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# AT HOME

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 | 2010 | EDITOR MICHAEL SASGES 604.605.2467 | HOMES@VANCOUVERSUN.COM



## A prize of a home

Variety, the Children's Charity opens the doors on its ninth annual lottery fundraiser Pages E4-5

The covered patio at the rear of this year's Variety prize home.

### NEW AND NOTABLE | E2

#### Soft on design

The same Vancouver trio that developed softwalls and softseating is on to something else: 'cloud softlights.' Lucy Hyslop explains.



### SATURDAY HOMES

#### Talking about Coquitlam

Cressey's new 27-storey tower will be a fitting addition to the evolving city landscape.

### HOUSE TO HOME | E3

#### The power of red

Debbie Travis says it's a colour that animates us and gives us confidence — and it can also lend drama to a room.



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NEW AND NOTABLE

# Lighting the latest result of Vancouver studio's 'soft' design exploration

'How we can occupy space a bit more densely' the quest at molo; 'cloud' the name of the find

LUCY HYSLOP



When Vancouver design trio molo has an idea, there's nothing fleeting about it. Since its inception in 2001, the group has been waxing and waning on the singular notion of one word: soft.

"It's all to do with how we can occupy space a bit more densely," explains Todd MacAllen, "and 'soft' - as an idea - is something that is expandable and collapsible, something that can respond to the change in the space so that open plan can become a bit more flexible."

Tapping into early Modernist and Japanese ideas about efficient homes to allow giant urban lofts to share their space with intimate rooms, molo developed partitions - a flexible honeycomb of various materials (paper, textile) known as softwall and soft-block modular systems that seamlessly connect together.

Now, along with its "softseating," the team - it also includes Stephanie Forsythe and Robert Pasut - has honed its talents on hanging canopy lights, called cloud softlights.

"It's just natural for us to start playing with what opportunities there might be, and the lighting was really the delight of exploration," MacAllen enthuses.

That exploration led to an altogether different approach of marrying LED lighting with design - first encountered when the three inserted lights into their partition.

"Generally, we have become so used to pointed beams of light," he continues, "but ours are an ambient, glowing light. It's perfect to be looking at lighting, because everybody - whether or not they are interested in design - is affected by the quality of light."

Think of these lights as creating a room, although obviously not enclosed, adds MacAllen, who met Forsythe at architecture school in Halifax and Pasut at high school in Vancouver.

"When they are suspended, they make a space underneath them," he says, referring to the old idea of high-back chairs at a dining table helping to enclose spaces (take a bow, Charles Rennie Mackintosh).

The molo studio, located at 1470 Venables St., is unusual in that it's not only a site for the works' design and manufacturing; it is also a point of sale.

"Researching how the materials would work and how things are made give us the opportunity to work a little bit more closely on a single idea," he says. "So we evolve it over time."

Molo's work can be observed mainly in Europe and Japan, although the cloud softlights are featured in Gastown's latest development, Paris Annex (a new-home project that will be featured in the Oct. 2 Westcoast Homes).

A number of its pieces are also found in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City, an inclusion that has made molo so single-minded, MacAllen explains.

"When that type of relationship has been established, we do feel a certain obligation to make sure we don't just throw stuff out there," he says.

"You can have a thousand or a million ideas, but we only release one or two of them."

The cloud softlights by molo start from \$330.

For more information, call 604-696-2501 or log on to molodesign.com.

### If in Villeroy & Boch, are they still fries?

In terms of dining etiquette, the names Villeroy & Boch have held currency for more than two and a half centuries.

But in today's less-formal culinary world, the firm is getting inventive: Present fries in a mug, for example, or turn a soup tureen into a vase, suggests Isabelle von Boch in a release.

The eighth-generation family member and spokesperson is flying in from the tableware's headquarters in Mettlach, Germany, to offer tips for "elevating dining décor" in Vancouver.



Living grandly has both a future and a past. The lighting above, called cloud softlights by designers Todd MacAllen, Stephanie Forsythe and Robert Pasut, has at least the promise of expanding the small space through the magic of light. Below, Villeroy & Boch has represented grand residency for more than two and a half centuries. This weekend, Isabelle von Boch is in town to champion "elevating dining décor" in Vancouver.

Along with presenting ideas for multiple uses for items, she will discuss mixing and matching patterns for place settings and how tableware is the "perfect backdrop" for any gathering.

The Fashion of Tableware event is at The House of Villeroy & Boch, 420 Howe (604-681-5884; villeroy-boch.com), from noon to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

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