

Home Profile

# Room service

## Small condo, huge makeover

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**H**ow can a small living space with only 1100-square feet be reinvented to become a home that offers hotel-esque escapism in a fresh, lively and dynamic environment? Well, we need only ask Anna Abbruzzo and Alain Courchesne of *Igloo Design* who worked with the motivated homeowners of this Nun's Island condo. For this design team, it was a "dream project" to undertake this challenging endeavour with clients who had a sense of style and a deep appreciation for design. They envisioned what the end result could be, and by all accounts the outcome was a triumphant success.

Mila Aguiar and Ricardo Poupada – a trend-savvy, metropolitan couple – saw their new condo as both an entertaining hub as well as a home. The mandate was to reflect this duality in the design, from the structural changes to the decor choices.

To give the space a glam lounge-feel, the *Igloo* team immediately recognized that a second bedroom (conveniently located next to the kitchen) would have to be relinquished to create a new spacious living area. Employing clever, small-space design techniques, new areas were delineated to create intimate gathering spots areas for guests, as well as functional spaces for the couple in their daily activities. For instance, a faux fireplace separates and beautifies the space, and functions as an impromptu bar – how's that for space economy?

As this chic couple would be entertaining often, an elegantly neutral colour palette was chosen for the living



Graphic art pieces were chosen specifically for their organic shapes and clean designs to punctuate the crisp lines of the modern furniture and soften the otherwise very linear design.



“It’s so subtle; if you blink you miss it,” says Abbruzzo of the wallpaper.

## Home Profile

room, resulting in an invitingly cosy and modern ambiance. “The living space is neutral because we wanted it to be a blank canvas,” explains Abbruzzo. “We wanted the hosts and guests to shine, as opposed to being in competition with the surroundings.”

An important consideration in designing this *au courant* condo was to quell the industrial feel of the original space, which featured exposed concrete and drywall. Abbruzzo feels that the popularity of the “loft-look” is subsiding, and that the new operative word in design is “appropriateness.” “Typical loft materials – concrete, metal, wood – can work in certain instances,” she explains. “But it comes down to whether or not a certain design component fits with what we’re trying to achieve with the client.”

For these urban dwellers, chic and warm was the goal – quite the opposite of barren and stark. So, up went the wallpaper, concealing the condo’s former incarnation as a loft-type space. “Wallpaper and carpeting have a bad reputation because they’ve been misused in the past,” says Abbruzzo, admitting that she was met with scepticism from the homeowners when the hot topic of wallpaper was raised. “The reality is that for a space to be balanced and rhythmic, you need to create pattern and texture. A space feels static when the materials are too flat; people mistake this starkness for



The bathroom is exquisitely seductive. “It’s a play on transparency and seduction,” explains designer Anna Abbruzzo of *Igloo Design*. “Even when the blinds are drawn you can see the person’s silhouette. It’s very sexy.”



- Design: Anna Abbruzzo and Alain Courchesne, *Igloo Design*
- Lighting: *Fraser*
- Art work: *Galerie d'Art St-Ambroise*
- Dining room table: *Latitude Nord*
- Curtains: *Unique Home Décor*
- Accessories: *Alessi*
- Bedding: *The Bay*

## Home Profile



Hotel-chic is a popular trend – everyone wants to indulge in a "home away from home."

modernism. Cosiness is important, whether a home is modern or traditional." As for the homeowners, they quickly recognized that the texture and depth of the fine wall covering adds a touch of elegance, while still suiting their modern penchant.

If the living area was to be the perfect backdrop for hosting a cocktail soiree, the bedroom was to be the ideal romantic retreat. The classic combination of cool blue and the rich brown of the wood sets the tone for a stylish bedroom. The key to making this small room – and the entire condo for that matter – feel airy was to opt for built-ins rather than stand-alone furniture. While furnishings often call attention themselves, built-ins tend to dissolve seamlessly into the surrounding decor. "I think that we see fewer built-ins because of our do-it-yourself culture," affirms Abbruzzo. "When it comes to design, there are some things that simply can't be done without the help of a professional."

Calling in professionals was surely a wise move for this Nun's Island couple. As design-conscious clients



who entertain regularly, it was crucial that their home reflect their stylish and modern vibe. This smart condo definitely has the "it" factor – that coveted cosy hotel feel, minus the starkness of yesterday's ultra-modern spaces. By tapping into their client's desires and earning the trust of their expertise on issues of contention, Abbruzzo and Courchesne transformed the condo into a much-loved and glamorous escape for these jet setters and their equally chic guests. ■