

SEPTEMBER 2020

HOUSE & HOME

SMALL

BUT MIGHTY

6 SPACES THAT PROVE BIGGER ISN'T BETTER



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FAMILY LIFE
IN 600 SQ.FT.
(Yes, really!)

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Dr. Paula Meyler displays several of her own photographs in the condo, including this one of a train station in Sri Lanka.

HOME REMEDY

A VANCOUVER CONDO BECOMES A REFUGE FOR A FRONTLINE DOCTOR.

Design by BEN LEAVITT | Text by WENDY JACOB | Photography by TRACEY AYTON

BODY OF ART

DR. PAULA MEYLER is no stranger to gruelling 24-hour shifts. When she's finally home, the Vancouver anesthesiologist goes straight to her cosy bedroom, crawls into bed, draws up the indigo sheets and looks at her travel photos on the wall. "You can get very focused in medicine and forget that there's a whole world out there," says Paula, who lives in a 1,600-square-foot condo in Gastown. "I'm so thankful to have invested in myself and my home; it's a place where I can relax and unwind after the chaos of the hospital. You can't put a price on that."

After renting the condo for three years, Paula bought it from her landlord—she loved its wraparound gardens and terraces, especially the private

Statement furniture in sunset hues and Paula's own striking photograph of a holy man in India personalize the airy living room. **Coffee table**, Arteriors; **ceiling fixture**, Lambert & Fils; **red accent chair**, Kraft.

Photo: Tracey Ayton

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LEFT: In the kitchen, a panelled refrigerator and white counters suit the clean lines of the contemporary windows. **Grasscloth**, York Wallcoverings; **stool**, Noir; **oak flooring** (throughout), Mirage Floors; **lower cabinet colour**, Gentleman's Gray (2062-20), **wall colour**, Simply White (OC-117), Benjamin Moore.

BOTTOM: This ceramic piece is an Etsy find by Polish artist Anna Kozłowska-Luc.

OPPOSITE, TOP: Photographs give the kitchen a dose of personality. While in Sri Lanka, Paula snapped this portrait after the man shyly asked for his photo to be taken. **Faucet**, Brizo; **counter**, Silestone.

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: Backgammon-style encaustic wall tile turns a white oak bench into the entry's graphic focal point. **Concrete tile**, Ann Sacks; **chair** (background) by Menu, Vancouver Special.



courtyard with fountains, trees and zen vegetation out front. She asked her friend Ben Leavitt of Vancouver design studio PlaidFox to make the interior feel equally tranquil. "Paula, like so many, had filled her home with things to live with, rather than things to love," says Ben, who oversaw the complete renovation of the condo in 2019. "Since the reno, she refuses to look at the before images and jokingly admits the home was previously a treasure trove of what *not* to do in design!"

A former ballet dancer, Paula loves dance, travel and photography, and her home needed to match her intrepid personality. "She wanted it to be bright and calming — very minimal with not a lot of colour," says Ben. "But because she spends her whole day in a hospital, I didn't want it



"PAULA WANTED IT TO BE BRIGHT AND CALMING — VERY MINIMAL WITH NOT A LOT OF COLOUR. BUT BECAUSE SHE SPENDS HER WHOLE DAY IN A HOSPITAL, I DIDN'T WANT IT TO BE CLINICAL" — Ben Leavitt, designer





LEFT: The dining room ups the drama with colour-blocked drapery. **Drapery fabric,** Robert Allen; **chandelier** by Kelly Wearstler, Circa Lighting; **dining chairs** by Gubi, Inform Interiors.

OPPOSITE, TOP: The guest and media room pairs a plush sofa (which pulls out into a bed) with statement accents. **Drapery fabric,** Robert Allen; **side table,** Noir; **rugs,** Etsy; **lower wall colour,** Black Beauty (2128-10), Benjamin Moore.

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: A custom door based on a Moroccan design was commissioned for the guest bathroom. Charcoal floor tile is grounding while quirky objects and vases add a whimsical touch. **Gilt lantern,** Arteriors; **runner,** West Elm; **floor tile** by Kelly Wearstler, Ann Sacks; **sconce** (with 28), Rich Brilliant Willing; **sink,** Native Trails.



to be clinical." He made sure to add art that Paula had created herself to bring warmth to the home. "Ben pushed me to incorporate my photographs into the design, to bring that part of me out," she says.

Details such as new arched doorways and handmade Moroccan tiles on the walls reflect Paula's travels and her time working as a volunteer doctor abroad. The entry, for instance, features a photo of a train station Paula took in Sri Lanka. Throughout, Ben brought in accents from Etsy artisans who live around the world. Closer to home, an antique Buddha statue from Vancouver's Chinatown sits (unexpectedly) on the kitchen counter. Ben further amped up the kitchen's personality with two tones of grasscloth wallpaper and custom slate blue lower cabinets. "Now it looks like Paula's kitchen, not just any kitchen," he says.





ABOVE: Herringbone flooring carried onto the wall is a striking detail in the principal bedroom. **Bed frame,** Blu Dot; **nightstand,** Worlds Away; **table lamp** by Kelly Wearstler, Circa Lighting; **sconce,** Arteriors; **wall colour,** Hale Navy (HC-154), Benjamin Moore.

OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT: The open closet was enlarged and painted a calm blue-green. **Ceiling fixture,** Illuminate Vintage; **wall colour,** Caldwell Green (HC-124), Benjamin Moore.

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM LEFT: In the principal bathroom, an arched mirror was hung horizontally over the floating white oak vanity. **Tile,** Ames Tile & Stone; **faucet,** Delta; **counter,** Silestone.

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM RIGHT: Breezy tropical wallpaper and white glass penny-round tile feel fresh. **Wallpaper,** Etsy.

In the dining room, new white oak flooring complements the custom concrete table and sleek Gubi chairs. "This house is influenced by Morocco and India, but mixing in modern pieces keeps it from feeling too theme-y," says Ben. Dramatic colour-blocked drapery conceals odd-sized windows and makes the room feel more intimate.

The lighting was a revelation to Paula (one of her favourite fixtures is the boat-shaped Kelly Wearstler chandelier over the dining table). "Pre-renovation, I thought lighting was just a functional thing, but each fixture is a piece of art on its own," she says. Matte black and gold finishes bring cohesiveness to the eclectic choices.

Renovating her condo with Ben introduced Paula to a new world. She went from knowing nothing about design to obsessively buying books and exploring design museums. "I have a background in art through ballet, but learning about architecture and design has opened up another way for art to be in my life," she says. "There's so much talent, beauty and craftsmanship in the world that I wasn't paying attention to." The doctor is now most definitely in. **PHOTOGRAPHY BY [unreadable]**

