

## LUXURY LIVING

## Five fabulous finishes

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Special to Postmedia Network

The word 'casual' might not come to mind immediately when you think elegance, but in a time when our homes have become retreats and safe havens, luxury combines beautiful aesthetics and design that allows you to live in a place comfortably.

"As the saying goes, 'Your home is your castle' and that cannot be truer with this pandemic, which forced many of us to stay at home, dine at home, entertain at home and to work from home," says Linda Leatherdale, vice president of public relations and communications with Cambria Canada, which produces quartz surfaces.

"During this pandemic, the renovation and new build sector has been on fire as people transform their homes or build new ones to have all their favourite luxurious creature comforts when we were allowed to travel or dine out," she says. That includes serene spas and fully-equipped home gyms as well as functional home offices, updated entertainment areas and outdoor living spaces.

The pandemic has also served as a catalyst for bespoke details that make a home warm and livable.

"People who want you to see where they spent their money tend to gravitate towards glamorous things, but we focus on creating casual livable spaces that are still luxurious and high quality," says Eugenia Triandos, founder and principal designer at Hibou Design & Co. in Montreal.

"We create that upscale vibe through natural



HIBOU DESIGN &amp; CO.

finishes like marble and wood," she adds. Here's a look at five fabulous finishes and materials that are transforming tired spaces into luxurious ones that are tranquil and inviting:

## 1. Marble and granite.

"Marble is my first pick for a luxury finish. It will increase both the value and the aesthetics of your home," says Triandos. Hibou Design has used marble in many unique ways, including as the first step on a custom staircase. "It's one of those really versatile materials that adds a sense of luxury wherever you put it."

Non-porous quartz is a perennial favourite in kitchens and bathrooms but those tried-and-true applications are just the tip of the iceberg. "Fireplace surrounds, full-height backsplashes, laundry rooms, coffee and wet bars, pantries, home spas, shower and tub surrounds, home offices, flooring and wall cladding have all become

popular," Leatherdale reports.

Quartz has also been used in furniture design like coffee tables, side tables and accessories, she adds. With bold designs featuring veins and movement to solid colours like whites, greys and blacks, quartz lends itself to numerous styles, including modern, Victorian, farmhouse and coastal.

## 2. Wall treatments.

Wood wall panels or fluting – a rounded molding finish that can be installed vertically or horizontally and that's repeated over and over – serve as a striking backdrop, adding texture, dimension and warmth to a space without making it feel cluttered, says Triandos. Ditto coffered or waffle ceilings and built-in cabinetry and banquettes.

## 3. Lighting. Sure, lighting

needs to be functional but it's also the 'jewellery of a home,' Triandos reminds. "When you splurge on lighting, you see it in the



CAMBRIA CANADA

**TOP PHOTO:** Traditional wall trim accentuates this home's arched doorways and carries up the main staircase. The hardwood floor features a mosaic tile inlay that's both functional and beautiful. **ABOVE PHOTO:** Leabridge is among the new designs Cambria has launched this year. It features gradations of cool white and warm honey, with borders of textured ridges reminiscent of the salt flats in Utah.

quality of finishes and the scale. It really takes your home to another level in terms of luxury."

"Think warm brass finishes, oversized light bulbs and oversized lighting in general. Triandos had

## 4. Architectural hardware.

Knurled door handles – identifiable by a ridged texture – like cross-cross diagonal lines on the lever – and plated cabinet knobs are "little details and extra textural elements" that infuse luxury into a home and amp up the value. Mixed metals, matte black and polished nickel are designer favourites. Burnished lacquered brass – a finish that resembles polished brass – makes any room feel rich, cozy and timeless. "It starts off shiny and takes on a patina as it ages so it becomes more matte over time," says Triandos.

5. Hardwood. Matte finishes are also on trend in hardwood floors. They give off the illusion of raw wood floors but also hide scratches, dirt and other imperfections much better than glossy floors. Seven- or even eight-inch-wide planks are trumping three-inch or narrower planks.

When it comes to hues, the designers at Hibou Design gravitate towards light and medium-toned woods. "Traditionally, the darker you go in wood, the more formal your space will feel," says Triandos. "The lighter you go, the more casual the feel. Trends are evolving and casual or livable luxury is here."

