

2008 DESIGNERS OF THE YEAR!

THIS YEAR'S WINNERS ARE DESIGNING
THE MOST EXCITING HOMES, GARDENS,
FURNITURE AND FASHIONS IN
WESTERN CANADA TODAY.

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heir expansive spaces, natural materials and sustainable focus capture a unique moment in the rising trajectory of design in the West. From the architects of a stunning modern masterpiece to the textile engineer behind some bodacious bikinis, these 10 designers have had a breakthrough year in architecture, and interior, landscape, furniture, fashion and eco-design.

Photographs by Martin Tessler

INTERIOR
DESIGNERS
OF THE YEAR
(TIE)

Evoked
International
Design

From award-winning homes to neighbourhood watering holes and hip T-shirts, this design firm redefines casual modern living.

BY JIM SUTHERLAND



BLACK TIE OPTIONAL



Open plan: An award-winning Evoke home on a standard 33-foot lot in Vancouver's Point Grey neighbourhood, seen from the rear; borrowing plenty of space from outside makes it seem much larger. Evoke partners Robert Edmonds (opposite, left) and David Nicolay.

STYLING: T.J. CONSTABLE/TAYLOR/LIZBELL

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ome interior design partnerships are headed by highly focused individuals possessing intimidating training and credentials along with a laser-like sense of purpose. Other partnerships consist of, well, an architect and a graphic artist who branched into interiors primarily to outfit the bars and restaurants they wanted to hang out in.

The latter partnership describes Vancouver's Evoke International Design, headed by David Nicolay and Robert Edmonds. And while the duo's route to running a seven-person interior design practice may have been circuitous, that doesn't take anything away from their work, lauded by judge Kelly Deck for its "authentic flair" and "attention to materials and atmosphere."

Today, residential work takes up a large chunk of Evoke's design energy. Nicolay was responsible for a Vancouver home (seen here) that in 2006 was named a North American Home of the Year by Metropolitan Home magazine.

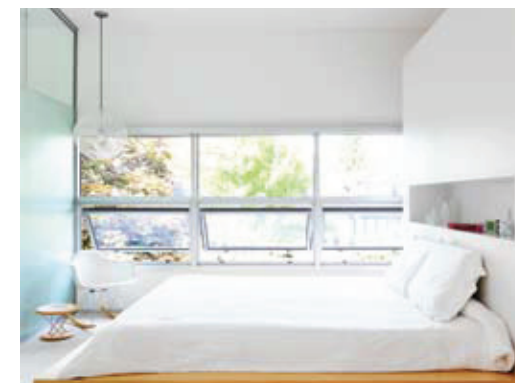
Other residences are at various stages of design—in some cases, Nicolay notes, their progress hampered by local zoning regulations that penalize contemporary design.

Entry-level position: A multi-tasking entry room (above right) shows the street beyond. The kitchen (right and below) manages to meet all the needs of owners who like to cook and entertain while taking up minimal space. In a loft-style design, says Nicolay, it helps to craft every element as custom-designed furniture.



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Much of Evoke's recent work has been on condominiums, particularly collaborations with Acton-Ostry Architects for Vancouver developers Townline and also the Salient Group, which specializes in converting warehouses and other heritage buildings. Judge Raymond Girard lauds what he calls "real" (as opposed to "soft") lofts. "How clever to turn utilitarian spaces like kitchens and bathrooms into sculptural elements, spicing up smaller loft spaces without cramming them full of stuff, materials and textures."

The seed of the Nicolay and Edmonds collaboration dates to the mid-1990s and a memorable Vancouver restaurant in the Kitsilano neighbourhood called Tangerine, which Nicolay and family members launched to fill what he describes as "a keenly felt void of cozy, stylish places to eat and drink." That soon led to other restaurant work, both as designers and proprietors. Vancouver's Figmint and Metro restaurants are recent projects, each displaying sophisticated takes on neo-modernism. Evoke and partners also designed Main Street haunts Habit and the Cascade Room, the latter a slightly off-key riff on post-war England. Both continue a tradition of rooms that, true to the company name, suggest rather than accurately describe a style or period. Paul Lavoie describes them as "fresh spaces with thoughtfulness for heritage and reality."

The firm was recently hired for a condominium development in Victoria. A line of T-shirts featuring vivid graphic treatments by Edmonds is also ready to go. Not everyone can live in an Evoke product but at least we can all wear one. See SOURCES

Fire, water: A fireplace (above left) adds a touch of formality to the free-flowing design. Views of the master bedroom (top) illustrate the role of intricate planning and custom design: screens hide the master bath (above) and closets (below), creating the illusion of a much larger space. Purpose-built furniture snugs into precise dimensions.

