

DESIGNING CANADA 2021

KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

Over the past year, the spaces in which we eat and cook have become the hubs of our homes, made to work as offices, classrooms and creative studios as much as where we gather for meals. In the second edition of Designing Canada, our annual spotlight of the country's best architecture, interiors and housewares, we celebrate these multifunctional marvels and the designers who keep them looking delicious

WRITTEN BY ANYA GEORGIJEVIC

ARCHITECTURE



MAISON LOUIS-HÉMON by La Shed Architecture

"We love to do really personal projects," says Renée Mailhot, co-founder of Montreal-based La Shed Architecture. "The best part of design is the relationship with the clients."

She founded the architecture firm in 2010 with two partners, Yannick Laurin and Sébastien Parent, and has since built an impressive portfolio in residential design.

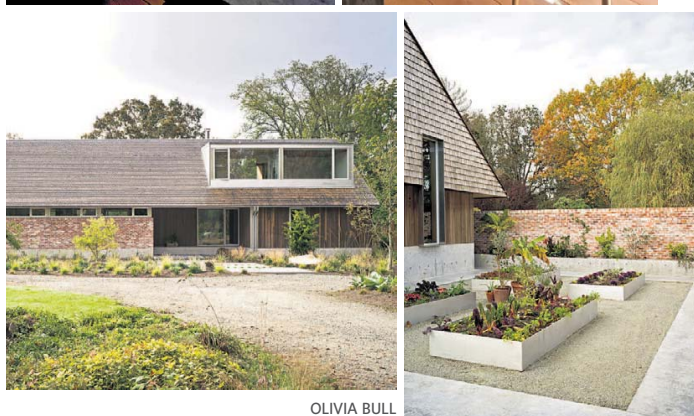
La Shed welcomed the challenge of updating this 100-year-old duplex in the city's Rosemont neighbourhood while maintaining its traditional façade. "The idea was to extend the house and bring more fluidity to the spaces," Mailhot says. The architects built an extension in the back, creating an additional light-filled level connecting the main floor and the basement.

The clients, a couple, requested abundant storage space for their collection of dining and tabletop objects and kitchen equipment. Mailhot and her team came up with a custom run of white oak cabinetry that stretch the entire height and length of the space, starting on the dining-room level as a credenza, extending into kitchen cabinets and, finally, stepping down to become an entertainment unit in the basement.

The kitchen opens up to the intimate exterior dining space, which is well used during Montreal's warmer seasons and just steps away from the fresh vegetable garden on top of the rear garage. "We wanted to create a strong relationship between the main living areas and the exterior," Mailhot says.



MAXIME BROUILLET



OLIVIA BULL

SAANICH FARMHOUSE by Scott and Scott Architects

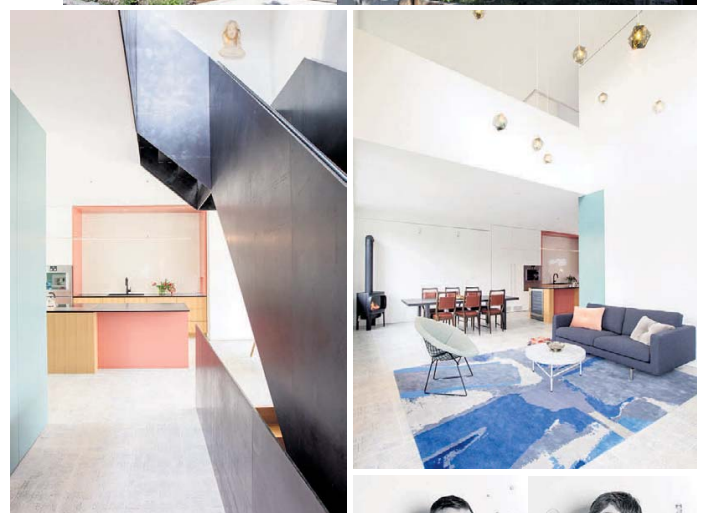
"We focus more on the construction process and the craft of the build itself," says Susan Scott of Scott and Scott Architects, a Vancouver-based architecture firm she runs with her husband, David. "For both of us, it's a part of architecture that we really enjoy."

