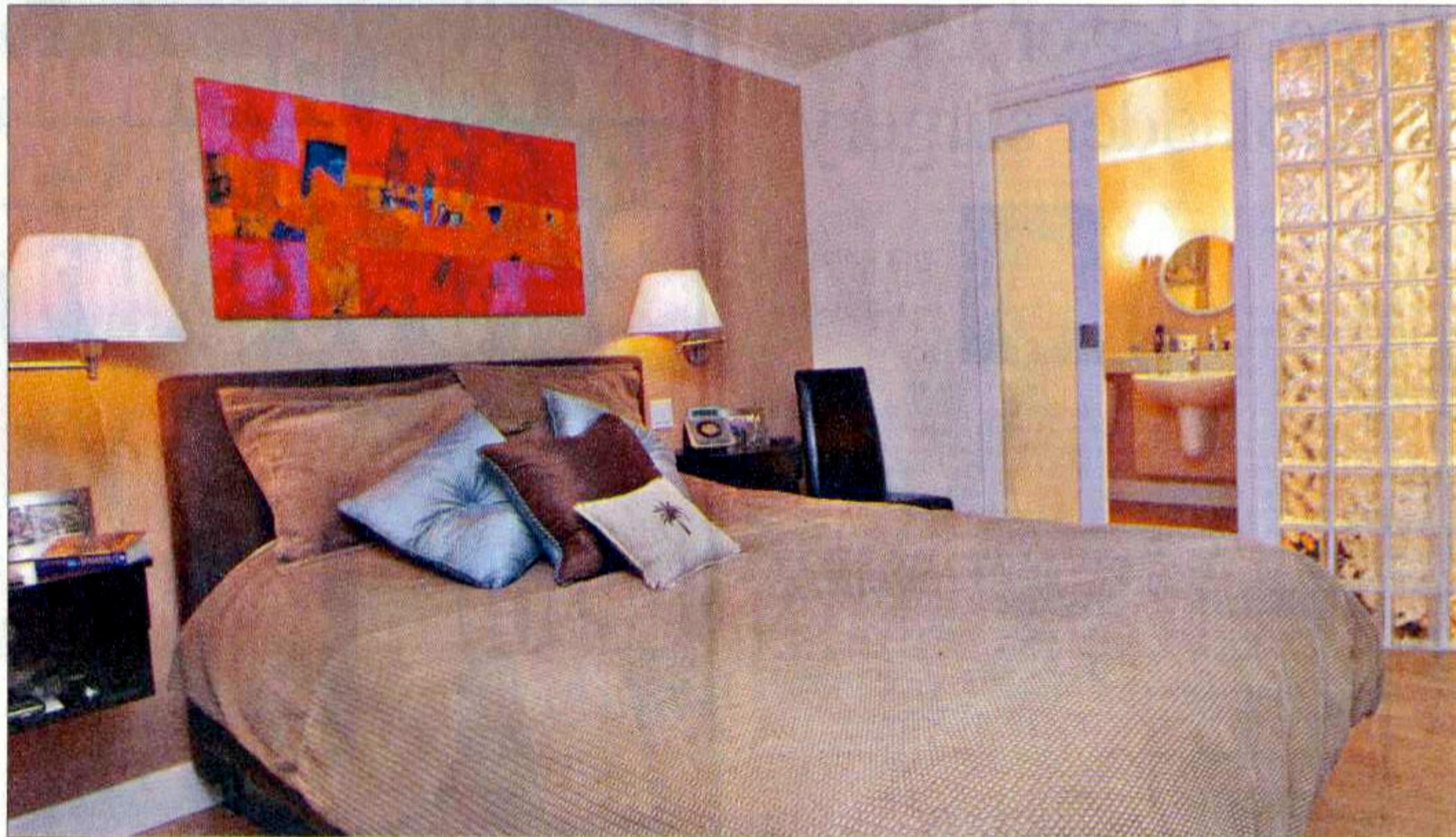


# NEW HOMES

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A warm colour scheme and lights that can be dimmed are just two elements that help create a romantic setting, as seen in Teri Thorson's new home. Her idea of romance was to to make her downtown condo a welcome place for friends and family when they visit.



