

# Behind the design: Realities of a TV designer



Very quickly from her experience working on HGTV programs, Rebecca Hay learned is that with some creativity the marriage of high and low elements can yield amazing results.



REBECCA HAY  
DESIGN  
PRIORITIES

**A**s a designer having worked on two very different HGTV shows, I can say that it is extremely rewarding and yet also a lot of work.

The timelines are tight and the pressure to impress is high. Despite these constraints, I learned exactly how to deliver a cohesive design on time and on budget. Here is what I have taken back and incorporated into my design firm.

Very quickly, I learned is

Meet Rebecca Hay at the new Vaughan Home show on Saturday, May 5 from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. on the main stage. Located at Improve Canada at 7250 Keele St. in Vaughan. For more information, visit [improvecanada.com](http://improvecanada.com).

that with some creativity the marriage of high and low elements can yield amazing results. I don't work with small, TV-sized budgets anymore thankfully but I do know that you can balance a high-end design with some budget friendly options.

I advise my clients to splurge in the areas that will last the longest and bring them the most joy. For example, I always spend generously on upholstered goods like custom sofas and chairs that are solidly built and that can be re-covered in the future.

I choose classic styles that won't date themselves, then we can pepper in more cost effective accessories or smaller furniture items.

The only way to stay on budget is through proper planning. I always say you have to plan, plan, plan — review the budget — plan some more, and execute. When it comes to designing a home, a sales office or vacation property I always research first.

Start with the big picture — the concept, the mood, the inspiration. Then I pull

together every item for the design before presenting to my clients.

We create our dream design and then look at the budget to see how it aligns and where we can make changes.

You can't let budget dictate every choice or you won't achieve the best design. I prefer to design first, then budget and re-evaluate.

One word of caution: 'function' must come before 'pretty' and always look at the floor plan first. I won't even begin sourcing for a project until we have zeroed in on the best layout.

The rest is the fun part. It's worth mentioning that TV budgets are never what they seem, the look may be expensive but the budget is tight.

I no longer work on such unrealistic budgets, however, it taught the importance of creating a budget and managing client's expectations of the costs of things.

Timing is also so important in any design project. The more decisions you make at the beginning and the more you plan, the better you are

able to predict a timeline.

If you only select a few items at the beginning and leave other decisions for the end, then you run the risk of finding out that the items you want aren't in stock and now you don't have time to wait without doubling your timeline.

This is why, at my firm, we do all the designing upfront before we even start any demo or ordering. We present our designs to the client as a complete whole. This allows us to control the ordering process and allows us the time to get everything we want.

So there you have it. Three key take away from designing for TV. The best reveals are ones that provide a 'wow factor' but also fit into the timeline and budget.

— *Rebecca Hay is a Toronto-based designer who has worked on several HGTV programs and whose focus is on exceptional designs that infuse the old with the new. Visit [www.rebeccahaydesigns.com](http://www.rebeccahaydesigns.com).*

## From neglected country home to chic chalet

HGTV's Home to Win returns with new season geared at first-time buyers

DIANNE DANIEL

Special to Postmedia Network

**W**hen you have HGTV Canada celebrities like Scott McGillivray and Bryan Baeumler picking your first home, you'd think the risk of surprise would be small. But season three of Home to Win — premiering Sunday, April 29 at 10 p.m. ET/PT — proves even the experts get fooled sometimes.

It's a case of 'buyer beware' as the star-studded crew of designers and builders are met with unexpected guests behind the walls of a mid-century chalet, a serene seven-acre country property McGillivray and Baeumler selected as ripe for an overhaul. If wasps aren't pesky enough, Mike Holmes Sr. brings in an expert to confirm his suspicion that bats have taken up residence as well.

"There are some episodes that are just cringe-worthy when it comes to what we saw in the house," says Home to Win host Sangita Patel.



Through three seasons of HGTV's Home to Win, the cast and crew have all become good friends. "It's such a great show to bring all of these talented people together," says Patel.

For the first time, the show is open exclusively to first-time homebuyers who will compete to win the spectacular reno as a way to get into a hot real estate market that's out of reach for many. By the time the winner is announced, all traces of unwanted pests will be long gone — along with the

banana yellow bathroom fixtures and sub-par finishes on the second level.

The four-bedroom home is more spacious on the inside than it appears from outside. With floor-to-ceiling windows throughout, natural light is abundant and the team decides to go for a contemporary design scheme that

says "party time." As designer Sarah Richardson puts it: "This will be somebody's first home, but it may be their last home too."

Through three seasons, the cast and crew have become good friends, says Patel, who occasionally assumes the "mother role" on set. "It's such a great show to bring

all of these talented people together and really test them to see if they can actually work together," she says. "Sometimes I have to make them quiet down. I have these certain looks that say, 'Ok. Let's get serious' or 'Pay attention to me' or 'Behave!'"

As host, Patel gets the added advantage of a firsthand vantage point. She credits the talented team for encouraging her to "let things go and not always be straight edge" when it comes to her own home décor. After season one she attempted wainscoting and this season she learned that white is never just white.

"They've totally influenced me in terms of things I can do in my own house," says Patel. The part that never gets old, she adds, is when it's time to announce the winner.

"I think back to the first time I bought a house and how hard it was," says Patel. "This is an opportunity for people who are starting off their lives together to compete to win a house. It's pretty amazing."



Host Sangita Patel has learned a lot from the show.