



BRANCHING OUT

Shelley Penner expands her sustainable design sensibilities to the retail sector and shares her inspiration and influences

BY JANET COLLINS



Going green may be a new craze for some people, but for Vancouver-based designer Shelley Penner, there's more to sustainability than a timely trend. Look beyond Penner's penchant for sound, modern design, and you'll find an approach that is nothing short of groundbreaking. Since 1992, Penner has helped pioneer the sustainable design movement, not only in Vancouver, but also throughout North America.

STREET SMARTS The new storefront is a showcase for items from p+a furniture and doubles as the Penner & Associates design studio.

Today, Penner leads the team at Penner + Associates, one of the most respected design houses in Vancouver. Founded on the principles of sustainable design – a rarity in 1997 – the firm garnered more than a few coveted awards both at home and further afield (including a recent Award of Excellence from the Interior Designer Institute of BC). Stepping firmly into the international spotlight, Penner contributed sustainable design expertise and was the LEED project team administrator for the VANOC 2010 projects.

Penner + Associates has branched into a new direction with the introduction of p+a furniture. Manufactured in Calgary, furniture pieces, which include a headboard, daybed, sideboard



NATURAL SELECTION Penner's work, as seen in this private residence, blends modern and minimalist elements, enriched by the natural beauty of materials.

Shelley Penner on her early influences, favourite material, and the one thing she can't live without

What is the first thing you ever designed? My cousin, Darcy, and I used to design and construct houses and furniture out of Lego. She was going to be an architect and I was going to be an interior designer. We were eight and 10 years old, respectively.

What inspires you? Nature.

Design influences? Tadao Ando and Shigeru Ban. And I'm definitely influenced by the work of some of our contemporaries on the West Coast.

Favourite colour? I like bright, enlivening colours that are fresh and edible, figuratively speaking.

One thing you can't live without? Coffee.

and other elements, are composed of non-toxic and sustainable materials. A range of decor items – 100-per-cent certified-organic sheets and towels from India, and 100-per-cent mohair and alpaca throws from Australia – will also be in store, along with salt and pepper shakers made from recycled wood, handmade soaps and paper-based placemats crafted by independent artisans from Canada and the United States.

The furnishings are available at Penner's new Vancouver storefront and design studio located at 159 West Hastings St. in Vancouver, or online at www.pafurniture.ca.

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ECO CHIC Mohair throws manufactured in Australia are just some of the sustainable and stylish finds in store.

Favourite material? Wool, a super fibre made by nature.

If you could own just one piece of furniture or home decor item, what would it be? I know it's cliché for a designer to say this, but the Eames lounge chair and ottoman. It's so comfortable, like being cradled by a giant baseball glove. Another dream acquisition would be a piece of art by Bratsa Bonifacho.

What design trend/item would you like to see go the way of the polyester leisure suit? Small pets as personal accessories.

What one thing would you do to make the world a better place for all?

I really admire thoughtful activism, as well as quiet diplomacy. So continuing to "walk the walk" in terms of living sustainably, and broadening our reach to contribute to positive social change – especially now that our design studio and p+a store are located in the Downtown Eastside – is our focus.

If you can only design one more thing, what will it be? A modernist tree house with my son. He's got some great ideas. ■



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