



ONWARD AND UPWARD

ARCHITECTURE: GRAHAM SHERWIN STUDIO
INTERIOR DESIGN: MITCHELL FREEDLAND
TEXT: ABIGAIL STONE
PHOTOGRAPHY: ROGER DAVIES





“We can make anything look good,” designer Mitchell Freedland says. “But my goal is to make it so that it functions for the clients and makes them happy.” In the case of this three-story waterfront home in Vancouver, designed for an empty-nest couple, that meant a space intimate enough for two that could also eventually host large events. Being hired at the same time as architect John Graham of Graham Sherwin Studio allowed Freedland’s firm to be involved in the property’s development from the beginning. “So we got to have a hand in shaping how the house came to life,” Freedland says.

It was clear from the first meeting, when Freedland and the client pulled out matching tear sheets showcasing Lianne Gold’s Grande Cielo chandelier from Ralph Pucci, that the two were in sync. So it was not surprising when Freedland, spotting slipcovered leather chairs by Formations he felt would be perfect for the dining room, learned that the client already had her eye on them. Grouped with Hellman Chang’s Z Quad table and the Solna sideboard from Bruno Moirard, the quartet completes one of the only spaces in the home that relies on already-designed pieces rather than bespoke furnishings.

Tilting toward custom work was a factor of geography, the unique qualities of the site and the client’s involvement. “It was great having someone with a strong vision,” says Freedland. “She was clear on how they wanted to live.” With sliding doors that fully open the narrow home to a large terrace that overlooks the water, allowing life to move seamlessly from inside to out, the interiors would need to be dynamic enough to hold their own against the dramatic and mesmerizing view.

Achieving that feat calls upon an interior designer’s knowledge of how texture, proportion, color and scale interact. “I wish I could tell you there’s a method to the madness but it just starts to evolve,” says Freedland, who brings two decades of experience in commercial and residential work across Canada to the table. “We start with the floor plan and consider how everything relates. You’re striving for a sense of balance.” That awareness led to the need for specific pieces. “If the sofa is bigger and chunkier, the club chairs a little fatter and friendlier, then the other things need to be skinnier or finer.” With a finite number of showrooms available in Vancouver, sourcing means traveling, usually to Seattle or Los Angeles. “Since she was very particular—she wouldn’t like an arm or a leg but she might like the thickness of a pillow—custom was the best way to go,” says Freedland. “We’re able to hand-tailor everything—the seat depth, the pitch, the firmness—all of those things that don’t have to do with the aesthetics but with comfort. Plus she liked the idea of having things that were created for her and her husband’s taste.”

That encompassed a preference for natural, tactile textiles—wools and linens, raw silks and leathers—in shades of brown and beige. Set against this neutral backdrop, the art, which makes an appearance in every room, including the bathrooms, the pantry and the wine cellar, shines. Witness two calligraphy scrolls by Hangzhou artist Wang Dongling that dominate the stairwell, unfurling from the upper hallway. “We all—her husband, the architect, me—loved the pieces but we weren’t sure about the scale,” Freedland recalls. “But she was positive they were going to work and the minute they went up, we knew she was right. They looked great.”

That delicate sense of balance and poise suffuses this home. On the main level, the living room’s seating moves from a casual grouping of tub chairs clustered around an ottoman, all upholstered in Dedar’s Deco, to a formal ensemble anchored by a substantial custom cast-glass coffee table and a custom sofa with throw pillows covered in fabrics by Jim Thompson. The indoor areas find their counterpart outside, where pieces from Sutherland are covered in fabric from Donghia. “Everything ties together,” Freedland points out, noting how materials and shapes find their echo throughout the home, creating a pleasing sense of harmony. Consider the correlation between the faceted form of that Lianne Gold chandelier and the powder room’s William Haines Ice Crystals acrylic wall sconces; the link between the bronze hood over the kitchen’s range and the living room’s fireplace surround; the relationship between the curved backs of the chairs in both the living room and the master bedroom; the plush Tufenkian carpets in the living room and the master; the natural oak used for the cabinetry in both the kitchen and the master bathroom; or the limestone that unifies inside and out. “There is a sense of order and comfort that threads through all of my work,” says Freedland. “My work is about making your life better. I’m striving to make you feel good.” *Mitchell Freedland, mitchellfreedland.com; Graham Sherwin Studio, grahamsherwinstudio.com*