"My only request was that the designer incorporate my favourite purple velvet couch" into a warm, inviting look for her home, says wheelchair athlete Teri Thorson.

# Romantic settings

An inviting, warm and cosy space with lights that can be dimmed helps set the mood for love

STORY BY PEDRO ARRAIS • PHOTOS BY JOHN MCKAY • *Times Colonist staff*

**O**n Valentine's Day, our thoughts turn to creating a perfect setting for that special person. It's not difficult to devise a romantic environment at home. With a little planning, anyone can set an atmosphere that appeals to all the senses throughout the year.

Designing a mood for romance does not mean having to make your house look like a French boudoir, says Jacqueline deMontravel, editor of *Romantic Homes* magazine.

Sometimes it can be achieved by just replacing a regular light bulb with an amber one, or by lighting candles set in a vintage candelabra.

"Romance is an ephemeral look, something soft with feminine touches. It can be a play on the senses, a play on light, incorporating quality pieces such as mercury glass and vintage items," says deMontravel. "Romance is evoking a mood that makes one

want to sit back, relax and want to stay in a room."

The subscriber base for her 20-year-old magazine, which is based in California and available on newsstands in Canada, is strong because there are always people drawn to the romantic side, deMontravel says. Romance, she adds, has a timeless appeal for both sexes, regardless of age.

There is no set style that is romantic, says deMontravel, as even a contemporary space with stark, white walls can be softened with jolts of colour and the introduction of lush fabrics and textures.

Teri Thorson's idea of romance is to make her downtown condo a welcome place for friends and family when they visit.

"I like to entertain and it was important that my home conveyed a warm, soft and comfortable feeling," says Thorson, who is a wheelchair athlete.

*Please see ROMANTIC, C7*

# Romantic: Colours, finishes define personality

• From C6

Thorson says that her previous apartment had a more institutional look to it because it was only designed to be wheelchair-friendly.

With this condo, she wanted to have a softer, more romantic ambience while preserving the need to get around with the wheelchair. She wanted a clean, modern look to her place.

"I told my designer to make it modern but resaleable," she says, "my only request was that the designer incorporate my favourite purple velvet couch."

Donna Riddell, owner of Artistry Design Group Ltd., says that Thorson's request to incorporate a special piece in a new look is not uncommon.

"If everything looked the same it would be just boring," says Riddell, "but matching a strong colour such as Teri's purple couch with muted tones was challenging but rewarding."

Colours and finishes define the personality of the inhabitant, Riddell says. "They tell us who the individual is."

Riddell installed ceiling-to-floor suede curtains and cork floors to bring warmth to the room.

For accessories, Riddell chose items that had a sheen but were not too shiny

or reflective.

"Light always draws the eye into the space, making items such as ebony visually felt," Riddell says. Dimmers on lights, she adds, are almost mandatory to set the mood.

Boutique hotels also find that romantic settings appeal to corporate travellers and their partners, who respond to the cosier atmosphere. This "hotel-chic" look is a style that has caught on with homeowners.

"We strive to be different from the chain hotels, to have a decor that is more conservative, more opulent with a European flavour," says Randy Rai, director of sales for the Magnolia Hotel and Spa.

Rai says that the hotel's furnishings are traditionally styled, custom-made pieces that evoke timeless elegance. The rooms feature large crown mouldings, two-poster beds with down duvets and feather pillows. All the bathrooms are equipped with deep soaker tubs and marble counters and floors. Some rooms have gas fireplaces.

Thoughtful touches include fresh flowers, a nightly turn-down service with a chocolate on the pillow and fresh fruit and bottled spring water on arrival. On Valentine's Day, there's an added romantic bonus: a rose on the bed.



The dappled light created by the wall of glass blocks and the fluffy towels help set an warm, inviting tone in Teri Thorson's bathroom.

*John McKay/Times Colonist*