

September/October
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CANADIAN

INTERIORS

Open for business

Two off-the-wall offices

NeoCon on the rise

Designers at work: a portfolio



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DARLENE HESAS
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Including IDC's *Dimensions*

Anna Simone

Cecconi Simone

"I don't have an office. I don't want one," says Cecconi Simone partner Anna Simone in her characteristically dusky voice, wearing a trademark scarf. Instead, she prefers to work in the lower level of her company-owned low-rise on Dundas Street West. The room is a large serverly-hospitality area, where she'll start a meeting and break the ice by making fruit smoothies for her guests. "Whenever you're at a house party, the gathering place is always the kitchen. You feel more relaxed and connected. There's casualness about a kitchen that takes the edge off of being in an office environment. I feel that I can be more hospitable with clients and interact on a more personal level."

Founded in 1982, her firm, numbering 45 employees, is known for its office, hospitality and, in particular, condominium design projects, such as the sales centre for Massey Tower Condos in the long-vacant 1905 Canadian Bank of Commerce Building. She's standing at a long wooden table made from little planks salvaged from an old bowling-alley floor. "We always like to repurpose materials. That's the way we think. We take something intended for one use and put it in another application that's totally unexpected."



Inger Bartlett

Bartlett & Associates

Inger Bartlett, who heads her 30-year-old, 12-person, eponymous interior-design firm, has just explained that the firm's work ranges from high-end residential and condo renos to the financial sector, but centres mostly in creative office spaces. So how could she not be following *Mad Men*, which dazzles the eye with its '60s fashion and design art direction? The question is pertinent because she's reposing on a contemporaneous, vintage Herman Miller sofa whose swooping sides look so '60s-retro. The sofa is the commanding feature of the café on the firm's third floor. "We like to work in a collaborative way," Bartlett says. "We often come here to work together, away from our workstations, away from our tasks."

On the coffee table in front of the sofa she has plopped what appears to be a giant white Bento box. Only, instead of rice, fish or meat and pickled or cooked vegetables, she's filled it with an equally colourful and varied mix of wood, stone and textile materials. "We use big white boxes to look at all our samples – marble, metals, textiles – the entire palette we're looking at for a project. We will move the box to wherever a meeting table is free. Together, as a team, we can explore our options."

