

A Condominium's True Worth

Designer Thu Watson is making Vancouver's
luxury condominiums better by design.

By Tracey Ellis



I knew I was in the presence of a great creative mind the moment I set foot in Thu Watson's restaurant, the Quay in Yaletown. The restaurant is the definition of dining 'ambiance.' I didn't come for lunch, which I had anyway, but for an interview with Thu Watson, owner of True Worth Realty, during which I was to learn how the mind of a truly talented designer worked and what it was about Thu that made her see condominium space as a modern haven of comfort and luxury.

The luxury condominium market in Vancouver is going strong, and for those who want the convenience of turnkey living and the elegance of an international-inspired contemporary décor, Thu Watson is the designer to call.

Condominiums have long suffered the stigma of being small, boxy spaces that are hard to decorate and make into a home. Thu readily accepts the challenge of decorating such spaces with an

attention to detail that is impeccable. Traditionally, a condominium, even a luxury condominium, is a smaller space than is provided by a house. Thu takes on this challenge by making great use of the space that is available: of saving space and opening space up to make the residence more welcoming.

The use of glass is essential to Thu's designs. In her view, our rainy weather and lack of sun-



shine lends itself to the use of coloured glass or textured art glass walls to replace the traditional gyproc walls for an open aquatic feel. As Thu says, "Glass is beautiful and functional, it makes a room more open and is easy to change."



According to Thu, ceilings are one of the most overlooked design spaces in the home. Following the trend that began in Europe a year-and-a-half ago, Thu began using silver and gold faux finishes on ceilings as well as on feature walls. In general, European trends in home décor take two to three years to reach consumers and designers in North America, but as Thu points out, her clients are well travelled, worldly people who are well versed in different styles from around the world. Thu works with one of the most sought after architects in Vancouver, Ted Feenstra; along with Soco Design, who do most of her wall textures; and Tanya Slingsby, whose artistic talents find a home in

A good night's sleep is all-important to Thu, who takes the functionality of this room seriously. According to Thu, the bedroom should be an open space that is not busy. It should not be too dark, nor too light. Since we spend years of our life in sleep, it should be a space that is conducive to a restful slumber.

In Thu's world of design, every corner is important. Each corner must have something to make it an interesting place to look. "It is more enjoyable to the eye, more engaging," Thu said. This I observed in her restaurant, where glass and flowers, water features and artful effects catch your eye at every turn, instilling a sense of calmness and tranquility.

And this is what Thu revealed to me in her interview. She is not caught up in trends for the sake of being trendy. She concentrates on functionality, on beauty and natural, ergonomic flow. She understands what makes a homeowner comfortable and somehow is able to match a client's personality traits and lifestyle to give them living spaces that are comfortable, sexy and modern. It is her personal philosophy about what living well means and her dedication to every detail of her work that has made her one of the most sought after interior designers for upscale international clients in Vancouver's luxury condominium market.

many of Thu's client's living spaces. From start to finish they work with Thu to provide the best turnkey designs for luxury condominiums.

When asked about trends in 2005, Thu again leads the way with the current European tastes. While the current North American trend leans to spa-inspired lights and diffused, clear brights, Thu will be working with darker woods and colours and deep, rich colours in furnishings, like black and purple. Two-tone ceilings give a sense depth as ceilings in condominiums are traditionally lower than ceilings in houses. Thu says textures are clean – not busy. The smooth, clean surface of tile from wall to wall is big over hardwood (as long as it is heated). In the kitchen think cars – modern metallic finishes that are easy to clean, yet are modern and elegant – comfortable, welcoming shapes with interesting curves.