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LIFE AT HOME

LATEST NEWS AT CALGARYHERALD.COM/LIFE

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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2010

AROUND THE HOUSE

So you think you can build a house?

MY RONA HOME • From now through Oct. 24, homeowner hopefuls can apply to be on Season 2 of My Rona Home, airing spring 2011, at citytv.com/myronahome or at select Rona stores in Alberta.

For those not in the know, the local reality TV show follows two families as they compete to design, build and win their own home. Participants must be potential first-time homeowners who are currently renting accommodation.

They must also live in the Calgary area or be willing to relocate should they win. Finally, teams must be willing to get involved in every aspect of home building, from installing drywall to interior decorating.

A 'method' for holiday madness

NEW PRODUCTS • With Thanksgiving on next weekend, Method has come out with some new environmentally friendly kitchen products to keep your sink looking stylish, and your dishes and hands clean.

Method dish soap now comes in a hand-held pump bottle, to make dispensing the tough-on-grease formula easy. The company has a new hand wash, too — this one is made for the kitchen and aims to neutralize yucky, lingering food aromas (think fish and garlic).

All Method products are free of ingredients such as triclosan, parabens and phthalates. They also come in recyclable bottles that are made from 100 per cent recycled plastic. And the soaps smell great, too. Go to methodhome.com for details and to find a local retailer.

Get the decor lowdown

TOURS • Join Calgary interior decorator Aly Velji as he leads four themed decor tours to showrooms around the city as part of Bow Valley College's Live a Better Life series.

Velji will share his "insider tips" to help you become a decor, flooring, fabric or DIY expert in no time. Here's the tour lineup:

- The Art of Display: Oct. 4 from 7-9 p.m. at HomeSense;
- Tiles and Flooring: Oct. 23 from 10 a.m. to noon at ICON Stone and Tile;
- Fabrics: Oct. 30 from 10 a.m. to noon at DWA Interior Furnishings;
- DIY Decor: Nov. 9 from 7-9 p.m. at Rona.

The above excursions cost \$49 each. Register online at bowvalleycollege.ca/apply — the excursions are listed under Continuing Education and then Interior Decorating — or call 403-410-1400. For more information, call Margaret Toye at 403-410-1587.

— Compiled by Lisa Kadane, Calgary Herald



LOVING & LIVING IN HISTORY

FUNCTION AND STYLE MEET TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY CHARM

ANDREA COX
FOR THE CALGARY HERALD

When it comes to older homes, it's always a compromise.

Although homes from yesteryear usually offer oodles of charm and history, and boast the convenience of an established inner-city neighbourhood, they tend to lack usable space, feature little functionality, offer little or no storage, and can be fraught with draughts. For those who enjoy the charm, however, the attractions well outweigh the pitfalls.

Take Wanda and Darren Fach, for example. "We both love older homes

and the convenience of inner-city living," says Darren.

When they purchased an 100-year-old charmer 15 years ago, they fell in love with its grace and elegance, while overlooking its age-inspired quirks — including no insulation, antiquated plumbing and electrical services and only one shower, which was a rusty tin cube in the home's unfinished basement.

"It was terrible," says Wanda about the shower.

For years the couple endured. But as their family blossomed to include two children and a dog, the home's challenges were magnified.

SEE HISTORY, PAGE G3



Top left: Suzette Toews, Interior Evolution, with homeowner Wanda Fach in the renovated kitchen. Toews helped the Fachs sympathetically renovate their 1912 inner-city home, including adding a decorative tin ceiling in the dining room and creating a master bedroom ensuite.

Photos, Christina Ryan, Calgary Herald

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A red pepper rush

DEBBIE TRAVIS
HOUSE TO HOME



Dear Debbie: When I discovered an enticing stack of old textiles at a flea market, I was dazzled by the colours. There was also a bookshelf that had been painted many times, but the dominant colour was red. It made me want a red room. What are my options?

— Cassandra

Dear Cassandra: Dense, saturated colours have delightful energy and passion. If you have had the opportunity to enjoy dinner in a vibrant red room setting, you may have noticed the lively conversation that accompanied the food.

Red animates and fills us with confidence. And, as you noticed at the flea market, red draws you in.

When red is mixed with glazing liquid and rubbed over a surface, the resulting translucent finish allows light from beneath to filter through. The result is a gentler, old-world look, but still full of fire. White and blue dishes and natural wood have a cool, balancing effect when paired with red as pictured here. So that would make a fabulous dining room, kitchen or even a study for you.

Dip into the deep rich shades of red that have some blue in them and you have seductive hues perfect for a bedroom. Bring in your selection of blankets, draperies and pillows in exotic fabrics and some sparkly sequins and trim to build layers of tactile texture and interest.

If you are intimidated by such strong, dramatic hues as vermilion red or fiery orange, you can start with one wall or a few accessories. It's like slipping into a pair of red shoes and slinging a hot pepper handbag over your shoulder. It feels good. Enjoy your red room.