Their love of craft is evident in the Saanich Farmhouse, a gable-vaulted structure located on Vancouver Island. The house was designed around the owners' desire to maintain a unique mix of mature planting while expanding cultivation of the vegetable garden.

The clients wanted a semi-open plan, with distinct but connected spaces. "There was a desire to hide the kitchen a bit more rather than having it fully open," Susan says.

Locally harvested Douglas fir was used for the gable structure while the blue-stained version was used for the interior cabinetry that separates the kitchen from the living spaces. Local Vancouver Island blue marble provides another contrast to the natural wood interior.

The dining area is inset under the eaves, creating a more intimate space. A single piece of fir forms a dining-room table that looks onto the vegetable garden. "The more the clients realized that this was the house that they wanted to spend the rest of their lives in, the more important the garden became," David says.



JANIS NICOLAY

UNION STREET by MA+HG Architects

A renovation of a century-old heritage home in Vancouver's Strathcona neighbourhood and the addition of an infill building transformed this plot from a single-family dwelling into a five-unit development for the client and her extended family.

"People really value historical buildings as a part of our collective memory and collective history," says Marianne Amodio, founder and principal of MA+HG Architects, a small Vancouver-based firm that she operates with her husband, Harley Grusko.

After stripping the home's existing asphalt shingles, the architects discovered that the original house colours were pink and mint green, so they went with that colour palette for both the exterior and the interior.

"In our work, the use of colour is really important," Amodio says. "We think it's a really beautiful and evocative way to elevate design that's budget-friendly."

An origami-like folded steel stair runs the height of the client's space, providing a contrast to the soft pastel shades used for her kitchen.

The architects saved on cost by opting for painted MDF and white oak veneer cabinets and concrete tile flooring. The result is a simple but beautiful composition of colour and texture. "We do believe that architecture belongs to everybody, and it doesn't have to solely exist in the realm of exclusivity or luxury."



INTERIOR DESIGN



NIAMH BARRY



DUNVEGAN by Ali Budd Interiors

"I'm proud that we have a really diverse portfolio," says Ali Budd, founder and principal designer of Ali Budd Interiors, a design firm she founded 11 years ago. "We really look at each project as an opportunity to do something different!"

In the case of this spacious Toronto residence, it was about monochromatic palettes, mixed materials and optimization of space for a family of five. The older single-family home was in need of a full renovation, especially the kitchen. "It was a smaller kitchen and we rejigged the floor plan to get it where it is now," she says.

One of the design strategies was to create a space that was separate from the living area, yet still visually connected. So Budd and her team decided to build an arch as a grand window to the kitchen. "An arch really adds character and changes it up from being such a linear space," she says.

The palatial kitchen features double marble islands with curved edges, a detail that presented its own challenges. "We were so excited when we finally figured it out," Budd says. The islands sit on porcelain tile with a black detail that frames the space. Budd also incorporated porcelain in the back part of the kitchen on the hood cover, countertop and double sink. "I like changing up materials," she says. "I think it keeps things interesting."



COURTESY OF ALI BUDD INTERIORS



LUNE 1860 by Studio Author

"We are called Studio Author because we like to tell a story of the space," says Jayme Million of the Toronto-based interior-design firm she co-founded with Alex Simpson. "For every project, we find something contextual or environmental that we latch onto to develop a story from. That narrative guides us through the entire process."

For the renovation of a 19th-century stone manor in Goderich, Ont., the clients were inspired by the moon. Million and Simpson utilized different shapes and textures to reference the Earth's satellite, adding arches, a barrel ceiling, as well as lighting fixtures and limewash paint. The house, which does double duty as the clients' home and an event space, plays with the division of public and private areas. The kitchen and the dining room are the spot where the two converge.

