



This family room at the Four Seasons Private Residences Toronto exemplifies Lorri Morris's love for designs of the past

THE ARTIST AND HER CANVAS



PHOTO BY NORMAN WONG

Based out of Toronto, Lorri Morris designs spaces that exude tasteful extravagance

Designing for elite homeowners across the world, artist Lorri Morris doesn't dabble in pencil or ink, but in one-of-a-kind furniture, authentic art and travel-inspired spaces

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If Marie Antoinette had a Pinterest board, it would have looked something like Lorri Morris's portfolio. The Toronto-based interior designer has secured her place on the wish lists of estate owners across the city, attracting décor lovers with her taste for intricacy and lush antique style. *Dolce Magazine* caught up with Morris to talk about European art markets, the artful process she brings to every project and how beauty is synonymous with luxury.

Dolce Magazine: Tell us your story — what brings you to the tip-top of Toronto's home décor industry?

Lori Morris: I have always been

inspired by interior design. I designed my own bedroom when I was 10 and from there I was hooked. I studied at the International Academy of Merchandising and Design and founded Lorri Morris Designs in 1987. I have always been inspired by architecture, landscaping and beautiful couture designs, and felt that I understood the relationship between those elements and interior design in a unique and artistic way.

DM: You follow a carefully constructed designing process every time you take on a project. Can you break down this process for us?

LM: I have a staff of over 25 employees, including designers and

project managers, who help manage the spaces logistically, from the initial client meetings to the final reveal. Our creative director Julie Ballard works hand-in-hand with me and we design the spaces together, but I solely hand-pick all the decoration, art, finishes and details for each of my designs.

DM: *How would you define your style?*

LM: My designs all have a certain “Lori Morris” soul and elegance to them, but they cannot be defined as one particular style. I create very personal and intimate spaces for my clients that are catered to their vision. All of my spaces are especially unique because I custom design each furniture piece. You won’t find these pieces anywhere else. I can create very modern rooms and more neo-classical, French-inspired rooms, but all in all, I consider myself an artist who creates different pieces of art (spaces) for each of my clients.

DM: *You often allude to artistry, comparing your firm’s creations to paintings or masterpieces. Would you say visual art, or painting, is another passion of yours? Have you ever experimented with that string of creativity?*

LM: I constantly feel the urge to take out a canvas and just paint whatever is inside my head, but I haven’t explored that string of my creativity just yet. I do love art and I regularly travel around the globe to buy art for my clients. It will always be a big focus of my spaces.

DM: *Would you say your signature style has evolved over time, or has it stayed consistent?*

LM: My style is consistent in that I can always deliver on unique and luxurious spaces. That being said, I don’t design according to trends, I design based on the personality of my client, so my spaces are known to stand the test of time. If my clients evolve, my spaces will evolve with them.

DM: *Your Twitter says you reinvent the standard of interior design. Why would you say the standard needs a reinvention, and how does Lori Morris Designs answer that need?*

LM: Our one-of-a-kind client experience has reinvented the standard of interior design. We offer a concierge-like service that allows us to take a creative and artistic approach to all of our designs. We take care of everything for our clients, even moving their clothes back in and hanging them in their closet. I also travel around the world to places like London and Paris, either with my clients or on my own, to get

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— Lori Morris

inspiration and purchase art. We also house a number of finishes in our office, like textiles, floorings and hardware. We are a one-stop shop where clients can come in and look at all the options in one place. It is an unmatched experience in the industry.

DM: *Can you give me an example of an artist who you consider to be a muse in your work?*

LM: I have always been, and continue to be, inspired by Ralph Lauren. He has such a great sense of style and eclecticism, and I feel that he really understands the balance between creativity and proportion. I am also very inspired by the complexity of designers like Dolce & Gabbana, who understand the importance of layering different textures. When you consider these two designers together, that will give you an understanding of who I am.

DM: *What’s the project you’re most proud of?*

LM: I am proud of all of my projects, especially those where clients gave me the freedom to act as an artist from start to finish. Whether it’s a condo suite, city home or a cottage, it’s about having a blank canvas to work with and creating a space that is unique and that my client is comfortable in.

DM: *Most interesting project?*

LM: A cottage we did in the Lake of Bays was one of my most interesting projects. We designed the sprawling property with just wood and glass — no drywall was used at all. In fact, some of the floor-to-ceiling windows even retract to bring the outside in.

DM: *Most demanding project?*

LM: We recently designed one of the top floors in the Four Seasons Private Residences Toronto and, while this is one of my favourite spaces, it was a demanding project. The whole building was still under construction while we were working and we had to go up 50 floors in the cage elevator! I am pretty claustrophobic, so it was definitely an experience.

DM: *Which neighbourhoods have you worked in?*

LM: I have worked all around Toronto, from Rosedale and Forest Hill to Thornhill and Oakville. I do a lot of cottage homes, which brings me to places like Muskoka and Georgian Bay. Florida is another place where you’ll find my work, including Miami, Boca Raton and Palm Beach. I have some exciting projects lined up in New York City as well.

DM: *Have you worked with any notable clients you’re willing to share?*

LM: I work with a lot of big developers in Toronto such as Chris Bratty. I find it so interesting how creative they are with their own spaces. A notable project



This lounge at a Toronto residence exemplifies that cosy and contemporary can mix

I have coming up is the redesign of Oscar-winner Paul Haggis’s New York City loft.

DM: *Where do you source furnishings and other details for your designs?*

LM: I source furnishings from all over the world. I particularly love travelling to London and Paris to purchase art and antiques. When I design a space, I have a very particular vision in my mind and in order for that to come to life, I need to design my own pieces. It is a real passion of mine and adds an exclusive and unique element to each space. My clients feel secure knowing that no other space will look like their own.

DM: *What does luxury mean to you?*

LM: Luxury is so different for everyone. To me, it’s about being surrounded by beautiful things. It’s a space that is extravagant and extremely comfortable, sophisticated and sexy.

DM: *What’s your dream project?*

LM: My dream project is any custom space where the client gives me the freedom to be an artist and design the space from top to bottom. Luckily, I have had many dream projects already.

DM: *What is your definition of la dolce vita?*

LM: I am so fortunate to get to do what I love every day. My clients give me the opportunity to really be an artist. I also have the balance of being busy doing what I love, and then finding relaxation and solace in my personal life — that is *la dolce vita*.
www.lorimorris.com



A whimsical gallery hallway at the Four Seasons Private Residences

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And LOVE works! Our ambassadors are creating a youth-led ripple effect that is working to end violence in schools and the community each day. According to our 2012 national evaluation, over 80 per cent of youth said that violence in their lives decreased after participating in LOVE.

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