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| By Francesca Peraza

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"Comfort is about the feeling that you get when you enter a room."



Meeting with the beautiful and talented Canadian designer, Lori Morris was amazing as was the last time. Today, we asked her questions about some of her most beautiful projects and the idea behind them. Here's what she had to say:

All your projects are so different. Your process is highly customized. Describe your process of working with clients. Where do you begin? Whether it is the building of a new home or decorating an existing one, it's always based on a client's inspiration in terms of feeling. We do whatever it takes to make our client feel at home in their space. Of course, at House of Lori Morris Design (House of LMD), we have our own signature style – a mix of modern and

classic design that is avant-garde, sophisticated, and sexy. Many clients come to us torn, feeling like they are required to choose between traditional and contemporary design elements – but they actually don't have to. At House of LMD we embrace tradition and modernity and allow them to coexist in a calming balance.

So would you say you always work backwards from the feeling the client wants to have and then you create that feeling?

It is often hard for people to describe how they want a room to look and feel. With my clients, I often hear the term "warm." They'll say I want this to be sophisticated but warm, modern but warm, traditional but warm. When a client asks for a "warm" design, what they are saying is that they want their house to feel like a home. We don't do design for design's sake at House of LMD. No matter how opulent or luxurious a room is, you have to be able to live in it, and it has to be comfortable. And comfort doesn't necessarily mean only using soft fabrics and plush cushions. Comfort is about the feeling that you get when you enter a room. Comfort means the space touches your memories,

delights your eyes, makes you feel comfortable and welcomes you in. Creating warmth and comfort in a home requires a sense of balance and proportion of textures, finishes, pieces and design. And this is when House of LMD comes in.

But initially you are inspired by the client?

Yes, our starting point is always the client's wishes. We listen very carefully to what people say they want. Visuals help. It is not easy for people to articulate exactly what speaks to them in terms of design because often it is a visceral and emotional reaction. But, yes, everything starts with our clients' wishes. They inspire us in terms of their desire. And then we go from there.

You often use oversized black and white photography in your homes. I like how you pair this in more traditional spaces. At what part of the project does the art element come in?

Art is the finishing brush stroke to the cohesive painting that we create with a space. The eye is always drawn to art, be it a black and

white photograph or a color print, so it needs to be right. Choosing a certain style of art or artists really depends on the space and the client. I don't think of black and white photography as a color element, I treat it as a style element, like denim or wood or metal. Black and white photographs straddle that traditional-modern dichotomy we've been talking about. Photography is a fairly modern invention, but keeping the photographs black and white speaks to old Hollywood, to classic rock and roll, to edginess, to sexiness. Many of my clients come to me with preconceived notions of artists or photography they like but it's like a dress, you really have to try something on before you can see how gorgeous it is. A good photograph can stand up to the weight of the dramatic architectural details we layer into our homes.

When you are looking at a blank floor plan, how do you decide what will be the feature piece? Do you have your signature pieces that you gravitate towards?

There is no signature piece and no step-by-step guide. Our work is less a series of steps than a gradual evolution. We work so much by instinct and rely on creativity. If I have to break it down, from the start of a blank floor plan, we always start from a focal point in each room. If we are building the house from the ground up, we create architectural focal points throughout the house. A focal point can be anything like a fireplace, a feature wall, a gorgeous window, a beautiful archway, beautiful doors or a millwork wall. Then we take these architectural focal points and pair them with balanced design. And there can be surprises: even if we have planned for the fireplace to be the focal point, sometimes, you enter a room and realize that the window is actually the room's most striking feature because of a gorgeous view. The room becomes what it is meant to be through layering of design elements, furniture, textiles, drapery, accessories. We start with a focal point in each room and design with an eye to that.

Black walls are a daring choice but look so effortless here. What rooms do you recommend work well with black paint?

Any room you want. Seriously. I do not know where the myth started that dark colors close down a space. Dark colors do not have to be dark and dreary. At

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House of LMD, our design is very rarely about one color or one piece, it is about a feeling. Black walls help us create the warmth and depth of feeling that our clients ask for. I recently had a client and we did most of her house in gorgeous pastels and she said to me: "You know Lori, we spend most of our time in that dark library you made for us." Dark paint colors, like black, help us create our signature style of layers and layers of details. That said, a dark room has to be done properly. Everything needs to be in balance and the overall finishing of the space has to align with the feeling you are trying to create. Color is almost inconsequential. It is about creating a feeling through the layering of design elements. So to answer your question, black can work in living rooms, powder rooms, bedrooms. But you have to do it right.

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Have you travelled anywhere recently that helped give you inspiration for work?

I recently came back from Switzerland. So inspiring! There was a jewelry store in Geneva that had oversized steel doors decorated with faceted glass fashioned to look like gemstones. Just imagine the thought that went into that – they took the time to make the door to a jewelry store look like jewelry. Door details are very interesting to me because they seem like such a small element but they can create a lot of interest through carving and panels and hardware and hinges. Doors set the tone for a space. They are the first thing you see before you walk into a house or a room. Right now I am very inspired by beautiful original doors from Europe. I must travel to Europe every year. Always. I have to go to London and Paris! I will never be tired of being in Europe and being inspired by European





design. Europe will be my inspiration for my lifetime career in design.

What is a favorite piece in your own home? Be it an accessory or a room where you spend the most time?

I spend the most time in my own home because every piece of it reflects who I am. If I had to pick my favorite pieces, I particularly like the Yannick Fournie painting in my lounge, I like the sofas in my living room, I like my truffle grey flannel and suede walls in my powder room. What I love about my house is the fact

that I did not have to explain to anybody that anything was right or wrong. My home is probably the purest expression of my creativity because I just did whatever felt right and did exactly what I wanted in every room. But if you are ever looking for me in my house, I am most likely in my bed!

What element of being an interior designer gives you the most joy?

I love that my job is to be an artist and to be creative. I love that I can draw a house from scratch and understand what it looks like three-

dimensionally. I love to see the spaces I design evolve. It is so satisfying to see the design you have imagined come to fruition. You can have a beautiful, architecturally gorgeous exterior of your home and beautiful architectural details in the interior, and beautiful finishes for floors and ceilings and doors and hardware and furniture – but you need that one extra step of having beautiful accessories to make the picture perfect. And when everything is finished and perfect, that gives me joy. ●