"It was that balance between creating a space that was aesthetically really beautiful, but functional for everyday use," Million says. The designers opted for a brass-clad island, a monolithic block that anchors the room. Dark lacquered cabinets wrap around the kitchen, but uppers on one side have been replaced with a marble backsplash with a hand-broken edge, another reference to the moon and its craggy texture. It's a study of contrasts.

"It's all about the balance: the hard and the soft, the light and the heavy."



ST. ANDREWS PLACE by Aly Velji Designs

A mid-century modern vibe proved right for this Calgary home. Nestled in the city's St. Andrews Heights neighbourhood, the newly built five-bedroom house is designed for a family of four.

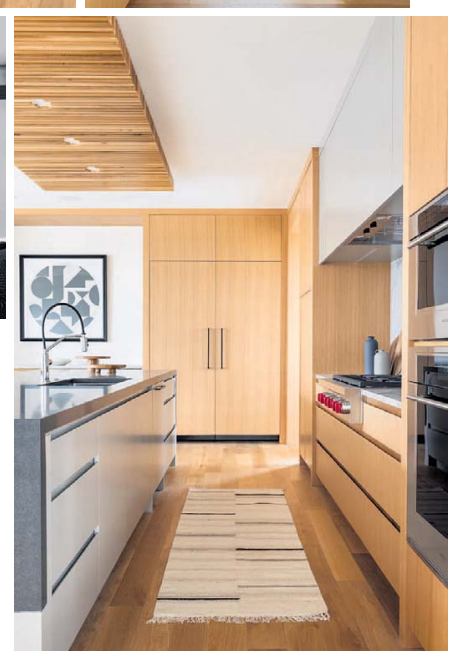
"They wanted a space that exuded their modern aesthetic, but also a place that was warm, inviting and had a lot of beautiful architectural details," says Alyhkan Velji, founder and principal at Aly Velji Designs, the Calgary-based boutique design firm he founded 15 years ago. "My design mantra has always been that design should be for everyone – and I like to make my designs as accessible as possible."

Velji used oak throughout the home, including all flooring and cabinetry. "We wanted to use a lot of wood and almost make it a monochromatic setting," he says.

With the intention of keeping the spaces as open to each other as possible, Velji created a custom two-way oak bookshelf, visually separating the kitchen from the sunken living room.

Oak gives way to quartz in the form of a two-tone kitchen island. "It really lifts the space and makes it feel more airy and bright," Velji says.

Above is a custom oak slat panel with built-in lighting. "We are huge fans of carrying different materials throughout the space."



JOEL KLASSEN (ROOMS); JAGER AND KOKEMOR (PORTRAIT)

FURNITURE AND HOUSEWARES



OBJECTS OF PLACE by Daniel Gruetter

"I'm really interested in seeing craft as a way for more humans to interact with nature," Daniel Gruetter says. "I think its role in society can dictate how we think of the environment, how we react to it, and how we manage resources."

The Toronto-based woodworker works with a variety of scales, from large cabinetry to small tabletop objects.

His Objects of Place collection of vases is a tribute to the richness of Ontario timber. "They are inspired by different forms from spending time in the forest," he says.

Gruetter grew up on the West Coast surrounded by woodworkers, but it wasn't until he moved to Ontario that he took up the craft full-time, partially because of his surroundings. "The diversity of hardwoods here is really impressive."

Gruetter's wood vases are sculptural and interactive, with smooth round lids that invite touch. "It's about responding to the tactility of the material," he says.

He aimed to reveal how different woods respond to the oxidation process. For example, cherry becomes quite dark - almost black - while maple becomes a blue-grey colour.

The woodworker's relationship with nature is what drives his practice. "Being able to spend time in the natural environment and connect the living thing to the craft is really important," he says.

