

# HOMIE

BUDGET-SAVVY DECOR SOLUTIONS | THE PERFECT WHITE | DIY CRAFT CENTRE



PHOTOGRAPHY: COLIN WAX; HAIR AND MAKEUP: MAKARA MARTIN

## Winning Approach

Risk is relative. Just ask Olympic silver medallist Helen Upperton. The 34-year-old Calgarian is perfectly at home in the pilot position of a bobsled, hurtling down the run at bone-rattling speeds. But when presented with the challenge of decorating her new digs, this first-time homeowner wasn't about to take any chances—especially not with designer friend Aly Velji on speed dial. Here's how she got the home of her dreams on a seriously down-to-earth budget. ▶

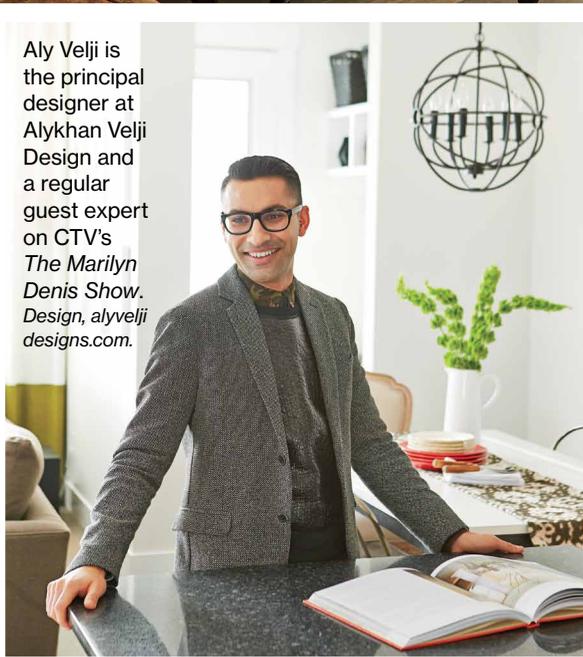
BY BRETT WALTHER

# Go For The Bold

DESIGNER ALY VELJI SERVES UP FEARLESS STYLE ON A MODEST BUDGET FOR AN OLYMPIC MEDALLIST'S FIRST HOME.

WRITTEN BY BRETT WALTHER  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY COLIN WAY

Aly Velji is the principal designer at Alykhan Velji Design and a regular guest expert on CTV's *The Marilyn Denis Show*. Design, [alyveljidesigns.com](http://alyveljidesigns.com).



Upperton's silver medal from the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics is stashed in this jewellery box!

Velji snagged this accent chair for just \$175 at HomeSense!

**BUDGET SAVVY** Scour fabric outlets for remnants. Ready-made drapes from Ikea fit Upperton's budget but, unfortunately, not her windows. In an inspired Ikea hack, Velji extended them to the floor by sewing on a border of bold moss-green linen from Fabricland. "This not only helped us save on fabric costs, but also created a custom element that picked up on the green accents that we had in the rest of the space," he says. Drapes, rug, [ikea.ca](http://ikea.ca). Green linen fabric, [fabricland.ca](http://fabricland.ca). Sectional sofa, [crateandbarrel.ca](http://crateandbarrel.ca). Coffee table, bookcases, [styleinform.com](http://styleinform.com). Slipper chair, [homesense.ca](http://homesense.ca). Side tables, [salvagefurniture.ca](http://salvagefurniture.ca). Flooring, [kentwoodfloors.com](http://kentwoodfloors.com).

