



ROBERT LEDINGHAM MEMORIAL AWARD

# Perspective Shift

The duo at Falken Reynolds Interiors had an unusual start to their careers—and their work is all the better for it.

BY BARB SLIGL // PORTRAIT BY CARLO RICCI

» A cowboy and a cop: not your usual beginnings for these designers. Before they were Falken Reynolds Interiors, Chad Falkenberg rode the range and Kelly Reynolds patrolled the streets—until, on separate ends of the continent (Falkenberg in Texas and Reynolds in Vancouver), they each decided to go back to school for interior design in their early 30s. Now, 10 years later and just four years after becoming partners in work and life, they're the winners of this year's Robert Ledingham Memorial Award for emerging interior designers.

"It was always there," says Falkenberg—who recalls his affection for building with Lego as a kid—of the designer within. "We just took the long way there." And those early careers just fuel their curiosity and creativity as designers today. "I think they give us a different perspective," says Falkenberg of their circuitous paths to design. "There are so many different ways to do the same thing."

It's likely part of what makes the duo's work so "fresh and innovative," says Calgary-based interior designer and judge Paul Lavoie, and

"engaging and usable." Function is always tied to fun for Falken Reynolds. "We step off the curb somewhere," says Falkenberg, "and that little touch comes into our heads and says, 'this is how it's special; this is the one little thing we can add to make it more interesting.'"

In a Scandinavian-inspired west side home in Vancouver, for example, a bold bleached-oak waterfall staircase is caressed by a lithe, black-steel-picket hand railing. The chunky wood stairs have solid risers so heavy and square that it was a challenge to add visual lightness. Using thinner rods (and more of them) made the staircase feel delicate, yet still sturdy. Judge, designer and global lifestyle brand head Kelly Wearstler particularly loved the design and describes the staircase as a "clever, simple execution of common architectural elements."

Wearstler also notes "a sense of delight and whimsy" throughout Falken Reynolds's work, which "takes function very seriously without making it the point of the design." It's seen in a tiny yet statement-making powder room in a Beatty Street loft in Vancouver. The room

**Scandi Cool**  
Designers Kelly Reynolds and Chad Falkenberg (above, left to right), photographed on the rooftop of the west side home they designed for a young family. The colour palette of the home is restricted to layers of whites and greys with black accents, the latter most striking in the staircase (far left) and the minimalist fireplace (centre).

Erna Peter

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**All Together Now**

The design of this west side home revolves around family togetherness, with the kitchen’s work table island forming a central gathering place.

is clad in wood, with Falken Reynolds using floorboards on the walls both for function (budget) and form (“It’s like being inside a gift box of wood,” says Falkenberg). Wearstler calls it “a soft statement that shows sophistication and poetic restraint.”

Despite starting only four years ago, the duo has had a wide breadth of some 40 projects to their name, ranging in design from Craftsman to industrial modern. Each features clean lines, along with a no-fuss and casual West Coast feel, and a natural materials palette. And yet the pair draws from far beyond local inspiration, making a point of travelling every year to design shows in Milan and Paris.

The two count many influences, from Zaha Hadid and the playful

“digital baroque” of Jaime Hayon to local interior designer, mentor and past Designers of the Year winner Robert Bailey—all of whom go far beyond utilitarian design. “Function definitely drives the beginning process, but it can’t be the end,” says Falkenberg. He recalls Vitruvius’s three-part design philosophy of *firmitas*, *utilitas* and *venustas*, or solidity, function and delight. “If we don’t enjoy it, what’s the point? That’s the essential balance of anything we do.” **ILL**

Erna Peter