

For the love of design



MARTIN SLOFSTRA EDITOR'S NOTE

I had the honour recently of serving as a booth judge at the Canadian Furniture Show held June 4-7 at the International Centre.

Traipsing along miles of trade show halls and taking in a wide range of furniture styles and booth designs from 245 different exhibitors can be a little tiring. But I have to say, it was also a lot of fun.

And if you were there that Thursday morning, you would have seen us — five judges — hopping from booth to booth, getting in and out of chairs and sofas, jumping on and off mattresses, just revelling in the chance to touch anything we wanted. It was a blast.

Apparently, it hasn't always been this fun. This is a show in transition, and as I found out later in the day, 2015 was a relaunch year for this show formerly named The Canadian Home Furnishings Market.

Pierre Richard, president and CEO of the Show, took a few minutes out a very busy schedule to sit down with us. He said that when he came on board, the first thing he noticed was that, to put it bluntly, “people weren't having fun.”

The Canadian furniture industry had been going through some tough times — thanks to foreign competition and a sluggish economy — and the show became tired-looking and started losing its appeal.

That's led to some major changes at this show — now 48 years in existence — starting with a date change from January to June, a name change to the Canadian Furniture Show and a concerted effort to inject some energy into the proceedings by involving many of Canada's top designers.

In fact, as fun as checking out all the designs, was the opportunity to catch up

with some of these designers. There is, to say the least, a real passion and a love for design here.

That's New Homes and Condo columnist Evelyn Eshun (in the picture third from the left) reaching out to touch the love ball. Evelyn was one of many prominent designers who could be seen “style-spotting,” using her expertise to let attendees which products to check out and then spreading the word using social networks.

It was also great to catch up with Jo Alcorn who writes the Smart Spaces column for us. At the show, she launched her new line of very stylish and modern furniture, as well as a chance to check out her collection of kid and pet-friendly cushions. (Seriously, these fully-washable pillows with no need to remove the cover are as stylish as anything else out there on the market.)

It was also good to meet with up-and-coming designers like Melissa Tossell who shared with me how sustainability and reusability are catching on in the design world and how ‘upcycling’ is only the beginning.

Also on hand was Jane Lockhart whose leading edge designs you can see in model new homes around the GTA.



Booth judges and style spotters gather at the recent Canadian Furniture Show held June 4-7 at the International Centre in Mississauga. Photo by Rob Corrado.

It was Lockhart who summed up it best: “As a Canadian designer, it's important to let people know that Canadians actually make great furniture! In our modesty, we never think about all the wonderful wood furniture we make or the cool

sofa styles designed and built locally. I think the Canadian Furniture Show is the first step in sharing with consumers that they can ‘shop at home’ and have a good, solid selection of choices.”

In Canada, there is no shortage of great designs —

for more, check out Colin and Justin's two-page write up celebrating the season-ending episode of Cabin Pressure (p. 4-5); and new rug designs featuring Love It or List's Jillian Harris (p. 6) — made even better if you can have fun at the same time.

Canadians have renos on their minds



BRYAN TUCKEY BILD

A report published by CIBC earlier this year revealed that nearly half of Canadian homeowners plan to renovate their homes this year — a great way to add value to their existing homes while creating jobs in the industry and boosting our economy.

The poll showed that 42 per cent of Canadians are planning home renovations, and plans to spend an average of

\$17,000 on sprucing up their homes with some basic maintenance like painting, flooring, general repairs and replacing appliances.

Kitchen and bathroom renovations are still a popular renovation focus, lagging only behind outdoor landscaping this year, and not by much.

These results come as no surprise to some industry professionals, who cite low interest rates and rising house

prices as two major factors in the renovation demand.

The average price of a low-rise home in the GTA currently exceeds \$775,000 while the price of a new condo averages just below \$450,000. This leaves many homeowners turning to renovations to get the feeling of a brand new home but with a lighter price tag.

Before you embark on your renovation, be sure to plan ahead. A lot of major renovations require you to obtain the proper permit, particularly in big cities like Toronto.

Failure to do so may result in you being asked to restore your home to its original state if the renovation doesn't conform to the municipality's bylaws — an expensive process you don't want to experience.

Please make sure that there

is adequate time allotted to getting your permit. BILD is working with our government partners to hasten the approvals process, but in the meantime, waiting times can often take a while.

I recommend working closely with your renovator to ensure that all the paperwork is in order before starting any work. If your contractor pressures you to act otherwise, proceed with caution. A professional renovator will know to play by the rules.

Working with a professional renovator is of utmost importance because you want to be confident that you're trusting your home to someone with the right knowledge and experience to do the job and do it right.

If you think it's expensive

to hire a professional, wait until you see how much it cost to hire an amateur. You may end up paying thousands to fix sub-standard work, or risk having no work done at all.

This is where the written contract comes in. Make sure you have all elements of the job, including payment, outlined in a detailed and written agreement. Without one, any legal action will prove challenging should you encounter issues.

There are hundreds of professional renovators and trade contractors available in a fully customizable online database at www.renomark.ca. All companies that you will find on this website have agreed to a renovation-specific Code of Conduct, which includes things like providing a written

contract; offering a minimum \$2 million in liability insurance; providing two years warranty on all work; and carrying all applicable licenses and permits.

If you are planning a home renovation this summer, make sure you hire a pro. Visit www.renomark.ca to find out if there's a RenoMark renovator in your area.

— *Bryan Tuckey is President and CEO of the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) and is a land-use planner who has worked for municipal, regional and provincial governments. He can be found on Twitter (twitter.com/bildgta), Facebook (facebook.com/bildgta) and BILD's official online blog (bildblogs.ca).*