



Natural light streams through floor-to-ceiling windows in this open-concept living/dining room area, complete with wine cellar, in one of the L|L sur le Lac condos in Laval.

A Q&A WITH DESIGNER KATERINE DAOUST

LORRI BENEDIK

Katerine Daoust, interior designer, possesses an ideal blend of talents. She was born with an artist's eye and has evolved to embody traits of the best entrepreneurs.

The eldest of three children, Daoust grew up in the community of Vaudreuil-Dorion, west of Montreal. When she was little, she loved her paintbrushes and crayons. In school, academics were not her forte; she excelled in art class.

We met at her office, Daoust Design, in a stunning heritage house in St-Eustache, Que.



Katerine Daoust, interior designer.

When did you decide to become an interior designer?

I was raised in a working-class family. My father worked for the city of Vaudreuil-Dorion and my mother did bookkeeping. She was our driving force and he had an artist's soul; he was always full of projects. I was quite young when we visited relatives who were renovating their home and had hired a designer. I was excited to learn that this was an actual profession.

Where did you study?

In 2000, I heard about a school offering courses in interior design. Without telling anyone, I took the train to downtown Montreal and visited LaSalle College. The tuition for the 2½-year program was \$23,000. My family could not afford this, but I registered and told my parents I would pay for it myself. They covered the cost of transportation, books and materials.

While studying, I worked at Home Depot and Benjamin Moore (paints) in the West Island, which allowed me to pay my tuition and provided contact with do-it-yourself renovators, a few of whom became my first clients. Upon graduating, I received a certificate of

excellence for having achieved perfect grades.

What happened next?

I launched a firm, CK Design, with a co-worker from Benjamin Moore. We set up in the basement of a house I had moved into, in Mirabel. Years later, my partner relocated to British Columbia and I continued on my own.

As I became busier, I learned the importance of surrounding myself with reliable people who have complementary skills. In 2010, I rebranded as Daoust Design and moved to a rented space in Boisbriand.

In 2014, I bought this charming heritage house, renovated it as a base of operations, and the Daoust Design staff settled in.

How did you attract clients?

While still in Mirabel, I placed an ad in a weekly newspaper, *La Voix des Mille-Îles*. A local developer, Pascal Raymond (Construction Raymond et fils), noticed it and contacted me. He was looking for someone to design a model home. He liked my work and hired me; it was an incredible break. This was my first opportunity to come up with a global concept for a whole



Katerine Daoust has designed a large home in Rosemère, Que., featuring this bright and airy living/dining room complete with fireplace; the home will be built by Construction Raymond et fils.



Floor-to-ceiling windows and a wall of glass facing Lac Simon help create a bright and airy interior for this sprawling contemporary lakeside home.

house. Through the years, I designed several model homes for Pascal. Other clients came to me through word of mouth. I am also fortunate to have been featured in a few decor magazines, including *Prestige Design* and *Chez Soi*.

How did L|L sur le Lac come to you?

Years ago, Pascal introduced me to developer Philippe Marsan, whose speciality was one-of-a-kind luxury houses in the Laurentians. I

worked on some of his homes and when he partnered with Groupe Quorum to build L|L sur le Lac, he introduced me to co-owners Peter Cosentini and Guy Laporte.

They hired me to customize the condos of all four phases of the project.

What is customization?

Customization consists of making changes to a dwelling — sometimes changes of a structural nature — before construction has been com-

pleted. It might include the removal of a wall to achieve a more open layout or perhaps to upgrade the finishing or add luxurious touches to the kitchen or bathrooms. In the case of L|L sur le Lac, the quality of materials is already top-notch, but many owners like to personalize their new homes.

Any other current projects?

Something interesting occurred recently. An architect hired me to design a large home in Rosemère. No construction company had yet been hired, so I recommended Pascal Raymond and just learned that he was chosen to build it. He gave me my first break. It feels amazing to reciprocate.

And in your spare time?

I believe in the physical and spiritual benefits of staying active. I practise yoga and have completed a Half Ironman: swimming, cycling and running.

I enjoy entertaining at my home and love to travel. Last year, I experienced an extraordinary Alaskan cruise, and I recently attended a design show in Milan, Italy.

What puts the spring in your step?

A company is a living entity and I nurture mine as if it was my child. I employ nine people at Daoust Design and am driven by a passion for the work and also by the understanding that others depend on me for their livelihood. I am 37, but think about my succession and legacy. I work closely with young designers and teach them everything I know.



Stone, metal, wood and glass combine to create a dramatic, ultra-modern, open-concept space decorated with mostly white furnishings, save for the orange chairs that provide a pop of colour. ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF DAOUST DESIGN