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in the MOOD

A Calgary model home evokes the look of a 17th-century masterpiece with a modern brushstroke.



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1 A classic klismos chair - an ancient Greek design - is balanced by a clean-lined sofa in the living room. 2 In the dining room, the tall mirror amplifies light from the windows. 3 Calgary designer Nam Dang-Mitchell. 4 A lion's head door knocker adorns a wooden planter. 5 Nam started with a moody, modern wallpaper in the dining room. 6 The wall panelling in the entryway establishes the traditional feel of the architecture, while the zebra-printed rug lends exotic flair. 7 Nam opted for a modern slab dining table "with a bit of an edge," she says, because the chairs are so traditional. 8 A detailed limestone mantel and gothic arched doorway form the traditional backbone of the living room. 9 The oversized sleek, industrial chandelier keeps the mood in the living room informal. 10 The den features walls wrapped in rich dark wood panelling, and a custom sofa nestled between two bookcases. 11 Vibrant green stems add colour to the muted palette.

"I HAD IN MIND THE PAINTINGS OF VERMEER, WITH THEIR SOFT, RICH, WARM, MOODY COLOURS."

NAM DANG-MITCHELL, DESIGNER

DESIGN, Nam Dang-Mitchell Design, namdangmitchell.com. **LIVING ROOM:** Silver Mink 33-25 **WALL PAINT,** Pratt & Lambert; **SOFA,** Restoration Hardware; **CHAIR,** Hickory Chair; **CHANDELIER, ARTWORK,** Chintz & Company; **RUG,** Colin Campbell & Sons; **VASE,** Crate and Barrel. **ENTRYWAY:** **SCONCES,** Chintz & Company; **BASKET,** Pottery Barn. **DINING ROOM:** Harlequin Whisper **WALLPAPER,** through Têlio, DWA Interior Furnishings; **CHAIRS, MIRROR, CHANDELIER,** Restoration Hardware; **VASE,** Crate and Barrel; **CONSOLE,** Hinchcliff & Lee Distinguished Décor. **DEN:** **CHAIR,** Maria Tomás; **COCKTAIL TABLE,** Hickory Chair; **THROW,** Restoration Hardware; **TRAY,** Crate and Barrel.

Nam Dang-Mitchell saw the light. The designer's "aha!" moment happened on her first walk-through of the model home she'd been hired to design and decorate at Mission Home's exclusive StonePine enclave near Calgary. "The house has tons of northern light, which is beautiful and soft, and the lot is so treed in the back," says Nam. "It's bucolic and peaceful, so I decided to do my version of a romantic country house, but make it relevant to today's lifestyle."

Nam was also inspired by an artist who was once captivated by light. "I had in mind the paintings of Vermeer, with their soft, rich, warm, moody colours," she says. That conjured thoughts of country homes in Northern Europe - Belgium, in particular. "Belgian design can be traditional and modern at the same time, and it all looks right," says Nam.

The concept - Belgian country house dressed to evoke the atmosphere of a 17th-century Dutch masterpiece - solved a challenge the designer faced. "The issue with new houses is that you don't want them to feel brand new," says Nam, who has worked on model homes before. The StonePine house already had traditional architectural elements like coffered ceilings, wood panelling, and cabinetry that created an aged pedigree. But, says Nam, "I'm not interested in having one note throughout a house. The envelope here is traditional, but I've got a modern element in every space. In the living room, it's the cube coffee table; in the dining room, there's a slab table. The modern sort of cleanses the palette." →

“IN CALGARY, MOODY COLOURS WORK WELL BECAUSE THE LIGHT IS SO CLEAR. IF YOU USE BRIGHT COLOURS HERE, THEY SCREAM.”

NAM DANG-MITCHELL, DESIGNER

Mixing periods and styles also suggests the natural evolution of a century-old European country home, and, Nam says, would appeal to the sophistication of prospective buyers. “This area attracts a lot of established, more mature people,” she explains. “They tend to travel a lot. Sometimes they’re empty nesters, or they may have teens or older children in the two bedrooms on the lower level.”

Nam ensured her design would appeal to either prospective family by finding commonalities in each group’s lifestyle. “Everyone wants a gorgeous eat-in kitchen because it’s a room where you really live out your life,” she says. “I wanted that unfitted look where nothing matches perfectly. It’s European, but more relaxed.” She included charming open shelving and a framed blackboard, like those you’d see in a Belgian café, but punctuated the old-world look with edgy industrial-style pendant lights and bar stools, and a wall-mounted television.

In the dining room, the Gustavian-inspired chairs are all the more interesting contrasted by the walls and ceiling, which are papered with modern, sumptuous, textural patterns. An antler chandelier brings a rustic element to the space, and the Chinese console adds a global vibe. Fabulous foils for the traditional architecture and furniture, “the ethnic pieces do the same thing as the modern pieces,” says Nam.

The mix is repeated in each room, adding layers of interest and creating a continuity that’s reinforced by a palette of warm, natural colours: cream, grey, taupe, and an accent of blue or living greenery. The effect captures the luminosity of the Vermeer masterpieces Nam admires. And, also like a Vermeer, it’s a scene that beguiles and beckons – an ageless beauty.

FOR SOURCES, SEE OUR WORKBOOK

12 In the kitchen, the walnut open shelves tie in with the wood used on the island. 13 Mounting the TV onto a kitchen wall finished with blackboard paint allows it to disappear when not in use. 14 “I’d been doing so many white kitchens that I was very excited to use a beautiful putty grey,” says Nam, who likes the way subtle greys and taupes come to life in Calgary’s bright, even light. 15 Nam designed a curved banquette, covered in easy-to-clean Naugahyde, to cozy into the breakfast area’s generous bow window. The traditional pedestal table and two dining-height chairs upholstered in a modern damask complete the look. 16 Nam designed the stainless-steel fan hood, with its aged-pewter detailing. “It has a handmade feel, which people appreciate,” she says. 17 The bright breakfast area invites lounging. Woven blinds and potted trees and plants lend a conservatory feel.

KITCHEN: Custom **CABINETS**, **SHELVING**, Nam Dang-Mitchell Design; **CABINETS CONSTRUCTION**, Denca; **Wolf RANGE**, Bradlee Distributors. **BREAKFAST AREA:** **PEDESTAL TABLE**, Bondars Fine Furniture; **CHANDELIER**, Restoration Hardware; custom **BANQUETTE**, **CHAIRS**, Nam Dang-Mitchell Design; **BANQUETTE CONSTRUCTION**, Calgary Interiors; Wotton 9140 **CHAIR CONSTRUCTION**, Whittington Furniture; **TOSS CUSHIONS**, Crate and Barrel.



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"You can see that I love symmetry and I love the stove as a focal point," says Nam. She repeated the gothic arch from the living room in the kitchen cabinetry, which is traditional and reminiscent of a European manor house, but the island injects a more casual profile.

Dawn Mist 32-25 **CABINERY PAINT**, Pratt & Lambert; **PENDANT LIGHTS**, Circa Lighting; Caesarstone Lagos Blue 4350 **COUNTERTOP**, Calacatta Gold marble **ISLAND COUNTERTOP**, Alberta Marble & Tile Company; Ocean Blue travertine **FLOOR TILES**, Calacatta Gold marble **BACKSPASH TILES**, Nu-Way Floor Fashions; **BAR STOOLS, PULLS**, Restoration Hardware; **BOWL**, Crate and Barrel.