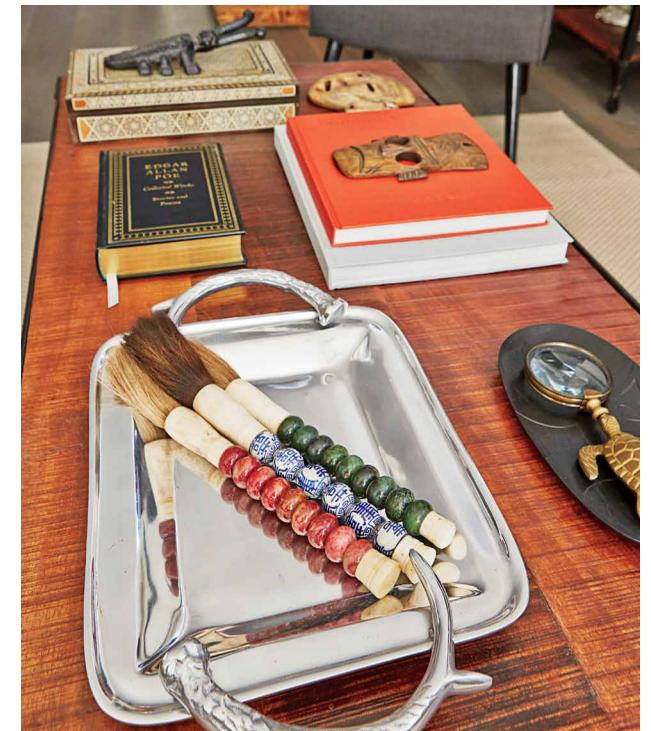
## DIY ARTWORK

**BUDGET SAVVY** Turn a single snapshot into a pop art installation. This gallery wall looks like a million bucks, but Velji pulled it together for just \$30—the price of six Ikea art frames. Using digital photo-editing software, he gave an image of Upperton suited in bobsledding gear an on-trend pixelated effect, and even tweaked the colours to complement the surrounding decor. Printed and mounted in the prefab frames, the custom artwork strikes a more personal note than a mass-produced print. Images, [quintaro.ca](http://quintaro.ca). Frames, [ikea.ca](http://ikea.ca).

**> GO ONLINE:** For our guide to the best free photo-editing tools on the web, check out [canadianliving.com/digitalphotos](http://canadianliving.com/digitalphotos).

If an interior decorator's role is to read a homeowner's unique sense of style and convey that in the space surrounding them, Aly Velji's doing a damn good job. "It's like he could see what I'd pictured in my head before I was able to describe it," says Olympian Helen Upperton, who gave Velji free rein over her 1,500-square-foot new build. The one caveat? This being Upperton's first home, it was important he squeezed the most out of every decorating dollar, a challenge that Velji met with gusto. "The main concern was to make it very comfortable and homey for her," says Velji. The first step was to pin down Upperton's style, which leans toward the rustic but also melds ethnic influences with the occasional splash of pure, unadulterated "pretty." "It's definitely all about the mix, and

I think Helen just needed some help pulling all of her 'likes' together to make a cohesive space." The rustic element was realized in the form of raw, textural wood found in everything from the plank flooring to the bookcase shelves. The warm, grounded esthetic was driven home with an organic palette of burnt orange and greyish green, which—unbeknownst to Velji—happens to be Upperton's favourite colour. What's more, the souvenirs Upperton collected in competitions around the globe provided an endless supply of exotic accessories. "The injection of pieces from Helen's travels helped to pull everything together," says Velji, "and truly puts her stamp on the space." "He totally nailed it," says Upperton. "It's good to feel excited to go home every day and think, 'Yes! This is my home!'"



**BUDGET SAVVY** Find a spot for what you've already got. Velji combined chic souvenirs, inherited treasures and items from Upperton's cupboards to create a tabletop vignette with a real sense of character and meaning. "The Chinese calligraphy brushes were given to Helen by her sister and are very important to her," says Velji. "Seeing them on display will put a smile on her face every day." Tray, [homesense.ca](http://homesense.ca).

**BUDGET SAVVY** Wallpaper a focal wall rather than the entire room. This pricey floral-print paper earns its keep, making a dramatic style statement in the niches flanking the fireplace. “We decided to limit the wallpaper to those two panels, not only to cut down on cost, but because it was such a bold pattern,” says Velji. “We didn’t want to overwhelm the space.” Sandpiper Studios Villa Flora VB10000 wallpaper, crownwallpaper.com.



**BUDGET SAVVY** Hit up big-box stores for smalls. “There’s no need to splurge on thousand-dollar vases when you’ve got a HomeSense in your neighbourhood,” says Velji. That’s where he snagged these stunning black stag’s-head urns, as well as many of the brightly hued toss cushions and throws that provide lively bursts of colour throughout the home. Captain’s mirror, urns, homesense.ca. Bookcase, styleinform.com.

