



The focal point of Violeta and Terence's loft condominium renovation was a set of sliding, stained glass doors (pictured opposite and on page 25) created by Winnipeg artist Judy Jennings. Interior designer Leon Moryl helped convert the 550-square-foot space into a clean, modern bedroom (centre), office (above), and bathroom (left) that would compliment Violeta's vast art collection. To enhance the building's vintage feel, Leon and Violeta chose to uncover the 1.4-inch Douglas fir beams that were hidden throughout the condominium before the renovation.

When Violeta Miramon and Terence Moore decided to leave their quiet River Heights neighbourhood and move to the Exchange District, they knew they were in for an adventure.

On a typical Saturday night, the heady aroma of roasted garlic from a nearby restaurant drifts up toward their fourth-floor loft condominium while garrulous club hoppers—waiting to get into one of the district's several nightclubs—line the streets below. But it's these eclectic sights and sounds that enticed them to the Ashdown Warehouse, located at 167 Bannatyne Ave. Even more enticing for Violeta, an artist, and Terence, comment editor at the *Winnipeg Free Press*, was the high culture that immerses the area.

"Since we both love music, we just cross the parking lot and we're at the concert hall," says Violeta, who sings with a local choir

group. "It's amazing that we have so much right in our own backyard."

Other attractions just a hop and skip away include the Manitoba Theatre Centre, Pantages Playhouse, and the Manitoba Conservatory of Music and Arts, where Violeta takes her choral singing lessons. But the main appeal: the rich history of the Exchange District,

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a relic from turn-of-the-century Winnipeg, when the city was a warehouse capital and distribution hub for the Prairies, due in part to our thriving railway lines.

Those days are over, but some remnants of the city's warehousing glory days remain. In particular, the Exchange District's character-laden buildings, including the Ashdown Warehouse. Built in 1895 by Winnipeg business-

man, politician, and philanthropist James H. Ashdown, the building was restored and turned into condos in the early 1990s.

Violeta and Terence occupy one of 100 suites in the building. And while the historic Exchange District is a natural fit for the pair, it's their 1,500-square-foot condo that truly feels like home—thanks to dramatic renovations they completed over the past year.

"We wanted to make the place into ours," says Violeta. "We knew we were going to stay here for a long time, so we wanted it to be comfortable, pleasant, and workable—a space that enhanced what we have and also enhanced the activities we pursue."

So, the couple hired interior designer Leon Moryl, B.I.D., owner of Hands-On Design, to carry out their vision. They wanted more than a place for eating and sleeping, but an abode where they could work, hold music recitals, display art, and store their life's possessions. All this while maintaining the integrity of the century-old dwelling.

The couple decided to renovate 550 square feet of their condo, turning two bedrooms into one cohesive bedroom and office area that runs directly off the living room.

"Designing this multi-functional space was a challenge. It's an old building, so you don't know what you'll discover," explains Violeta, pointing to an exposed 14-inch Douglas fir beam that has held up for more than a century. The beams add structural and esthetic strength to the surroundings. "We tried to enhance what we had so we didn't destroy the building's look and feel."

The revamped space centres around a set of one-of-a-kind stained glass doors created by local artist Judy Jennings. Leon suggested the pairing after he discovered Judy and Violeta were friends.

"The doors are airy, so there's a feeling of space," says Violeta, adding that they replaced a set of conventional wood doors. "This new design also adds an element of mystery. You want to know what's beyond the glass."

The result is something owners and designer are proud of. "The doors are pieces of

art unto themselves," beams Leon. "At night, they are backlit with halogen. And there's a beautiful glow to them during the day—much like the stained glass windows in a church."

Behind the luminous glass is Violeta and Terence's bedroom, a tranquil space where everything has a place behind the seven-foot maple cabinets.

Violeta, a self-professed neat freak, wouldn't dream of wasting the remaining four feet of space above the cabinets (her ceilings are a grand 11 feet, but standard cabinets only run seven feet high). So Leon, who also holds a bachelor's degree in theatre arts, recommended she create a set of painted screens to close the space and cover her storage boxes.

The screens are part of her artwork collection—including clay raku sculptures, paper collages, and large, abstract paintings—which is displayed throughout the condo.

Down the hallway in the couple's office space, soft pastel wall colours blend impeccably with the beige Manitoba brick found throughout the home. This is where the couple works and holds music recitals.

Halogen bulbs hang from almost invisible cables in the ceiling, adding an industrial feel and spotlighting Violeta's art. "And when Terry has recitals here, he often redirects the bulbs on the musicians," explains Violeta.

A large, humidity-controlled cabinet in the space houses Terence's cello.

Stepping from the newly renovated area into the existing living room is a seamless journey. "Unifying the space was a challenge," says Leon. "We had to be sensitive to what is already there, but I think we accomplished our mission of creating a beautiful new space."

For Violeta, surrounding herself with beauty stirs her to create extraordinary artwork. And being inspired, she explains, is particularly important now. She currently spends five hours a day at her McDermot Avenue studio where she is preparing paintings for an upcoming U.S. exhibition.

"I love being around nice things. But the most important inspiration is freedom, and living here makes me feel free." **WV**

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