

NATIONAL POST
SATURDAY,
APRIL 30, 2011



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STYLE

LACQUER LOVE
Samantha Pynn
redoes the
kitchen cabinet.
PH6



RENO

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A revisit reveals
remarkable
changes.
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BROWSE

KING CITY
Live like royalty,
if you can pay
\$3.5-million.
PH20



THE BEST CONDO COVERAGE IN THE GTA



TWO'S COMPANY

Meet the interior designer and the architect behind Peter Street Condos, where the style is always consistent

By Martha Uniacke Breen

Peter Clewes and Elaine Cecconi at the Toronto offices of architectsAlliance.

PETER J. THOMPSON / NATIONAL POST

There's a fresh breeze blowing through lower downtown, and it's not the Venturi winds caused by the bank towers. It's condos — and with as many as 40 residential buildings under construction or scheduled to go up over the next few years, it's going to completely transform the character of the area.

One of them, the Peter Street Condominiums at the corner of Adelaide and Peter streets in the Entertainment District, is an interesting example of how a thoroughly modern structure can be designed to work well down here. After all, this is not a featureless greenfield next to the 401; the neighbourhood is one of the oldest parts of the city, and until recently it mainly featured Victorian-era storefronts and stately warehouses and office buildings, some of which continue to be architectural treasures.

The neighbourhood still bears some of the scars of the

teardown mania of the '60s and '70s, with dilapidated loft conversions and parking lots scattered up and down its blocks, and not so long ago it turned into something of a ghost town after the office workers went home at night. The proliferation of nightclubs that give the area its current nickname animated its street life in later years, with mixed results; but this is evolving as well.

But then, two things have happened in the past few years. One is that the city has developed a huge appetite for residential space — it's one of the hottest locations on the continent for new condo construction. And the other is that living downtown has become ultra-chic.

With all this new construction going on, it's easy to get it wrong; just look at the glass phalanx that separates the city from the waterfront.

COMPANY continued on PH6

“Some refinishers will use latex paint, but most will tell you that lacquer is better. I don’t want to get all techie on you, so suffice it to say that latex paint clogs the spray gun. Lacquer dries quickly and will give you an incredibly smooth finish — *Samantha Pynn*, designer



The Pure Design team revived a tired kitchen with 80% high-gloss black and grey lacquer paint.

VIRGINIA MACDONALD

Lacquer love

Kitchen cabinets have good bones? Don’t demolish, remodel, with a snappy solution that’s sure to get everyone talking



SAMANTHA PYNN
Pynn Pointers

Hi Sam,
Love your column! I have been looking for a place that lacquer-sprays cabinets. I found a place that uses latex paint, but they still look painted to me. Could you please let me know where I can have them lacquer-sprayed in the GTA 'cause we have 45 cabinets!
Thanks very much, Lynda

Hi Samantha,
I read your last article about kitchen makeovers. Can you give me the contact info? Were you happy? Did they take it all down or do it in your kitchen? Does the sprayer supply the paint or should I?
Thanks for your help,
Debra

Sam,
I would like to have my cabinets painted in a high gloss to work with the aesthetic of my place. I’ve seen walls painted in high gloss, but not cabinets. Can you please share your secret?
Amy

Wow! Since writing about my brother’s small-space kitchen makeover two weeks ago I’ve received countless questions on where to have

your kitchen cabinet doors spray-lacquered, where to buy the paint and how glossy the paint should be.
First, I’d like to say that there was a small error a few weeks ago — my brother painted his cabinets by hand. Painting by hand requires patience, but many people feel it gives cabinets a custom look. Contractors like to use oil paint in an eggshell finish for cabinetry because it’s durable, yields a smooth finish and can be colour-matched to any paint chip. However, many companies no longer carry oil paint because of its negative impact on the environment and the IAQ (indoor air quality) of your home.
In response to consumer demand for a durable and scrubbable oil paint replacement, paint companies continue to improve latex (water-based) paint.
Sico Paints recently launched Sico Furniture and Cabinet paint, a low-VOC line that performs like oil-based paints and will work on any surface including melamine and medium-density fibreboard (MDF).
Some refinishers will use latex paint, but most will tell you that lacquer is better. I don’t want to get all techie on you, so suffice it to say that latex paint clogs the spray gun. Lacquer dries quickly and will give you an incredibly smooth and good-as-new finish, but it’s not as easy on the environment as latex. However, I feel that keeping an entire kitchen out of the landfill justifies using lacquer.
I am always happy with the results of having a kitchen or piece of furniture professionally spray-lacquered. You can remove your doors and bring them to Benjamin Refinishing

