

By Design

➔ LIZ BELL KNOWS a thing or two about beauty. As a former model, one-time muse to Karl Lagerfeld, and the driving force behind one of Vancouver's biggest modelling agencies, she's been immersed in the subject for most of her life. It shouldn't come as a surprise, then, that her West Vancouver home reflects her flair for all things beautiful. But while she's made her living in a world that trades on trends, she says her home is a refuge from that pressure. "Growing up in South Africa, we didn't have television for years because it was banned, so we didn't have trends. I grew up in a house full of antiques and big huge family portraits and things like that, and I've always believed that if you like something you keep it forever." That, she says, includes her house. "People always say to me, 'If you're going to sell your house, please let me know—because I want to buy it.' But nope, I'm not selling it."

By MAX FAWCETT // Photo by DAVID STRONGMAN

London (and Milan) Calling

Bell manages models around the world, and that means working strange, time-zone-determined hours. A home office is therefore a professional necessity, but she still treats her house as a retreat from work rather than an extension of it. "It's really important to be able to switch off, at least for a little bit. When I get home from the agency I shed my 'fashion skin' and throw on my gardening or happy clothes and immerse myself in the garden or in creating a delicious dinner. That is my therapy, my catharsis."





All in the Family

The house might be a work of art itself, but it's also full of the stuff—and many of the paintings that hang inside it were done by her husband, artist David Burns. "He's a great influence in my life," she says. "He helps me to see the beauty in things, and to slow down and smell the roses. I do tend to be somebody who is a doer rather than a smell-the-roses person."

Rock Solid

Bell's house is custom-built on a piece of land—a "rock," she says—that she and her ex-husband bought in 1986, and it's finished with wood they collected in Howe Sound and milled on-site. And because the location leaves the house exposed to the elements, they decided to build the central structure out of concrete instead of wood. "When the Squamish wind is blowing and the house is bearing the brunt of the whole storm, you want to be surrounded by strong walls," she says.

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