Inlays, herringbone patterns and borders that surround a room in a different species of hardwood than used elsewhere in the house are some of the ways Hibou Design uses hardwood to create a custom feel.

In open entrances, tile-to-wood transitions that allow the two materials to 'mix and mingle' are creative alternatives to straight line transitions.

## Warming up for winter

Lush fabrics can lend a luxurious air to wintertime home design

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As winter inches closer and temperatures begin to drop, a cozy abode is the antidote to the chilly months ahead. It's time to begin trading light linens for warm wools, ensuring each room of the home offers residents and guests all the creature comforts needed to spend more time indoors. Using lush fabrics in each room sets a stylish tone for the season, lending a luxurious air to wintertime home design.

"What's comfy in the winter won't be the same as summer, so it's actually a functional decision to work with different fabrics from one season to the next," says Sacha Lafleur, one half of the husband and wife team behind Ottawa design company West of Main.

When winter sets in, Lafleur says drapery is an ideal place to start introducing seasonal fabrics. "In summer, you want sheer drapes because you have more light and you want to bring in those evening sunsets. However, in the winter it gets dark early, so you may have your drapes closed for longer."

Since drapes will be more visible during winter months, they're an opportunity to set the desired tone for a living room. Earthy colours usher in a feeling of calm, while bold patterns and shades add a touch of energy to a muted space. When it comes to materials, in winter, Lafleur's go-to is a thick cut curtain made of velveteen.

Velveteen is typically made from cotton, sometimes mixed with silk. It has velvet's characteristic texture but with less sheen and more thickness, making it perfect for cold weather decorating.

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— RED BARRINUEVO, REDESIGN4MORE

Lafleur suggests it especially for those in older homes, which may be "rich in ornamental architecture, but maybe not as great for heat efficiency." Velveteen curtains help keep the cold at bay, adding an extra layer

of insulation to any drafty nooks.

For Red Barrinuevo, principal designer at Redesign4More, blankets are a favourite way to bring a comfortable yet refined feel to a room.

"In cold weather, you always want to consider layers and textures," he says. "Most throws are made from cotton. In the winter season, I may layer that with faux fur to make it feel warmer and cozier, and create a little vignette in a particular section of a room."

With this technique, fabrics that are usually saved for summer months can be put to use year-round. The key is to find a thicker version of the blanket to layer with its thinner, warm weather counterpart.

"The same material will come in a range of different thicknesses, and thicker ones are going to seem warmer even if it's the same material as something that you use in the summer," explains Lafleur. "For example, you can use linen year-round, but for winter you'd just go for a thicker cut."

Rugs offer another layering opportunity. Lafleur encourages clients to think outside the box when it comes to choosing rugs for colder seasons. Her seasonal pet peeve is the ubiquitous, black entryway rug that many use to deck the halls at this time of year, hoping to soak up some of the salt and damp.

"I get the practicality, but there are great polyester indoor/outdoor rugs on the market that can even go

into the washer," Lafleur explains. "I'm okay with patina and things wearing and tearing. I also like to choose carefully for the front door. It's the first thing people see."

Throughout the rest of the house, Lafleur uses rugs to bring in some of the much-missed hues that nature offers in other seasons, before a blanket of white covers the landscape.

"We have so much colour in nature during the summer, spring and fall, so I like to bring it back in the wintertime by layering carpets. Put a vintage Persian over your summer jute so you still have that warmth of tone and richness of colour year-round," she says.

Barrinuevo likes to throw a shag rug into the mix when he layers carpets.

"It's so cozy to walk on and nowadays there are tons of different options for shag rugs, too."

Both designers say that the bedroom, if nowhere else, is the place where fabrics have the power to provide the most comfort from winter's chill.

"I like the hotel feel," says Barrinuevo. "We like to go for white because it's crisp, comfortable and calm for lounging, but then we add throws, or a blanket, and maybe some decor pillows with texture. Again, the key is always layering."

For Lafleur, mohair adds the ultimate touch of luxury to a bedroom.

"Find it in a beautiful chocolate shade and it really is just like desert – a gorgeous finale at the end of your day!"



PHOTO BY WEST OF MAIN

When winter sets in, drapery is an ideal place to start introducing seasonal fabrics, says designer Sacha Lafleur.



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