SKOCZKOWSKI STUDIO (PORTRAIT)



SEBASTIAN STADLER



AIZOME CREDENZA FOR ARIAKE by Zoë Mowat

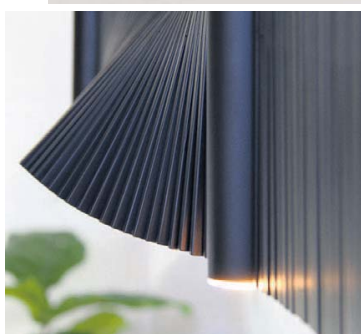
While attending a workshop in Japan, Zoë Mowat learned all about traditional Japanese dyes and experimented with ways they could be used to stain furniture. The indigo dye - or *aizome* - became the inspiration for a series of furniture for the Japanese brand Ariake. Its latest piece, the Aizome Credenza, continues to explore the dyeing traditions.

"I really see them as a canvas for these finishes that are really beautiful and have a lot of depth to them," says the Montreal-based industrial designer, who is currently living in New York, where she teaches design. "I just wanted to create something simple that could really illustrate and let these finishes shine."

The ash wood cabinet is stained with two finishes of indigo - a lighter and a darker - while the details are rendered in red dye and black Sumi ink, which is traditionally used for calligraphy.

Mowat kept Japanese design practices in mind while designing. A compact and efficient use of space and subtle detailing, such as incorporated handles, help streamline the overall form.

"What I love about Japanese design is that not everything is immediately apparent," she says. "There are a lot of quiet and hidden details that you have to seek out - and those are often more meaningful."



VÉRONIQUE GRENIER.

TECTA LIGHT SERIES by Studio Botté

Philippe Charlebois Gomez has been collecting reclaimed materials since childhood. So when it came to start his own design business, the industrial designer knew he wanted to continue with the sustainability model. "I would pick up anything that would inspire me," the Montreal-based Studio Botté founder says. "I love the material flow that comes from creating and upcycling."

For his Tecta light series, Gomez worked with the slender necks of discarded spring-loaded architect lamps. Over the years, he had collected more than 100 of them while cycling through the city. The first iteration of the Tecta Light was designed as a custom piece for a conference room. The client, an architect, mentioned a famous Johann Wolfgang von Goethe quote - "architecture is frozen music" - that inspired the form.

"Soundwaves create a static wave held in time. It starts off straight, has a motion and then comes back to straight," Gomez says. The slim slats come from the lamp necks, while the large tubes that hold the bulbs are found IKEA desk legs. Gomez has procured enough raw materials for more custom orders, be it a chandelier or a small table light. For him, it's a labour of love, for both design and the planet.



STUDENT WORK



BOUBA by Heidi Rey

"Much of design is about the individual experience, as opposed to a shared experience," says Heidi Rey, a recent graduate of the Emily Carr University of Art and Design's industrial design program. Bouba (named after the boubu/kiki effect that maps the relationship between speech sounds and the visual shape of objects) is a dining experience that challenges how we engage with others. "It's about togetherness and bringing people together with form," Rey explains.

Rey worked with solid aspen wood because of its abundance and minimal grain. "It looks very soft, welcoming and calm," she says.

Melton wool was selected for being a natural fibre as well as its visual and physical feeling of comfort, highlighting the roundness of the boubu theory. "I really wanted to feel that softness."

Each bench is meant to seat two people, so one is forced to interact with the person beside you and co-ordinate how to sit down and get up from the enclosed space. "I chose the circle as a form because there's no head of the table, no hierarchy," Rey says.

The modular nature of the design allows the benches to be pulled apart and used in different scenarios to foster a variety of interactions.



HOW WE DID IT To compile this list, writer Anya Georgijevic reached out to Canadian design insiders as well as the featured designers from the 2020 list to pitch the residential architecture, interior and housewares projects that are capturing their attention right now. Projects had to be completed in 2020 by a Canadian designer or firm based in Canada or abroad. Architecture and interior submissions had to be homes located in Canada, and housewares had to be available for purchase by Canadians. Students graduating from Canadian design schools in 2020 were also invited to submit work designed during their final year of study. A group of editors from The Globe narrowed down the projects to the 10 featured here. Think we missed the mark and have a design-savvy suggestion of your own? Post a photo of your contender to Instagram and tag the picture @globestyle and #DesigningCanada.

ADDITIONAL CREDITS
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Art direction by Benjamin MacDonald