**BUDGET SAVVY** Amortize big-ticket buys over the long term. The kitchen’s subway-tile backsplash is an upgrade on the builder’s basic square ceramic tile, and one Velji considers a worthy splurge. “It’s timeless and lends itself to any number of styles down the road,” he says. It also provides continuity in the open-concept layout, as the tile repeats in the living area’s fireplace surround. Subway-tile backsplash, iconstonetile.com.



**GETTING WHITE RIGHT**

Although Upperton had initial doubts about enveloping the main floor in white, her faith in Velji’s vision paid dividends. “With white walls, you’re free to hang patterned wallpaper and lots of art without it feeling overwhelming,” she says. It also offsets the room’s richer elements, like the textural wood, ornate accessories and dark maple kitchen cabinetry. “It’s all about contrast,” Velji says. Ultra White CC-10 paint (on walls and ceiling), benjaminmoore.ca.

**DINE-O-MITE!**

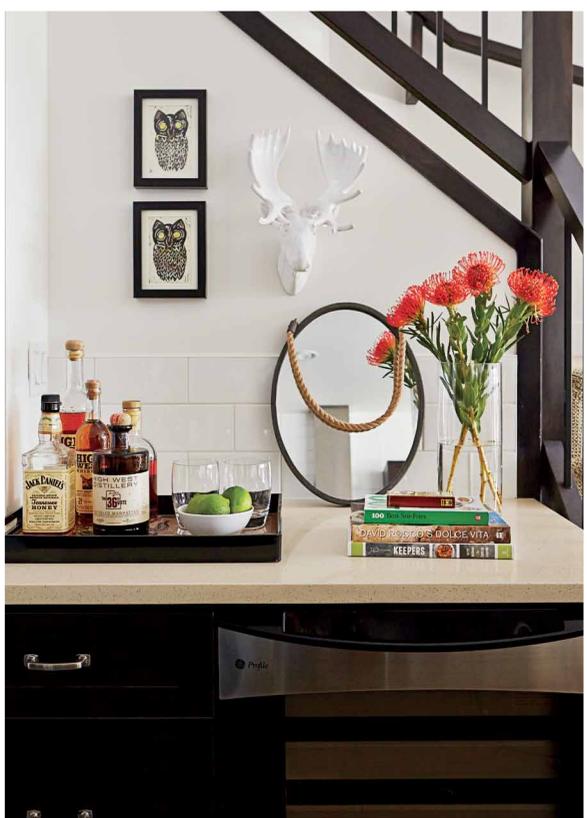
With its white marble top and barely-there black frame, this versatile dining table was made for mixing and matching. Velji paired it with Marais-style café chairs to capture the effortless chic of a posh bistro. Dining table, crateandbarrel.ca. Chairs, pendant light fixture, homesense.ca. Wall art, dishes, table linens, ikea.ca. ©



## SALVAGE LOVE

Previously open to the kitchen, the entrance to the library was fitted with a reclaimed barn door mounted on an overhead sliding track system. Velji collaborated with the door manufacturer, Calgary's Reclaimed Trading Company, on a new furniture line that sources salvaged wood from farms and historic buildings across Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. "I love using reclaimed pieces in my interiors," says Velji. "They add texture, history and an element of surprise." *Reclaimed door, reclaimedcanada.com. Salvage Furniture Collection, salvagefurniture.ca. Settee, westelm.com. Side table, homesense.ca. Ottoman, crateandbarrel.ca.*

**> GO ONLINE:** Check out Velji's chic Salvage Furniture collection at [canadianliving.com/alyvelji](http://canadianliving.com/alyvelji).



## LIBATION STATION

Indulging Upperton's knack for playing host, Velji carved a home bar out of an underutilized nook at the base of the stairs. Kitted out with a wine fridge and plenty of counter space for prepping cocktails, it packs a lot of party into a tiny footprint. *Captain's mirror, vase, homesense.ca. Moose wall hanging, etsy.ca.* ●

