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Colin and Justin

Well it's that time of year again; time for the annual pilgrimage to Toronto's [National Home Show](#), by our reckoning the best home event in the GTA. Whether visiting to shop till you drop around 700-plus exhibitors — all of whom, more than ever, seem hell bent on assisting consumers to make the best of their homes — or simply planning a fun day out with the family, there's sure to be something to tickle your fancy. And we're not just talking feather dusters . . .

Our own association to The National goes way back, in fact to the very first time we visited Toronto to promo *How Not To Decorate*, one of our rollercoaster British TV shows. Five years past, as we raced from Pearson to host our first slot, we had no idea that Toronto would soon become our second home. Courtesy, however, of a thronging crowd who turned out to see us, we quickly fell in love with the city — and its people — and the rest, as they say, is history.

And this year's show? Well, it promises to be bigger and better than ever before. With one eye trained firmly on style, and another on value for money, Marketplace Events (the show's organizers) have assembled a hall full of home and garden related luminaries to help you heighten the style factor, *chez vous*. So prepare for massive inspiration as you head on over.

Attractions this year are many but we'll bullet point a few to help steer you in the right direction. We're excited to be appearing on The Urban Barn Main Stage, presented by HGTV, along with Debbie Travis (our fellow Brit, who you'll recognize from various TV shows, most recently on CBC, is a wonderful crowd pleaser), Brian Baeumler, everyone's favourite contactor, and our close friend Janette Ewen, co-star (along with Ty Pennington) of *W's Inside The Box*. And take it from us: Janette's presentations overflow with top tips to help you make the best of your nest. The glamorous Ms E will also be showcasing 2011's must-have products as part of a freestanding exhibit entitled Art and Design: A Gallery Of Our Future. Chatting recently by phone, a very secretive Janette would only say that the technology she'll be showcasing takes even her breath away. This from a gal who really knows her stuff. We can't wait!

We'd also recommend you find time to sit in on CityLine expert Ramsin Khachi's presentations. His take on space planning and kitchen and bathroom design make him a "go to" designer for many of Canada's affluent style cognoscenti. And don't leave till you've listened to a master class from Karl Lohnes, design expert from CTV, or Glen Peloso, a fellow *Toronto Star* columnist, with whom we've had the good fortune to become friendly over the last few years. As designers, we love to mingle with our own sort, and this means we'll be squeezing into the main stage audience to listen as designer Yanic Simard and Benjamin Moore paint specialist Leigh Ann Allaire Perrault (both regulars on CityLine) wax lyrical about what style means to them.

And how about gardening? Well, we only have a compact terrace in our Toronto condo (come on, we're 39 floors up, for goodness sake), but that won't stop us storming a path to BT weatherman Frank Ferragine as he teaches his audience everything they need to know about horticulture.

Nor will our new found teetotal-ness (okay, we lied) slow our enthusiasm to sit in on presentations by Dee (Cocktail Deeva) Brun. We had dinner with the gorgeous Dee just before Christmas and her Apple Martinis rendered, in us, tears of joy. And, ahem, minor inebriation after just a couple of swigs. Aye, this expert takes mixology to a whole new level.

Another aspect of The National that we're really looking forward to is The Boulevard Of Dreams, a clever installation (we've seen the plans and they're dazzling) that consists of two modern residences (created by PolyGHomes and Quality Homes), a Man Cave (come on guys, we're talking ultimate lad's fantasy here), exquisite garden planning and awesome ideas for outdoor living. It's hard to decide what we think will be the main "show stopper" (our kilts, perhaps, or maybe Janette Ewen's gravity defying new L.A. hairstyle?), but if we had to put money on it we'd suggest the futuristic glass house by PolyGHome. Its renderings, over which we drooled this week, are state of the art and it's shape, alone, is sure to thrill.



Tangerine orange is paired with Colin and Justin's favourite interior colour, grey.

BRANDON BARRE PHOTO

But anyway — back to us. What will we be covering during our atom splitting design master classes? Well, in a word; COLOUR. Yup, colour is back, big time, which means its shyer beige siblings should run for the hills. Affordability is our buzzword so we'll be discussing how a lick of paint will transform your space and how a change of colour can produce distinct alteration to mood. And we'll be talking "maximum return for minimal outlay" . . . or in other words revealing how putting in even a little effort can effect HUGE change to your domestic world.

Our favourite colour (and we won't stop till the world takes notice) is grey, and, to this end, we'll be extolling the decorating value of this wonderful palette when played alongside jaunty neon tones such as yellow, lime green or electric blue. Blimey — it's like Pop Art for the home. We've been doing colour mash up like this for some time and these shots of a typical C&J kitchen/living room and basement project illustrate this perfectly.

We'll also touch on how to install discreet technology in traditional environments. We love exciting home kit and in fact only recently purchased a Sony 3D TV (you'll find several of these at the show from various manufacturers) and the way things leap out of the screen has inspired us to add bolder, brighter elements to all our rooms. Our master class will expound glorious "before and afters," each of which will illustrate the very best in home decorating. So bring a pad and a pen and prepare to take notes!

While walking the floor at previous home shows, we've often been asked about what inspires us as we continue our quest to decorate Canada, one problematic room at a time. And our answer? Simple: joy and escapism. When the world — and its news bulletins — are filled with war, political scandal and global debt, don't we need, more than ever, good news homes that inspire, reward and comfort? Precisely. During our open forum question and answer sessions, we'll be discussing these matters at length.

So there you have it: Seven hundred vendors, designers and makers all under one roof? Tick. A mixture of big names and big ideas? Tick. A special family day on Monday, Feb. 21 when children under 17 go free? Tick. Free entry into a visitor competition to win a family vacation for four? Tick. *Toronto Star* day on Friday, Feb. 25 with presentations and autograph sessions by us? Tick.

Hey, all this can only mean one thing: it's time for The National lift off.

Yup, the good taste style shuttle is about to reenter your world. So fasten your hyper space seat belts . . . and prepare for the ride of your life!

- Restore, Refresh and Renew with The National Home Show, Friday, Feb. 18 to Sunday, Feb. 27 at The Direct Energy Centre, Exhibition Place, Toronto. Go to [www.nationalhomeshow.com](http://www.nationalhomeshow.com) for further information.

*Colin McAllister and Justin Ryan are the hosts of HGTV's Colin & Justin's Home Heist (weekdays at 6 a.m.) and the authors of Colin & Justin's Home Heist Style Guide, published by Penguin Group (Canada). Follow them on twitter @colinjustin or on Facebook (ColinJustin). Contact them through their website, [www.colinandjustin.tv](http://www.colinandjustin.tv).*