

# Shades of Grey



VANCOUVER DESIGNER  
KELLY DECK CRAFTS A CHIC,  
MOODY MODEL HOME.

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**Elegance cannot** be faked. You either have it or you don't. Those old Hollywood starlets, the likes of Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich and Rita Hayworth, had it in spades. They embraced it, embodied it and defined it. And that same enduring style can be felt the moment you walk through the front door of this small Vancouver townhouse. Despite the fact that it's less than two years old, it has a sense of history. And yet it also feels undeniably chic and contemporary.

Located in the city's vibrant Kitsilano neighbourhood, the Craftsman-inspired cedar-shake exterior hints at the simple elegance that unfolds inside. "We wanted to create something timeless, a place that, when viewed 80 or even 150 years from now, will still be beautiful," says designer and HGTV's *Take It Outside* host Kelly Deck, who, along with her team at Kelly Deck Design, created the enchanting space. She was brought in by Mount Royal Developments in 2008 to do the interior design for three townhouse units carved out of a large single-family home.

"Houses should have a voice; they should have personality," says Deck, who studied painting, sculpture and ceramics at the Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design in the 1990s, cut her teeth in the design sphere creating



ABOVE: The townhouse's living-dining room is blessed with lots of windows, and the pale sofa designer Kelly Deck (*left*) chose amps up the brightness. By placing a relatively low-backed sofa with its back to the dining area, she defines the living area without hampering the visual flow between the spaces. A simple grouping of white plates acts as art in the dining area.

**Furnishings**, Liberty; **drapes**, Kravet Canada and Window Works; **rug**, Ikea; **pillow fabrics**, Robert Allen. OPPOSITE: A sophisticated take on a mudroom bench, this dark wood dresser in the entry is perfect for stashing purses, mail, keys, hats, scarves, etc. **Chest**, vase, Liberty; **artwork** by David Guenter; **coral**, The Cross.



dishware, textiles and bedding during a stint in Cardiff, Wales, and later ran her own decor boutique, Simple, opened in Vancouver in 2002. Usually, the people who live in a house define its style and personality, she explains, but since this townhouse was a model suite, there were no homeowners to defer to when deciding what this house would say. So Deck and her team had full creative licence. Their goal: imbue the two-storey, 1,100-square-foot space with a luxe, elegant and “ever so slightly French” look.

To create a sense of grandeur, they bathed all the walls in a soft dove grey. Then, they played with the shade. “Choosing one colour and varying the tones keeps things simple and timeless,” says Deck. In the kitchen, the cabinet millwork is a deeper, matte-finished flannel grey that matches the veining of the Bianca Carrara marble that wraps around a high peninsula separating the kitchen

TOP LEFT: Wainscoting and porcelain floor tile are durable choices for an entry in a rainy city. A group of black-framed doilies is a dramatic and affordable art wall. **Throw**, Kelly Deck Design; **bench**, The Cross; **boots**, Gum Drops. TOP RIGHT: While the living room is small, it possesses all the right elements: a well-defined focal point in the fireplace and built-ins; loads of storage in the crisp,

X-panel built-ins; and plush, comfy seating for at least four. The large baroque mirror balances the proportions of the fireplace. **Millwork**, fireplace, Kelly Deck Design; **furnishings**, Liberty. RIGHT: Flannel-grey cabinets with filing-drawer pulls contrast the white quartz-composite counters in the efficient kitchen. Running the cabinetry and subway tile to the ceiling customizes the space.





from the dining room. Pale, milky grey armchairs pull the feature hue into the living area. And throughout the house, the oak flooring was treated to a graphite-toned stain.

Chic black and pure white were layered in to ground the greys, and spring pinks and jewel-toned purples are subtly carried from room to room, giving the home a distinct femininity. (The grey has an innate flexibility: it looks great with many other colours as well — perhaps yellows or oranges or pale greens — so just by bringing in different accessories, the buyer can easily change the mood.) And yet, the glamour is meted out with a light hand here. Delicate, low-key touches include mirrors and crystal chandeliers, which inject sparkle and reflection, and nostalgic framed lace doilies. Deliberate masculine elements keep the look from feeling too fussy or girly. Take in the spaces as a whole, and you'll notice how quiet they really are: there's very little pattern to be found. Even the patterned throw pillows feature subdued tone-on-tone prints or lace detailing. "I love pattern," Deck says. "But we wanted to get at the essence of the house, and we felt pattern would have distracted from the rooms themselves."

Because the house has such a pared-back, unfussy look, storage had to be incorporated through clever and stylish means. Small cupboards atop the kitchen cabinet uppers are perfect for items that aren't used on a daily basis, like

At the top of the stairs, a bevy of silk butterflies is a whimsical alternative to large framed artwork. The landing is outfitted with a cosy tufted bench. **Bench**, Liberty; **throw**, HomeSense; **pillow**, The Cross.



TOP LEFT: The custom geometric design in the big shower pairs luxe grey and white marble tiles with affordable white subway tiles. Using a bold design like this meant Deck could scale back on costlier materials. She carried over the square-edged design to the plumbing fixtures and vanity hardware.

**Lighting**, The Lighting Warehouse; **hardware**, Cantu; **faucets**, Kohler. LEFT: Tucked in beside the living room built-ins, the small, elegant office nook features an inky black velvet chair, a studded leather stool and a marble-top bistro table. **Furnishings**, mirror, Liberty; **shoes**, Nine West.



LEFT: Upholstered in simple white micro-fibre and detailed with brushed nailheads, the understated headboard almost melts into the wall — a look that's chic and ethereal. The slender crystal lamps and elaborately carved mirrors are equally bright and airy. The bedside vignettes work as horizontal extensions of the demure headboard. A bold black and white hide rug punches up the pale carpeting and keeps the look from becoming too monotone. It's an edgy element in the French-inspired room. **Headboard**, Kelly Deck Design; **furnishings, accessories**, Liberty; **white bench**, Moe's Home Collection. BELOW: Even accents as simple as flowers can help reiterate a home's mood or palette — and can be changed up as needed for a new look. **Crystal cube**, The Cross; **table**, Liberty.

large serving platters, formal table linens, even Christmas decorations. Built-ins flanking the fireplace in the living room feature deep, open shelving and lower cupboards with a classic X-panel motif to tone down clutter. Using a vanity instead of a pedestal sink in the bathroom means much more storage here, and adding a dresser in the front hall creates a home for keys, mail, purses, and off-season hats, gloves and scarves.

To bring a sense of whimsy and keep the home from feeling too subdued, Deck and her team created innovative — and inexpensive — art displays throughout, pieces she describes as slightly cheeky with a “film noir edge.” A handful of thrift-store doilies, crocheting and lace tatting were stitched to black mats, mounted inside different black frames and hung in the front foyer. At the top of the stairs, dozens of silk butterflies (carefully spray-painted black) were affixed to the wall — a quirky, unexpected art installation. “To make a house special, you have to be willing to spend the time and be creative, especially if you're working with a tight budget,” says Deck.

The finished result is a brand new, move-in-ready home that feels as though it has been lovingly tended to over the years. Yet because Deck and her team opted for longevity as opposed to trendiness at every turn in designing it, the home is sure to look fresh for years to come. **H&H**

