

URBAN CAPITAL MAGAZINE



**WHAT WE WERE
UP TO IN 2011**

THE MONTREAL PHENOMENON

TRENDS IN DESIGN

**+ INDUSTRIAL CROSSINGS
A CITY DISTRICT REBORN
SAVING THE METROPOLITAN BIBLE CHURCH**



N5

Interior design thinks small

Night Five



Elaine Cecconi

Partner,
Cecconi Simone Interior Design
Cecconi Simone is a multi-disciplinary interior design consulting firm which produces award winning designs for large scale condominium/loft developments and hotels, for clients in the restaurant and hospitality industry, for corporate clients ranging from major advertising agencies to insurance companies and for leading financial institutions and government agencies.

The crowd murmured with a eureka moment when Elaine Cecconi revealed the miniature scale she works in for Toronto's newest condominium projects: "The condo units are getting smaller and tighter – we're looking at cubic inches, not cubic feet."

As a result, the most forward-thinking high-rise condo developers now consult with interior designers like Cecconi very early in the design process rather than as an after-thought. "We get involved in suite design at the beginning before the architecture's set. It's really the interiors influencing the exteriors, designing projects from the inside out."

With its newfound knowledge, the crowd later laughed *with* Cecconi about a 950 sf one-bedroom layout, a relic from 1995. Condo humour. The truth though: a one bedroom of this size would be a white elephant in today's market of 400 square foot one bedrooms.

The architect is dead. Long live the interior designer.

Cecconi, a partner at Toronto-based interior design firm Cecconi Simone, spoke at the final installment of our Trends in Design series. Last but not least, she revealed the considerable amount of interior design thinking that goes into making new condo units efficient and compact yet also appealing.

"I guess the question is how small can we actually go and what do we really need to live in?" she asks.

High ceilings help small interiors: "The value of a small unit is in its cubic feet; square footage doesn't really have any importance anymore," she explains. To make a volume bright and spacious yet practical, Cecconi uses sliding glass or solid panels for

flexible divisions and borrowed light.

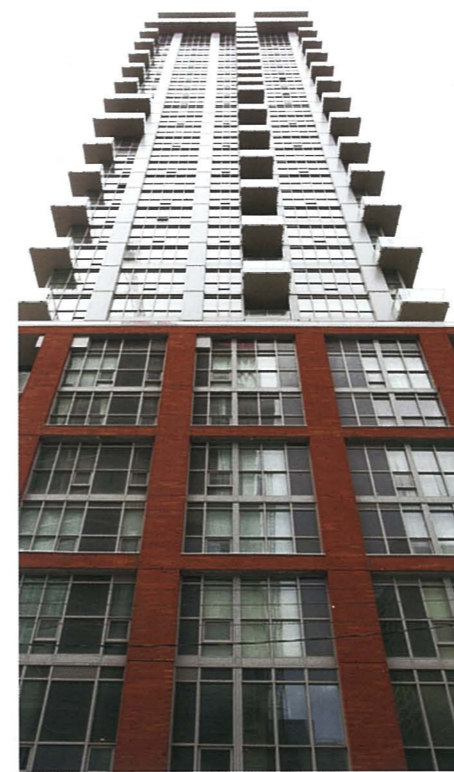
"You can have space that's totally compressed and closed or totally open," she says. "It's a really innovative approach to living. It makes spaces completely flexible because you're not fixed to any specific functional requirement."

In these small interiors, kitchen islands are a new focal point. "They're where everyone tends to gather. All of this is in your living room, so we're trying to make the kitchen less of a kitchen and an island that's more of a design element," she says.

The new scale of condo also requires a new scale of furniture. "Initially we found things weren't scaled appropriately. Furniture selections have to be a little more considered. You're not often going to be having a dinner party for eight or ten people in 425 sf."

Interesting thing, with units shrinking, developers are paying a lot more attention to a building's amenities. Lobbies, party rooms, fitness facilities or courtyards – they've become extensions of the suites people live in. "It doesn't seem to matter what the climate is, people have a longing to be outdoors," Cecconi explains about the premium placed on well-landscaped gardens or rooftops. "Outdoor fire pits are great for fall days and extending the seasons."

Boutique hotel lobbies have also become the model for condo projects' new lobbies/lounges, latter-day parlours, outfitted with libraries and comfortable lounge seating. "We've looked at these spaces differently, we wanted to look at them more as an extension of your living room," she says. "It's about having places for people to go and really meet their neighbours and hang out."



BOUTIQUE

In 2011 we completed our two-phase, 637 unit Boutique development located at the nexus of Toronto's Entertainment and Financial Districts. Combining the best of condominium features and boutique hotel-style amenities, each phase of the development close to sold out shortly after being launched.

Boutique was developed jointly with Malibu Investments and Alit Developments.

DETAILS

ADDRESS

21 Nelson Street and 126 Simcoe Street, Toronto

DESCRIPTION

Urban condominiums - two phases; 15 and 35 floors; total 637 units

DESIGNERS

ZAS Architects, CORE Architects, Ceconni Simone Interior Design

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Malibu Investments and Alit Developments

WEBSITE

boutiquecondos.ca