



SPECIAL REPORT ON MODELS OF DESIGN

A condo suite with a lot of Flaire

Alessandro Munge pulled out all the stops at Shops of Don Mills

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SPECIAL TO THE STAR

The Shops at Don Mills is a tony open-air mall with the requisite fashion stores (Anthropologie to Michael Kors); high-end eateries like Mark McEwan's Fabbrica; patios (the first Bier Markt outside the downtown core); Toronto's first Fisker showroom, offering the world's only plug-in hybrid luxury car; and a central square which hosts everything from yoga classes to the TD Jazz festival and morphs into a skating rink in winter.

To accessorize all of the above is the fashionable Flaire condominium tower by Cadillac Fairview and The Fram Building Group, the third of seven condos planned for the Shops at Don Mills. It is '60s retro-inspired with two 11-storey towers anchored by a four-storey podium. The signature wraparound balconies resemble undulating ribbons of glass and concrete, the work of Toronto architectural firm Gianone Petricone Associates.

The showroom/representation centre at 6 Pabst Lane, which gives potential residents insight into what they are buying into, is the work of Alessandro Munge, managing partner in Munge Leung & Associates.

Munge also sexed up the amenity spaces, including a lobby complete with concierge; the attendant Flame Lounge with two-sided fireplace; a Miami-inspired rooftop terrace; and The Hub, Flaire's party room, with chef-catering kitchen, bar and a formal dining room that could pass for an upscale resto. No more cheesy party rooms with menus to match.

"Chic, modern, urban style" are the buzz words. "We are selling a sophisticated lifestyle," says Johnson Cheng, vice president of sales at Milborne Real Estate, specializing in the marketing of condos.

Munge supplies the outfit; Cheng has to strut it.

"The Shops at Don Mills attract a college crowd, a business crowd — it's an urban experience," Cheng says. "The downsizing market is also alive and well. You might be retired but you want a vibrant lifestyle."

"Our target demographic includes newlyweds starting a life together with the room to accommodate a growing family," adds Munge. "Young families also — they can't pay \$800-a-foot, downtown prices. Here it is \$550 a foot and it is 12 minutes from Portland St. and King St. W. (condo central for hipsters)."

There are 296 suites in Flaire, ranging from 504 to 1,100 square feet (with larger combo suites available) and prices start in the mid \$200,000s. Tentative occupancy date is December, 2014.

You get big bangs for the buck: the countertops are granite with a tile backsplash.

Flooring is pre-finished, engineered strip laminate and there are ceramic or porcelain tiles in bathrooms.

Bathrooms are spa-inspired in natural stone with proper lighting.

"I don't advise upgrades for the finishes because the quality our developer gives us is pretty damn good — our base model feels like an upgrade," says Munge, leading a tour of the 930-square-foot model suite, awash in a palette of white and grey.

"I want people to feel calm," he says. "Bring the level down from sell, sell, sell. This would be home."

Ya gotta love niceties like an extra-large surround on the tub to accommodate candles and champagne.

The master bedroom has a sophis-



The living/dining room/kitchen area is contemporary yet somehow retro — Dean Martin's dapper detective Matt Helm wouldn't look out of place.

"I fuss about artwork and accessories. The furniture is European and Italian — sleek and modern. We customized the end table and sofa and bought the rest."

ALESSANDRO MUNGE



Alessandro Munge customized the end table and sofa; the rest of the furnishings come from a variety of sources.



The kitchen features granite countertops and a glass tile backsplash.



Flaire has a 1960s retro style (inspired by its Don Mills surroundings) with two 11-storey towers anchored by a four-storey podium.

ticated wall treatment inlaid between two panels of glass, one of which is mirrored. A fake fur throw rests on the bed, further accessorized by a leather upholstered headboard.

This could be a deluxe hotel suite. I feel a compulsion to dial room service.

Munge rearranges the photos before moving on to the open-concept living/dining room/kitchen area. It is slick, contemporary yet some-

how retro — Dean Martin's dapper detective Matt Helm could live here. You expect Stella Stevens to slink in with martini in hand.

"You can seat friends and not be crowded," Munge says. "You can fit in a dining room table. We put the TV away in a recessed area and the microwave is stashed in cabinets in the kitchen island. Mom's cooking dinner in the kitchen — a standard, not a cramped kitchen."

Munge created a faux skyline and

installed a fake bird on the wrap-around balcony, which he landscaped and then added a side table and a couple of chairs.

It's not just about an end table in the living area. It's an end table in grey-green leather.

The coffee table is smoked glass; the rug looks 3-D.

"I fuss about artwork and accessories," he allows. "The furniture is European and Italian — sleek and modern. We design a lot of the fur-

niture. We customized the end table and sofa and bought the rest. It's like a great outfit: mix and match, not from one store. We'd shop 15 to 20 stores when outfitting a model suite. I don't go to the first place and say, 'I'll take the showroom.'"

"There is a full-sized couch in the model suite," adds Cheng. "Alessandro didn't use condo-sized furniture. He's not trying to cheap out by showing small."

You never go small in the mall.

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