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As seen in all of VictorEric Design Group's custom residences, meeting clients' visions with second-to-none design expertise is of the utmost importance.



DESIGN INTUITION

There is a well-deserved buzz surrounding the work of **VictorEric Design Group**. The firm is not only creating stunning work in and around Vancouver but is doing so while maintaining the visions of its clients.

By Kelli Lawrence



On paper, an architectural design firm's job seems pretty straightforward: get a client, draft a design of the project, and then turn that project into something tangible that both the client and architect will be pleased with. In theory, it should be as easy as that, with zero miscommunication or discrepancy. But in reality, a lot of things can transpire between points A, B, and C that can create a sense of dissatisfaction for one or both sides, ultimately resulting in a subpar project.

That is why Vancouver-based firm VictorEric Design Group adheres to some key principles in order to keep this dissatisfaction at bay. One principle, however, stands out among all the others. "My belief is that trust is the most important thing in any project," says Eric Lee, partner. "We strive so hard to listen well in the beginning for that reason."

This trust naturally merges with another crucial facet of the VictorEric philosophy: the firm's tendency to not only listen to the client's ideas and visions but to hear them so well that the design team can anticipate the needs of the project before the client is even aware they exist. "It's really about the translation of the initial idea to our team and our team absorbing that, translating it onto paper and to the contractors," Lee explains. "At the end of the day, the finished project is as much intact as the client's original vision." ►►



LANG RESIDENCE

Location: Vancouver, BC
Started: September 2008
Completed: January 2010
Size: 4,500 square feet
Style: West Coast/modern
Accolades: 2010 Georgie Gold winner for Best Single Family Detached Home

"With the Lang Residence, we very much wanted to incorporate natural light," Lee says. "There are skylights on the sides, towards the back, in the kitchen, in the living/dining area, and even down to the basement." Built for a family with two children, the statuesque Lang Residence also boasts a roof deck with an outdoor fireplace and impressive views of the city, as well as an indoor bar/studio flex room, a master en suite, a freestanding tub, a theatre room in the home's basement level, and bamboo and cedar accents throughout.



» Today, VictorEric has made a name for itself as a premiere firm in the custom-home market thanks in large part to Lee's industry know-how and design-savvy expertise. Self-taught by the age of 18, Lee comes from a family of builders who helped him get his feet wet in the industry early on. Although Lee eventually studied architecture, it was initially interior design that appealed to him and kept him the busiest, as he allowed single-family homes to become his main area of concentration. Today, that appeal still rings true, as the firm specializes in both residential architecture and interior design, among other areas. "That's where the challenge is for me," Lee says. "I like dealing with families; I like small spaces and

"On paper, we have the time and luxury to spend a little more time thinking further, rather than just getting a project out the door. That's why we're custom, and that's why they come to us."

—ERIC LEE, PARTNER



► everything involved. With larger buildings, it's about 10 percent creative design, and the rest is safety-code issues. With homes, it's more like 60 percent creative."

There is a natural windfall of creativity when a business succeeds and grows the way VictorEric has grown. Founded in 1997, the design firm's residential repertoire has earned 17 awards and accolades to date, and its staff has doubled in size in just the past year alone. With projects that run the gamut in terms of style, square footage, and lot size, Lee is confident that VictorEric's outstanding communication and interpretation skills have fostered positive word-of-mouth promotion for the firm. "It's all about a

feeling," Lee says. "The key thing we always ask ourselves is: what is that feeling the client is trying to get?"

To date, one of the firm's most impressive projects is the Alamein Residence, which is located in the Arbutus neighbourhood of West Vancouver. The client was seeking to create a feeling of spaciousness combined with modern timelessness, so VictorEric was challenged with the task of finding unique ways to define the 3,900 square feet of space. "You can dream up a design, but to really make it work—to document it well with sections and details so that the subtrades and contractors can actually build it—is a different story," Lee explains. Ultimately, the

client's trust in Lee's high-quality drawings and design-build knowledge paid off: the Alamein Residence became one of the firm's first projects showcasing a modern, West Coast style.

Projects like these help VictorEric showcase a strong design versatility and reveal the firm's ability to design several types of residences. Another impressive project—the 2,600-square-foot Wills Residence—represents VictorEric's capability on a completely different scale. Located in the Douglas Park section of Vancouver, the project adopts a Heritage Revival style. Once VictorEric settled into the challenges of building on a narrow lot, as well as serving as a liaison on

WILLS RESIDENCE

Location: Vancouver, BC
Started: July 2008
Completed: October 2009
Size: 2,600 square feet
Style: Heritage Revival/
 French Craftsman
Accolades: 2010 Georgie Award
 Top 5 Finalist

"When designing, I'm always wondering how one is experiencing this space," Lee says. "With smaller homes, it's important to create efficiency." The Wills Residence, situated on a narrow lot in Douglas Park, a neighbourhood of predominantly younger professionals and their families, provided less space to work with than many of VictorEric's other clients. With the help of innovative storage solutions, the Wills family is able to enjoy their new home—including an open living, dining, and kitchen area—better than they ever could in their previous condominium.



ALAMEIN RESIDENCE

Location: Vancouver, BC
Started: December 2007
Completed: August 2009
Size: 3,900 square feet
Style: West Coast/modern
Accolades: 2010 Georgie Award
 Top 5 Finalist in 3 categories

"The owner was a repeat client, so that trust really helped us just go at it," Lee says of the Alamein Residence, one of VictorEric's first-ever homes in the West Coast/modern style. "It's a very open plan that's more about space than rooms, so we helped define the space with different levels—a step up to the dining area, a step down for the living room, and so on." Floating wood ceilings and a unique open-concept master bedroom, which includes a jacuzzi and Ecosmart fireplace, mark other unique features.

multiple levels, Lee focused on the mechanics of creating an interior that met the client's living and efficiency needs as organically as possible. "In planning a home, one of the key things most can't see on paper is flow," he says. "It relates to the whole house, your day-to-day activities—your lifestyle. That flow is something we're really good at creating."

Indeed, flow became paramount when VictorEric took on another standout project, the Lang Residence—a 4,500-square-foot home for a family of four that was completed on the west side of Vancouver in January 2010. Though its modern, West Coast style makes it somewhat similar to homes like the Alamein Residence, its location alone—perched on an elevation—and towering

build sets it apart. Notable features include several skylights that bring natural light to every level and a show-stopping roof deck that affords multiple views of the city beyond. To ensure that the roof deck received the use and attention it deserved, Lee outfitted it with an outdoor fireplace and third-floor loft. Additionally, the staircases in the residence became integral to the home's success, as Lee used a double-storey feature wall and other elements to provide what he calls an "appealing lead" from one floor to the next.

These projects are just a few testaments to the design firm's capability. VictorEric has dozens of eye-catching homes and renovations to its name throughout the Vancouver

area. As the firm nears its 15th anniversary, its success begets asking, "What's next?"

"We've said we do want to expand, but our measurement is not in sales volume or in company size," Lee says. "It's more about the prestige that our projects bring—the external prestige people give us—and the quality of people that we train and build. That's my measure."

Whether it grows externally or otherwise, Lee knows he will never sacrifice his firm's innovative project-management style to get there. "On paper, we have the time and luxury to spend a little more time thinking further, rather than just getting a project out the door," he says. "That's why we're custom, and that's why they come to us." CBQ