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High Low-Key Style

A meticulously designed family home leads the way to a backyard surprise

When Kathleen and John* approached Kevin Mitchell and Douglas Cridland of Cridland Interior Design to create their new home, they came prepared. Along with a clear vision of how they wanted their family to live in the space, John had already drawn up the floor plans.

John's passion for the project began shortly after they purchased the half-acre parcel of land on a cul-de-sac in Aspen Estates.

"He went out and bought draft paper, and he designed the house himself with everything that we wanted," says Kathleen. John poured over books and magazines, eventually finding a modern Spanish-style house in *Architectural Digest* as his main source of inspiration. Once he was happy with his own results, he took his drawings to an architect to have them professionally rendered.

John then approached Douglas Cridland and Cridland's senior designer, Kevin Mitchell, to make the house a reality. Being a long-time fan of Cridland's clean, modern aesthetic, John hired the designers without consulting Kathleen; however, she enthusiastically took the lead on helping to choose interior finishes, furniture and decor.

The living room is the most formal area of the house; however, it's still kid friendly and comfortable.

Right The half-acre lot has sweeping views and features a bocce ball court.



The couple tasked Cridland and Mitchell with translating their Californian inspiration for the home for Calgary's very different climate and natural light. Early on in the design process, during a shopping trip to Vancouver to source plumbing fixtures, Kathleen and John got to know Kevin Mitchell on a personal level. Impressed with his decisive nature, never-ending stream of ideas and organizational skills, the couple slowly shifted the project into Mitchell's hands.

"What we liked in Kevin was he was opinionated," says Kathleen. "We needed someone who would push back a bit on ideas that he felt very strongly about."

The result is a home that's suited to a family of four, yet feels refined and elegant enough for entertaining, which the couple does often. Kathleen's long-time wish to have an all-white interior was traded in for a palette of neutral beiges and dark millwork, which is more flattering in both winter and summer.

Below A tambour door in the kitchen can be rolled closed to hide everyday items from plain view.

Right Clunky cables and peripherals are hidden in built-in storage to give the office a calm, uncluttered feeling.



"We really thought about how we would all have our own space, how we'd be very organized, but also how we would flow and live together as a family." –Kathleen, homeowner

John's original design also called for a much larger home, but the couple decided to pare down to a still-sizeable 7,500 square feet spread over three levels.

"We really thought about how we would all have our own space, how we'd be very organized, but also how we would flow and live together as a family," says Kathleen. "Zero areas are off-limits to kids. And people leave their shoes on — it's a shoes-on kind of house. It's meant to be lived in."

Signs of the home's occupants are scattered throughout — a toy here, a book there — and Mitchell was very cognizant of the importance of family life in the home when it came to the design.

"We knew there were two kids in the house," says Mitchell. "They have to live there, and so do the mom and dad, so there have to be places for the toys to be stored." He cleverly incorporated storage into every part of the home to keep things tidy without discouraging playtime.

For example, at first glance, the streamlined, modern kitchen does not hint at its functionality and abundant storage. Two sets of upper cabinets extend the full height of the 10-foot ceiling, the



topmost set used primarily for storing seasonal items like holiday service, punch bowls and platters. Tambour doors roll up to reveal everyday items like the coffee machine and toaster but can be rolled down to conceal the clutter.

Stainless steel appliances are offset by a stainless-steel mosaic-tile backsplash. Mitchell says it's one of his favourite elements in the kitchen. "The backsplash makes sense with the appliances," he says. "It gives you a little bit of life."

The flow of traffic through the great room was essential to the success of the main floor's design. It serves as one of the home's main thoroughfares, providing access from the entryway to the dining room, kitchen and stairway to the second floor.

However, the room isn't simply a traffic corridor, and the formal furniture placement gives the room a glamorous feel while creating a sense of separation from the high-traffic area, making it perfect for family gatherings or the occasional piano recital.

Floor-to-ceiling windows swathed in sheer drapery take full advantage of the southwest exposure. In the evening, valence lighting gives the room a shimmery glow.

One room that takes full advantage of the southeast exposure is Kathleen's office, an understated, yet elegant hideaway created to feel slightly removed

Left Floating shelves hold an artful display of curios and books in the main floor den.

Below, left The formal dining room was designed with the principals of balance and symmetry in mind.

Below The backyard houses a multi-purpose sports court that can be converted into a rink in the winter.



Below The master bedroom is a simple retreat for the busy couple.

Bottom Generous amounts of Carrara marble are used in the master bath, giving it a European vibe.

from the rest of the home. The double glass doors can be closed for privacy, and windows on two sides of the room let in light throughout the day.

The office also features a gas fireplace with a mantel covered in hand-applied silver leaf.