(416-745-2559) or Beresford Inc (416-854-4692, beresfordinc.ca).
The cabinet carcass or cabinet boxes will need to be painted by hand. I would suggest using one of the new latex paints on the market like Sico’s Furniture and Cabinet paint or Benjamin Moore’s Aura line.
You can have your kitchen painted on-site. Nagy’s Decorating and Design (janosn2@sympatico.ca) will spray-paint a condo kitchen using lacquer paint starting at \$2,000. Because rooms need to be taped off and sometimes an exhaust system is required, on-site kitchen spraying is not an easy or cheap job.
When it comes to paint, you can order through the refinishers or you can go to Pro Glo paint in Concord (905-532-9700) to have latex custom-blended. Latex paint doesn’t always produce an exact match to the paint chip. If you want your walls and cabinet boxes in the exact same shade, have the cabinet paint (lacquer) matched to a paint chip. Pro Glo will then re-match the wall paint to the lacquer.
Finally, the secret formula for the perfect gloss or sheen: Here are the gloss percentages to request for your paint.
■ 10%-20% matte or “dull rub” finish
■ 30%-40% satin
■ 50%-60% semi-gloss
■ 80%-90% high gloss
Even though I have to ask Dino De Lellis of Pro Glo paints every time I order lacquer paint, it’s not such a big secret.
Happy spray-lacquering!
National Post
Send your small-space question to asksampynn@gmail.com

Small spaces can be very comfortable

COMPANY

Continued from Page PH1

Early condo developments such as Harbourfront assumed people would rely on their cars just as they do on the outskirts, and there’s little incentive to walk to the store or the movies around there; even the TTC isn’t all that convenient to the area. But with thousands of people about to move into lower-central downtown — not to mention the wealth of existing architecture designed long before the automobile was king — a new model is imperative.
architectsAlliance, the interior design firm Cecconi Simone, and developer Centre Court put real thought into solving the range of sometimes competing issues that make a condo building in this area successful. Sitting in the architect’s offices in the Commodore Building directly across from the site (itself a dignified pre-First World War office building), architect Peter Clewes and interior designer Elaine Cecconi explained that they collaborated right from the initial stages, to ensure the design would work equally well for residents and for the unique demands of the neighbourhood.
Mr. Clewes started, he says, by considering the immediate area surrounding the new tower. “We started by asking, ‘What’s nice about the Commodore and other buildings nearby?’ There are many handsome turn-of-the-century buildings around here that have great bones; architects and artists love them. So we wanted to imitate the height and setback of these buildings, with large windows and brick façades at street level, and then the tower ‘layered’ above them.” The building features a clearly defined division between the lower section and the tower, from retail space at street level that features tall, broad windows (a reference to the late-Victorian storefronts nearby), a middle section of mixed office and residential with windows framed in black in a vaguely Mondrian-style grid, then a maximum of glass for the tower itself.

Since the condo’s units are designed for maximum density and, to put it politely, compact — its 40 storeys will house 429 units, ranging from studios at 303 square feet to three-bedrooms at 772 sq.ft. — making the individual condos comfortable and efficient was a challenge. Ms. Cecconi points out that the tower’s wraparound glass gave her firm a little flexibility in arranging, say, where bedrooms could go and views maximized, but it was a little like designing a boat galley.
“The footprint of the building is long and narrow, so we had lots of window to work with. But other features had to be very carefully planned: more compact, streamlined kitchens with integrated appliances, baths that are small but with a wealth of storage built in. The rooms are comfortable, but not huge — our residents aren’t going to have dinner parties for eight; they’ll use the neighbourhood. They can walk everywhere; they don’t even need to own a car if they don’t want to.”
One of the pluses of having interior design and exterior architecture created in collaboration is the ability to create a consistency in style between inside and out. The lobby is an example, where exterior elements such as limestone and the rugged, attractive texture of Core-Ten steel panels incorporated into the storefronts are visually consistent with the medium-toned wood and stone tile used in the lobby. (The floor and one wall are taupe stone tile, while ceiling and the other wall are wood strip; the end wall is a panel of backlit stretched Mylar.)
“The relation between interior design and architecture is everything,” Ms. Cecconi says. “In the ’90s, often interior designers only decorated the model suite, but now that’s

changing; designers are getting involved with the entire process. And with a site like this one, where the space is tight and the units so small — we used to design one-bedrooms that were 700 sq. ft., but here they’re 520 — the tolerances are very finely tuned.”

The object, of course, is to make living small not only comfortable, but preferable. “It’s an interesting social phenomenon,” Mr. Clewes says. “How can people live in such small units? Actually very well. If it’s well-laid out, it can be very lovely. There’s a very spare, clean way of living that’s very attractive. People will use the neighbourhood more, because they don’t have the 36-inch Sub-Zero and large space to entertain — so they’ll go out more.”
“There’s a [growing] mix of office, retail and residential here, which is turning the neighbourhood into one of the most interesting in the city. And it all starts with these smaller units; it creates a culture, a vibrancy in the neighbourhood.”

National Post



Clearly defined divisions at Peter Street Condominiums.