Dear Debbie: My bathroom has three cedar walls and a cedar ceiling and I would like to paint them white.

Can you advise me on white-washing? I would prefer a white stain effect rather than a painted



Courtesy, Debbie Travis

Plaster walls and dish cabinet have been rubbed with hot pepper red in this vibrant eating space at Rancho La Puerta.

look. The cedar is tongue and groove and removing it is not an option.

— Brian

Dear Brian: In order for the stain to sink into the wood, first sand the wood to open the pores (and remove the sealant if there is one). Then you can proceed with either white stain or a paint wash. Roll or brush it on and then wipe off the excess. Apply a second coat to build up the effect you are after.

Because this is a bathroom, seal your work with varnish. Semi-gloss and gloss are the most durable, but if you prefer a flat finish, simply add two coats.

Dear Debbie: We are in the process of building a new house and now have the task of choosing all the colours.

In the kitchen, we have chosen espresso, a very dark colour for the cabinets. The countertops are very light — white laminate and Kashmir White granite. The floor

is dark, but not quite as dark as the cabinets. Our appliances are stainless steel and the wall colour we've planned is cream white.

Is the contrast between the cabinets and the countertops too much?

— Maggie

Dear Maggie: Your white countertops sound good, but you may want to think about adding a little colour to the kitchen, either in the countertops or even the paint on the wall.

With the dark wood, pistachio green would be both soothing and elegant. Lemon would be more dramatic, very contemporary, but again the contrast would be exciting.

DEBBIE TRAVIS'S HOUSE TO HOME COLUMN IS PRODUCED BY DEBBIE TRAVIS AND BARBARA DINGLE. PLEASE E-MAIL YOUR QUESTIONS TO HOUSE2HOME@DEBBIETRAVIS.COM. YOU CAN FOLLOW DEBBIE ON TWITTER AT TWITTER.COM/DEBBIE_TRAVIS, AND VISIT DEBBIE'S NEW WEBSITE, DEBBIETRAVIS.COM.

HISTORY: Renovations

FROM GI

"We really came to a point where we had to make some changes," recalls Wanda, adding the bathroom situation really spurred them on. "The kids were at the age where they needed their privacy and sharing one bathroom just was not working."

And with growing children taking up more room, "we really needed more usable space," says Darren.

The Fachs had attempted to achieve this by completing a few minor renovations over the years: they transformed a dingy and dilapidated room extending from the kitchen into a playroom for the children, and reworked the front entranceway and rear mud room.

"Every time we did one of these little renos, it became clear that at some point the house would need new electrical and new plumbing," Darren says.

In fact, the electrical was so antiquated the entire second floor operated on one knob and tube electrical circuit.

"If Wanda had the iron on and then started the blow dryer, the upstairs electrical would shut off," Darren recalls with a smile. In addition, the home was not properly insulated, and although beautiful, many of the windows were original.

The family briefly toyed with moving, but the home's charm and the warmth, friendliness and convenience of their neighbourhood inspired them to stay put.

When the idea of a renovation first began to jell, the owners thought they would simply address the plumbing, electrical and insulation issues, add an ensuite to the master bedroom, create a much-needed laundry room and modernize the basement. But, with some gentle nudging from designer Suzette Toews of Interior Evolution, this initial concept evolved into something greater.

"We needed to get the value out of the renovation," explains Toews. She urged the owners to consider some esthetic changes to the main floor; namely a kitchen makeover and the creation of a powder room. Staying on budget was a major priority for Darren and with the help of project manager Romi Lagadin of Squared Project Management, they were able to find the money to renovate the kitchen within the existing budget.

"We really wanted to maintain the character of the home and we realized that we could convert



Christina Ryan, Calgary Herald

The Fachs adore the character of their 1912 inner-city home.

the home's original footprint into really usable space," explains Darren. A luxurious ensuite was carved from the extra-large master bedroom, the main stairwell was opened and the two side entranceways were replaced with large windows.

For both owners it was essential that the design incorporate as many of the home's original elements as possible. The original 1912 hardwood was refinished and integrated with new hardwood in the kitchen and some of the doors were reused. Wainscoting, cabinetry doors with seeded glass, fixtures and a new banister were all fashioned to emulate design motifs at the turn of the 20th century.

In the dining room, Toews created a show-stopping tin tray ceiling to mask bulkheads created when plumbing was added for the upstairs ensuite. In the kitchen, an original window, which had been walled in, was reopened, allowing views to the rear perennial garden.

On both main and upper floors, the owners wanted to create a feeling of comfortable elegance that exuded timeless appeal.

"We kept the palette fairly neutral, and added pops of colour with accessories," says Toews.

The family is thrilled with the outcome. "For 15 years we lived with the cold and the drafts and the tin shower. Now we have it all. We feel like we have died and gone to heaven," says Darren.

ANDREA COX IS A CALGARY-BASED FREELANCE WRITER. SHE CAN BE CONTACTED AT LIVINGBETTER2@YAHOO.CA.

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