet luxury" look. "The colours here are subtle: richer tertiary hues that are muddied up. They're natural, but I've added a little bit of gilt."

BALANCE STYLES AND TONES Charcoal-brown hardwood floors ground the lighter tones — as do the bold espresso-brown doorframes. "They're big stained-wood pieces that create a sense of arrival and add dignity in every room." She's also tempered the traditional pieces with modern or eclectic accents. "John's British, and Cheryl's from the southern U.S., so they both have traditional architecture backgrounds," she says. "I've taken those motifs and stripped them back. For example, the natural woven blinds here have an old world feel, but contained within the substantial frames they feel more tailored."

ESTABLISH SYMMETRY Dang-Mitchell explains that symmetry imbues a space with harmony. "It creates balance and a sense of well-being and calmness," she says. So the bench balances the sofa, and the wing chairs offset the hand-cut limestone fireplace, while the inset panels in the coffered ceiling establish an even grid overhead.

USE A SPARE HAND Dang-Mitchell warns against overstuffing rooms: "I use fewer pieces but better quality. The sparseness in these rooms keeps them modern and relevant. They're tailored — but still sumptuous because of the luxurious materials."

Builder: Mission Homes; **design,** Nam Dang-Mitchell; **Design:** coffee table by Cowdrome, Robert Sweep Home furnishings; **wall and ceiling colour,** Edmund's Beige (14-26), Pratt & Lambert.

Our Favourite

UPHOLSTERED DAYBEDS



TAILORED CHIC Mary bench by Steve McKenzie. Kiln-dried maple; various linens (shown in Fog) or C.O.M. 30" h. x 80" w. x 37" d. Approx. \$5,789. At Grange.



DECO GLAM Canyon daybed by Powell & Bonnell. Solid wood; veneer; various fabrics and leathers, C.O.M./L. 33" h. x 90" w. x 31" d. Price available upon request. Through Tello.



CAMPAIN MOD SW daybed by Stellar Works. Ash; various fabrics. 20 1/2" h. x 75" w. x 31 1/4" d. From \$2,700. At Julien Armand.

"John and Cheryl wanted entertaining rooms, so I set the mood by creating rooms where people will be their most charming"

Display & Storage

PLAY WITH DARK AND LIGHT A tall gilt-framed antique mirror adds height and a bit of whimsy against the boxier chest. The chest's burled walnut looks warm and rich against the Venetian plaster walls. The interplay of dark and light is also pronounced in the drapes, which Dang-Mitchell finished with a wide band of brown — a far different look than solid drapes would have had. "The extradeep brown trim works better with how you 'read' the rest of the furniture in the room."

KEEP ACCESSORIES SIMPLE Layers are kept to a minimum, with white and glass accents adding height and texture on the dresser without shouting "Look at me!" A single turquoise pillow adds colour and contrast on the sofa.

Fabric for drapes, cushions, DWA Interior Furnishings; cushion sewing, Laurie Kirkhoven; drape sewing, Bonnie's Blind Ambition.



SIGNATURE PIECE A handsome burled walnut chest on one side of the fireplace balances a built-in settee on the other and embodies Dang-Mitchell's style: It's luxe and elegant, but also tailored and low-key. **Chest, Eisenberg's Fine Furniture.**



ABOVE: Dang-Mitchell designed a second settee as an intimate reading nook in the living room corner. **Settee fabrication, Calgary Interiors.**

< Welcoming Foyer

USE CREAMY TONES Floors in Jura Grey limestone and walls in pale Venetian plaster have warm undertones that take any edge off the bright space. "The plaster has a superrich, buttery, gorgeous finish."

REPEAT KEY MOTIFS A subtle interplay of forms can achieve unexpected symmetry, evident here where the graceful lines of the bench back are echoed in the striking quatrefoil mirror above.

CREATE A FOCAL POINT The absence of rugs, art and other accessories let the striking bench take centre stage. An offset cocktail table is a delicate substitution for a large pedestal table.

Bench fabric, DWA Interior Furnishings; mirror, Domine; limestone flooring, Nu-Way Floor Fashions; artwork (slown hall) by Peter Hajfer, artwork (top right) by Bill Fisher, Newzones.

SIGNATURE PIECE A cosy high-backed bench upholstered in a rich cut-velvet pattern tucks perfectly into a space beside the front door. "The niche was here already, and I turned it into a nice little jewelled area." **Bench fabrication, Calgary Interiors.**

Our Favourite

CHESTS OF DRAWERS



CONTEMPORARY CLASSIC Beau 3-drawer chest by Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams. Veneer: stainless steel. 31½" h. x 33¼" w. x 18" d. \$1,275. Through Elle.



FOLK COUNTRY Marlene scalloped chest. Select hardwoods. 34½" h. x 38" w. x 19" d. \$1,959. At Ethan Allen.



URBAN GLAM Murano chest with stone top by Hickory Chair. Cherry (shown in Rustic Parchment). 36¼" h. x 47½" w. x 20½" d. Approx. \$6,030. At South Hill Home.

Our Favourite

STATEMENT SETTEES



FORMAL TRAD Calais settee by Barrymore. Hardwood; cotton felt. 38" h. x 60" w. x 31" d. From \$4,360. At Barrymore Furniture.



RUSTIC MODERN IWI bench by Christophe Delcourt. Oak. 30" h. x 75" w. x 24" d. From \$4,885. At Avenue Road.



SCANDI COUNTRY Spoke Back sofa by Barge Mogensen. Beech; linen. 33" h. x 62" w. x 30" d. \$2,275. At Mjolk.

Our Favourite

CANOPY BEDS



ELEGANT WHIMSY Faline bed by Oly Studio. Cast resin; various fabrics and leathers, C.O.M./L. Queen, 94" h. x 66" w. x 87" d. From \$6,550. At South Hill Home.



SWEDISH COUNTRY Swedish Poster bed by Redford House. Alder wood (shown in Tarnished Silver). Queen, 92" h. x 65" w. x 87" d. From \$3,286. At Au Lit Fine Linens and Cocoon Furnishings.



RELAXED MODERN

Camargue bed in Blackened Oak (4901-01) by Ralph Lauren Home. Oak; rush. Queen, 89" h. x 66½" w. x 86" d. From \$10,650. Through Elte.



SIGNATURE PIECE The bed, with its plush, tufted headboard backed by a dramatic pelmet, "emphasizes the room's height, and adds luxury and cosiness." Bed, Eisenberg's Fine Furniture.

Polished Principal Bedroom

PICK AN EXTRAPALE PALETTE The colour scheme here is even lighter than in the main rooms: soft greys, blues and beiges evoke a serene mood. A hand-painted silk Fortuny lamp and a Persian-style rug rendered in chalky, whitewashed hues look extra subtle. "Keeping the fabrics simple kept this room from getting claustrophobic," says Dang-Mitchell.

CONTRAST WITH DARK FLOORS Traditional hardwood floors were stained a contemporary dark grey-brown and topped with a faded Persian-style rug for a soothing result.

ADD HEIGHT The bed is flanked by matching chests and tall lamps, while the bed's ceiling-height pelmet and drapes are echoed by those on the adjacent window.

MIX HARD AND SOFT Angular alabaster bedside lamps contrast the softer finish and rounded shape of the classic Fortuny pendant.

Fortuny lamp, Bernstein & Gold; bedside lamps, Circa Lighting.