



LIFE AT HOME

DECOR • DOMESTIC ARTS • RENOVATIONS • RENTALS • RESALE

EDITOR: PAMELA FIEBER 235-7299 FAX: 235-7379

WWW.CALGARYHERALD.COM

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2008



Photos, courtesy Theodore Alexander
The furnishings in the Althorp Living History Collection are reproductions of heirloom pieces found at Althorp Estate.

Heirloom QUALITY

Didn't inherit the family antiques? Chin up. You can buy your own from Earl Spencer and the Althorp Estate

LISA KADANE
CALGARY HERALD

When Earl Charles Spencer launched a furniture collection reproducing the heirlooms found inside his family home, Althorp Estate, his goal was somewhat modest: to use the collection's proceeds to fund the maintenance of the 500-year-old estate. He didn't dare to dream the Althorp Living History Collection would take off, turning the approachable aristocrat into a bit of a rock star. In Calgary last week to promote the furniture line at McArthur Fine Furniture, Spencer had come direct from San Francisco after stops in Los Angeles and Orange County. He only spent an evening in Cowtown before jetting off to Denver, and then hitting two states a day for the next week. Instead of looking tired and road-weary, Spencer, 44, younger brother to the late Diana, Princess of Wales, energetically signed more than 150 pieces of furniture from his collection — affixing his John Hancock just above the hand-painted Althorp coat of arms visible on most pieces — before



Earl Charles Spencer at home at Althorp Estate, where he says the furniture is respected, but still part of family life.

enthusiastically addressing the standing-room-only crowd who had come to glimpse the uncle of the future King of England and admire the collection's stunning pieces.

Some, such as the George II mahogany and rosewood secretary desk — the collection's signature piece — come with price tags (\$27,000) that would intim-

idate all but the most monetarily endowed.

"It's the jewel in the crown of the collection," said Spencer, adding the original is found in the King William bedroom at Althorp — Diana's favourite room.

But other pieces, including the Washington Chest (\$4,000), an eye-catching cocktail table

that doubles as a storage unit, are priced as attainable statement pieces. Some smaller pieces such as occasional tables start from about \$1,000.

"The range is incredibly reasonably priced," said Spencer.

The collection has been hand-crafted by furniture maker Theodore Alexander. Many of the original pieces were custom-made for the Spencers by renowned designers such as Thomas Chippendale, John Vardy and George Seddon.

"They've gone in and selected the pieces to reproduce that they think would have relevance today," said Ted Pound, owner of McArthur Fine Furniture.

"It's functional furniture. It's not to be set up as a museum."

The earl grew up at Althorp, in Northamptonshire, England, from the age of 11, when his family moved there after his grandfather passed away.

"He was always waiting for us to break something," Spencer recalled of his early visits to the estate.

To counter that, he's given his six children the run of the place. No word on whether they're using the original George II secretary as a jungle gym.

SEE EARL, PAGE G2

AROUND THE HOUSE

Calgary Home + Design Show next weekend

EVENT • If it's time to update your look, or at least that tired old bedspread, make a point of hitting the Calgary Home + Interior Design Show next weekend. In addition to the 250-plus exhibitors showcasing the latest gadgets and styles, show presentations cover living in small spaces, wiring your pad, and upcycling — the latest green trend that turns junk into jewels.

The annual starts Thursday at 4 p.m. at the Roundup Centre. It's open Friday from noon to 9 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Adult tickets are \$13 at the door, or \$11 at calgaryhome-show.com. Seniors pay \$7, children pay \$5 and admission is free for kids six and under.

Mirror, mirror on the wall

PRODUCT • Nothing screams "Builder Standard" like mounted, plate-glass mirrors dominating the vast wall space behind the sink in every bathroom. Mirrors are a bathroom necessity, sure, but they needn't look generic.

Moen's Mirrorscapes mirrors add an often overlooked finishing detail — the frame — around your rectangle of plate glass, giving the mirror a custom look.

The Mirrorscapes collection includes five styles of frames that can be further customized with finishes to co-ordinate with either the bathroom's wood cabinetry or the faucets' metallic sheen. Or, a paintable version is available for bathrooms that defy convention.

The easy-to-install frames are available in Calgary at The Ensuite and Kitchen & Bath Classics locations.

Design 'kit' makes projects easier

TOOLS • Wannabe DIY home decorators have just been given an inspirational boost courtesy of Canvas Corp. and its Home Basics line of home decorating products.

The Canvas line includes a pre-mixed paint and putty system, room spacing kit, decorative hardware, a project organizer and a collection of cool totes to keep your design project details all in one place. Paints are low-VOC and come with matching putty in designer-neutral colours to make patching and painting easy on you and the environment.

Canvas hardware components include nails, cup hooks, and wire and picture hooks in popular finishes from antique bronze to brushed nickel.

The Canvas Home Basics line is available in Calgary at Zellers stores. Go to canvas-corp.com for more details.

—Compiled by Lisa Kadane, Calgary Herald

www.samsluxuryhomes.com

Marketing your home for all it's worth.™

RE/MAX
HOUSE OF REAL ESTATE



Coach Hill, \$519,000 - 848 Coach Side Cr SW
Renovated 2 storey, with fabulous Kitchen & bathrooms, featuring high-end finishes incl. slate & travertine, hardwood floors, kitchen w/ granite counters, extensive built-ins, California shutters, 2191 SF + basement, 3 bdrms + den.



Signature Pk, \$595,000 - 31 Signature Mews, SW
Cul-de-sac location, pie lot, 5 bedroom home, 2300 SF + developed basement, featuring cork flooring throughout main level, 4 bdrms up + 5th on main floor, formal living & dining, main floor family room + games/play room in basement.



Killarney \$598,000 - 2408 27 Street, SW
Mint condition, inner city, 1596 SF infill + dev'd basement, amazing treed/private lot, Gorgeous kitchen w/ black pearl granite & stainless steel appliances, 2+1 bedrooms, vaulted master bedroom w/ fireplace, tranquil backyard with pond.



Prominence \$725,000 - 12 Prominence Pt SW
Much sought after executive bungalow villa in "the Brickburn", bareland condo, over 1500 + 1076 SF w/ walkout basement, extensive top quality renovations, entertain in style inside & out, wet bar, huge covered deck & private courtyard.



AA682295