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THIS CALGARY COUPLE had three main requests when they asked designer Alykhan Velji to decorate the living room in their new home: Make it family-friendly, make it warm and inviting, and make it perfect for entertaining. But a wall of stunning 19-foot-high windows presented one major challenge. Though they filled the room with light, they also made it feel vast and empty – the exact opposite of the warm and intimate ambience the owners were looking for.

Window coverings went a long way toward fixing the problem. “A lot of people think drapery has to extend all the way to the ceiling – especially if they have windows that stretch two storeys tall – but that’s not the case,” says Alykhan. “We ended the drapes at the first storey to help delineate the space and prevent it from feeling so vast.”

To create a collection that looks as though it has been curated over time, instead of thrown together in a few weeks, Calgary designer Alykhan Velji suggests choosing pieces with different design styles. Rather than using only modern furniture, which

is what the couple had originally requested, he bounced between traditional (the millwork and ottoman) to suit the style of the home, modern (the angular chairs with chrome frames) to appease the clients and rustic (a wooden side table) to add interest.

Artful design touches turn this high-ceilinged living room into a cozy entertaining space with nothing to detract from its expansive view.

TEXT ANDREA KARR | PHOTOGRAPHY JOEL KLASSEN

If you have a beautiful view and privacy isn't an issue (as was the case in this home, which backs onto a ravine) save money by skipping working drapery in favour of simple fabric panels. Alykhan used white linen that was approximately 36 inches wide to soften the hard lines of the window. When asked what he considers the most important splurge in any living room, Alykhan answers easily: "A custom sofa." In this space, it ensured a perfect fit - it's not too short for the long wall and low-profile enough not to take away from the view - as well as comfort and quality.



By contrast, notes Alykhan, the feature wallpaper above the wainscoting extends all the way to the ceiling to ensure continuity - the designer didn't want the vertical space to feel totally broken up, and the different height lines keep the eye engaged.

To maintain focus on the gorgeous view, Alykhan adopted a muted palette of whites, greys and blues, and brightened the black fireplace with a gleaming marble surround to reflect light. He also chose only furniture with a low profile to maintain open sightlines.



BEFORE



LEFT A new marble fireplace surround allows the feature to complement the gallery wall rather than draw attention away from it.



Mixing texture and prints was initially out of the wife's comfort zone, but Alykhan coaxed her toward graphic wallpaper in a quiet colourway, a casual leaned gallery wall and a patterned rug, throws and toss cushions – easy pieces to remove should the homeowners desire – to create a sense of inviting warmth. To increase the cozy factor even more, he chose varied textures, such as velvet, linen and leather, to create a subtle yet dynamic tension.

Seating was another top priority since this couple frequently hosts their large extended family, so Alykhan incorporated plenty of it: A sectional, two stools, two sidechairs and a plush coffee table-ottoman that also serves as a place to sit allows at least nine people to chat here without feeling crowded.

It's a fine balance – the perfect place to entertain, where expansive windows don't detract from the sense of welcome, and the subtle yet compelling design doesn't draw attention away from the stunning ravine view. It's exactly what these homeowners wanted.

LEFT Modern sidechairs keep sightlines open and contribute to the living room's airy look.

BELOW All of the pieces on the picture ledge were purchased on a budget from a big-box store, so the couple can expand their collection with original works over time without a huge initial investment. "It's a gallery wall that can change as the family travels and collects new artwork," says Alykhan.



DESIGN, Alykhan Velji Designs, alyveljidesigns.com; **CONTRACTING, MILLWORK**, Constructing Spaces; **WALLPAPER**, Crown Wallpaper & Fabrics; custom **SECTIONAL**, custom **OTTOMAN**, CF Interiors; **SIDECHAIRS**, CB2; **SIDE TABLES, TABLE LAMPS, TRAY** (on ottoman), **PRINTS**, lidded **BASKET, TROWS**, HomeSense; **STOOLS**, Bouclair; **FIREPLACE SURROUND**, Laporte Surfaces; **DRAPERY FABRIC, TOSS & LUMBAR CUSHION FABRIC**, Tonic Living; **DRAPERY, TOSS CUSHION & LUMBAR CUSHION SEWING**, Alykhan Velji Designs; **RUG**, Jaipur Living.

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