

## Rocky road

Mr. Baeumler starts building his dream cottage. **H6**



35  
YEARS

Top 10 New Home Buying Tips



Toronto.com

# NEW IN HOMIES & CONDOS



RICK EGLINTON/TORONTO STAR

Arlene Dickinson, CEO of Venture Communications and a star on *Dragons' Den*, is photographed in her amazing Toronto loft.

## HUMBER BAY

# Green rooms in the sky

Jade Waterfront's large balconies can be used to create living space

**RYAN STARR**  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Spring has sprung in Toronto and with it has come the thrill of returning to life outdoors.

So developer Henry Strasser thinks it's a great opportunity to gush about the large exterior living spaces he's got on offer at Jade Waterfront, the 38-storey, 370-unit building to be built at Lake Shore Blvd. W near Park Lawn Rd. in Etobicoke.

"We have balconies that are up to 400 square feet," says Strasser, a principal with Phantom Developments, the project's developer. "That's more than half the size of the actual unit size in some cases."

The balconies at Jade Waterfront — dubbed "Sky Yards" — will range in size from 60 square feet to 200 square feet, depending on the unit. Most of them are in the 150 square foot range, Strasser says.

Condos at Jade Waterfront range from 465-square-foot one-bedroom units to 1,450-square-foot two bedroom-plus-den suites. There are also penthouses.

Units are priced from \$240,000 to \$950,000. The project is currently 40 per cent sold.

Strasser reckons Jade Waterfront's big balconies should prove attractive to professional couples, young families, or local move-down buyers.

# In the Dragon's Den

Arlene Dickinson's art of gentle persuasion extends to her fabulously decorated loft

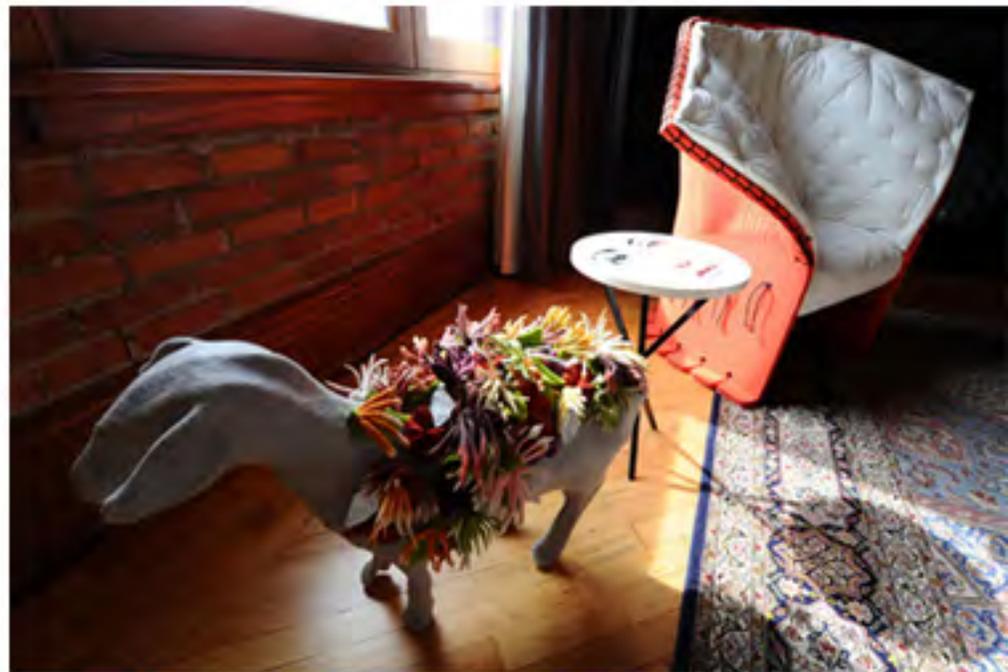
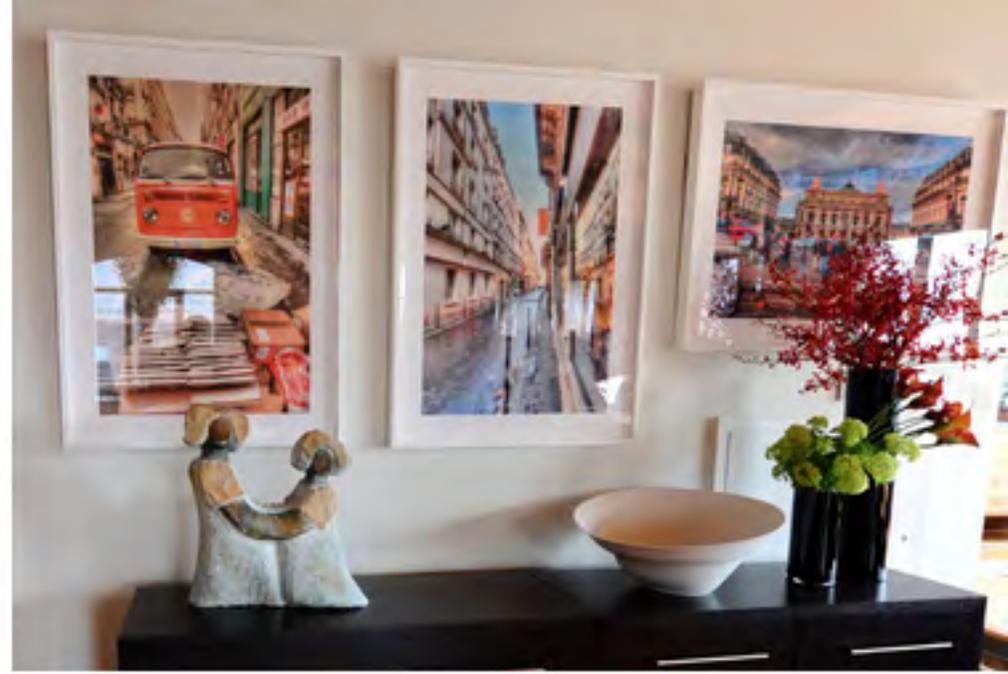
**RITA ZEKAS**  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