Here, too, the designers created clever storage solutions. For example, the fax machine, printer, cords and other peripherals are concealed in the lower cabinets' millwork.

Opposite the office, on the other side of the front entry, is the formal dining room. Designed

with principles of symmetry and balance in mind, a large-scale mirror hangs in a niche centred with the table. Artwork flanks both sides of the wall and pops of amber glass create harmony with the mirror's amber-lacquered frame.

The main-floor den — affectionately dubbed “the cave” — is a relaxed gathering place for the whole family.

The highlight of the room is the display shelf, which holds the family's collectibles and items sourced in Palm Springs by Mitchell. The inspiration for the wall came from one of Douglas Cridland's former homes.

Upstairs, the master bedroom is a simple, hotel-like sanctuary. Painted darker than the rest of the house, it is meant to be a soothing escape from Kathleen and John's hectic lives.

Black glass mirrors on either side of the floor-to-ceiling upholstered headboard add a subtle reflective quality to the otherwise subdued room.

The adjoining ensuite uses a mix of natural and man-made materials to create a spa-like effect.

“We used a Carrara marble on the walls and the floor,” says Mitchell. “That was one of the instances where you have to embrace the European quality to it and not be afraid of stains. If you drop something, it will mark, but as time goes on that just becomes part of a patina.”

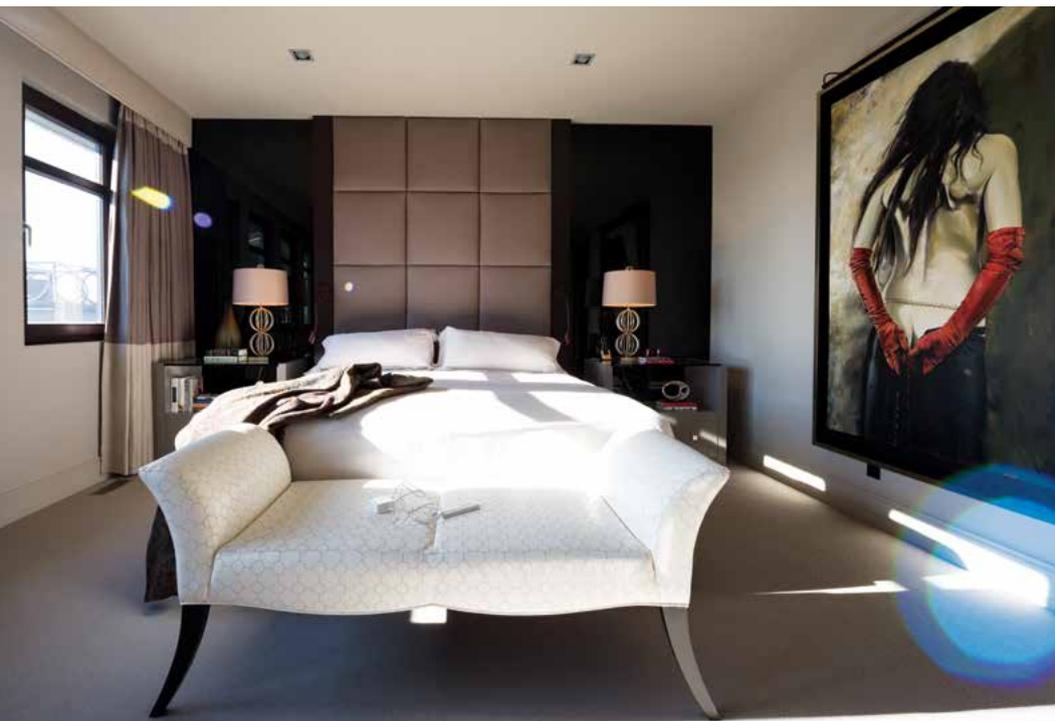
Not to be outdone by the refined, yet family-friendly, interior is the beautifully landscaped pie-shaped lot.

“One thing I wanted was a southwest-facing backyard,” says Kathleen, noting that, since she and John both work during the day, the warm evening sun would be most appreciated. On chilly nights, a wood-burning fireplace provides comfort, and two barbecues and a wood-burning pizza oven help create the perfect atmosphere to spend time together as a family and to entertain. And there's plenty of room for everyone. The adults can enjoy the bocce ball court while the children jump on the trampoline or play on the sports court, which can be configured for basketball, tennis or volleyball in the summer and as a skating rink in the winter. A hot tub provides respite year-round after an active day.

The new home is already starting to show the first signs of wear and tear, but that doesn't bother the homeowners.

“We absolutely love our house, and our kids' friends are welcome here,” Kathleen says. “We just open up all the doors and say, ‘Make yourselves at home.’” 📍

**The homeowners' names were changed at their request to protect their privacy.*



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–Kevin Mitchell, senior designer, Cridland Interior Design

