

# WARM & PLAYFUL

Vancouver-based celebrity designer embraces 'modern glam' style that is practical, fun

## MARTIN SLOFSTRA

Born and raised in Vancouver, Aleem Kassam started his path in interior design in 2004 by obtaining a formal education at the Art Institute of Vancouver.

He soon found himself with a desire for adventure and a yearning to further his education abroad, thus bringing him to the Art Institute of Chicago to obtain a degree in interior design and sustainable interior architecture, the Domus Academy in Milan and the Central Saint Martins school in London.

This global perspective soon brought him to a broader platform as a participant on *From the Ground Up*, a series on Global TV and later broadcast in countries around the world.

The child of two immigrant parents, Aleem grew up watching his parents establish roots and building a better life than the one they came from.

He did not, however, want to follow in their footsteps by taking on a corporate position. "I knew that I wanted to be something creative," he said, getting heavily involved in activities such as art, drama and music as opposed to sports. "I knew I was different from an early age.

"As an early teen, I remember a wide array of family trips that moved from Disneyland to Rome, New York, London and other international destinations. Here, things clicked." The exposure to other cities, cultures, societies, architecture, design, both historical and modern, ignited the "design bug" within him.

"One of the most exciting parts of our day-to-day operations at Kalu Interiors is that we're always working on something new and different," he said. "Our projects greatly vary from one to the next in size, style, budget, location, ranging from West Coast modern to Cape Cod transitional."

He describes the best part of his job as "doing what I love every day. This is certainly not a job, but rather a passion."

**Q How would you describe your home in one or two words?**  
**A** Modern glam.

**Q Tell us about your home.**

**A** It is a sub-penthouse, boutique-style condo in a 10-year old building with 1,150 square feet of interior and 150 square feet of exterior space. We moved in 2016 with renovations completed in 2018. Special interior features include a chef's gourmet kitchen, wine fridge, double dish drawers, built-in coffee centre with



Interior designer Aleem Kassam, with Kalu Interiors partner and interior designer Phyllis Lui, says his work is "not a job, but rather a passion."



A Louis XIV gold-gilded mirror is the focal point in the master bedroom.

imported Italian counter tops with honed black granite and custom matte black hardware.

**Q What attracted you to this space?**

**A** When I first stepped foot into it a few years ago, it was in a terrible state — dark, dingy, and compartmentalized spaces — but I was immediately attracted to the potential. I knew at the time that the space had a size and layout I could work with and though it

would be a challenge, it was workable. Also, it being one level from the top with exposure to west and north, it had unobstructed views of downtown Vancouver.

**Q Who shares this home?**

**A** My partner Victor Kazakov and our Bengal kitty named Prince Theodoros Alexander Kazzamakov.

**Q What is your favourite room and why?**

the condo and endless counter space with an oversized island and the perfect place to entertain. Whether just a night in or entertaining several guests, the kitchen allows me to whip up a gourmet meal while also socializing with my partner or friends.

**Q How would you describe your decorating style?**

**A** When coming to decorate our home, I took the premise that I take in my everyday design. In addition to layering, it's important to tell a story with your pieces, furniture, accessories, art, rugs. I always, always keep a neutral palette overall, allowing me the perfect canvas to take more risks with the accessories and art, then tying in the items through a theme based on subject, colour or finish. In this case, I took a theme of blacks, golds and tropical motifs. I love including pieces that play off one another from the cushions to the vases, creating little vignettes. I don't take my design too seriously, so I try to have some comical inclusions, some fun and create a warm, elegant, but playful interior.

**Q What is your fondest memory in this home?**

**A** I'd have to say it was the day we did our photo shoot of the home for a local magazine. When you're designing, renovating and then living in your own space, you sometimes forget to take a step back and absorb everything.

**Q What's the one item in this house you can't live without?**

**A** My Louis XIV gold-gilded mirror that is featured front and centre of my master bedroom and duplicates as the headboard. It was a pretty penny and one of the largest items we had to bring into the condo. It's bold, up front and certainly the main talking piece for guests when they see the room.

**Q During weekends at home, what are we most likely to find you doing?**

**A** The family piled on the bed — catching-up on all sorts of television, books and magazines. Once we've exhausted the remote, magazines and books — and drank coffee to our heart's desire — the family migrates to the expansive patio, where we can lay out in the sun.

**Q If your walls could talk, what would they say?**

**A** Our walls would say, "Boy these guys like to have fun!" ... wine flowing, music blaring, pots steaming and just laughter.



Aleem Kassam loves pieces that play off one another, from cushions to vases.

**A** The kitchen. It's the size of kitchen you'd find in a single-family home; in fact, it's larger than most. It's extremely functional, literally the centre of