



CLEAN LINES: Award-winning firm Burdiflek's model suites at Tip Top Lofts reflect the spare and stylish approach the award-winning designers are famous for. They also designed the sales office.

Burdiflek's designs suit Tip Top

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SPECIAL TO THE STAR

First they drew raves for designing Caban's innovative retail spaces. Now Burdiflek designers have unleashed their creative force on condos.

By designing two showplace model suites for Tip Top Lofts, the Burdiflek team (the office now numbers 18 and growing) has expanded its focus from international retail design to residential with results that are causing a predictable buzz.

Known for the interior design concept that pulled it all together for fashion retailer Club Monaco's home décor and lifestyle mer-

chandising venture, Burdiflek has won recognition for Club Monaco stores and offices in Toronto, Montreal and New York. This week, they take home four more awards from the Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario.

The sleek, hip look it created for the 23,000-square-foot Queen Street West flagship Caban had to be flexible enough for the retailer to successfully cross merchandise a bold mix of apparel and home furnishings, says Burdiflek's managing partner, Paul Fillek.

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Designers created two looks for suites

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"The interior is understated so that customers notice the merchandise rather than the design details," adds creative director Diego Burdi.

Each of its projects (nightclubs, restaurants, interior design trade show booths, shoe and clothing stores and a spa) is cutting edge — a touch of Zen, clean-lined, spare yet sensuous, refined yet stylish that lets the play of interesting materials dominate.

Now their approach finds a new home at Tip Top Tailors, the art deco building at the foot of Bathurst St. about to be transformed into high-end lofts. It's the company's first major venture into the condo model suite arena.

In the larger of the two models, sandblasted glass is married with brushed stainless steel and ebony in the cupboards. A long centre island combines cool white Statuario marble, again with stainless steel and sandblasted glass. Floors are solid oak, stained ebony. Concrete vanities, polished porcelain tiles, white marble, stainless steel and customized stained ash veneer comes together in the bathrooms.

All the wood finishes and millwork have been customized by Burdiflek. It was something the designers insisted upon.

"We toured the city and went to a lot of showrooms," says Burdi. "And we realized that the choices in finishes and upgrades were being dictated by suppliers and designers. We could have taken the same old, same old route and used what was out there, but that wasn't good enough."

"It raises eyebrows at first but if I'm ordering over 200,000 square feet of flooring I tell them there is no reason you can't customize it. You have to push the envelope."

Pushing the envelope is a reference that crops up frequently as Burdi talks about the team's approach to Tip Top. It's one of the reasons Howard Cohen of Context Development picked Burdiflek, though it was relatively new to the condo market. Cohen wanted to give buyers something unique and he recognized a flair for problem-solving in the design team's portfolio, such as their work with the Montreal historical board to retrofit an old bank building into a Caban store.

"We were looking for several skills," says Cohen. "Model suites are really difficult. It's not an easy program to fulfill for a designer — you're asking them to work in a vacuum for you don't have a real client, so you have to use your imagination. You have to make it seem as if real people live there. But you also have to think marketing."

"We wanted one of the suites to be more classic and luxurious, reflecting someone who had sold their house and moved into a really cool loft, but with a classic touch. The second (model) was a young, professional first-time



CUSTOMIZED: The kitchen in one of two models designed by Burdiflek at Tip Top Lofts incorporates sandblasted glass and stainless steel, left. The smaller suite, below, has an open-concept kitchen and living area set off by a column.

buyer." Flexibility was also key. That's what loft buyers are looking for, says Cohen. Here, people are buying space as opposed to a condo with a basic floor plan. The standard architectural elements at Tip Top will include the flooring, lighting, bathrooms, sliding barn doors dividing the spaces and cabinetry. And there will be a wide range of custom finishes to choose from. But buyers are still free to go in whatever direction they wish with the space.

"Structurally you are buying a large volume," says Burdi. "You can cut the space any way you want. It's limitless what you can do with a loft space."

That's the key selling point at Tip Top. Once you get to the sales office you should feel that the possibilities are endless, says Lawrence Ayliffe of LA Ads who did the marketing for the project.

To that end the sales office is a vast expanse of light and space and panoramic views — a borderless white-on-white vista of pale floors, walls, pillars, display cubes, tables, chairs, pipes and ductwork. It's punctuated by bright tangerine lounges and huge blowup photos that depict a variety of tongue-in-cheek fantasy lifestyles.

The Burdiflek team was elated to be chosen for the project. "Everyone knows Tip Top, and yes, it created pressure because the eyes of the city were going to be upon us."