The Dragon lady's den is not what you would expect. Arlene Dickinson, a venture capitalist (and the side feline) on the CBC series *Dragons' Den*, has a bright, airy, artfully appointed downtown loft which invokes a New York state of mind — the elevator opens up directly into the unit like the fabled uptown Manhattan apartments in films of the '40s.

There is nothing remotely corporate about it. Dickinson is the CEO of Venture Communications, author of the bestseller *Persuasion* and owner of the product line Persuasion, featuring coffee, wine, chocolate and skin care — thereby catering to your insides and out. She is also co-starring with *Dragons'* alum Jim Treiving in the new CBC series *The Big Decision*, in which they go on the road to rescue struggling companies and help them get their mojo back.

DICKINSON continued on H14

JADE continued on H13



<http://www.yourhome.ca/homes/decor/article/1157407--in-the-dragon-lady-arlene-dickinson-s-den>

Photos copyright RICK EGLINTON/TORONTO STAR

## In the Dragon Lady Arlene Dickinson's den

April 05, 2012

Rita Zekas

Special to The Star

The Dragon lady's den is not what you would expect.



RICK EGLINTON/TORONTO STAR

[Arlene Dickinson](#), a venture capitalist (and the sole female) on the CBC series [Dragons' Den](#), has a bright, airy, artfully-appointed downtown loft which invokes a New York state of mind — the elevator opens up directly into the unit like the fabled uptown Manhattan apartments in films of the '40s.

Arlene Dickinson, CEO of Venture Communications and a star on *Dragons' Den*, as well as a best-selling author and owner of her own line of wine, is photographed in her Amazing Toronto loft.

There is nothing remotely corporate about it.

Dickinson is the CEO of [Venture Communications](#), author of the bestseller [Persuasion](#) and owner of the product line [Persuasion](#), featuring coffee, wine, chocolate and skin care — thereby catering to your insides and out. She is also co-starring with *Dragons'* alum Jim Treiving in the new CBC series [The Big Decision](#), in which they go on the road to rescue struggling companies and help them get their mojo back.

The loft's ceilings are 18 feet high; the space is open and expansive, almost 6,000 square feet of hardwood floors gleaming in natural sunlight.

It's not big enough for a polo pony but it is big enough for a horse from an antique carousel, a piano and a pool table. There are two kitchens, two living rooms, three bedrooms, three baths and a workout space.

Dickinson has been in the loft since August. She is divorced, the mother of four, and moved here from a house in The Annex.

"I'm an inner-city girl," she says. "It was a four-storey, contemporary semi-detached. I wanted something where I could do more entertaining. I had no interest in buying a loft but I walked in here and just bought it on the spot. I knew the previous owner (a video producer). I absolutely love it; I could see past what he had done with it."

The loft is filled with artifacts and art, tweaked with consultation and fluffing by designer [Ashley Botten](#).

**Dickinson redecorated** and did a nominal reno: a built-in closet here, a few walls knocked down there to accommodate an ersatz apartment for her photographer daughter, [Marayna](#), 27, who has her own bedroom, ensuite and the run of the back kitchen, which is used for catering when Dickinson entertains.

"I glazed the window of her bedroom for privacy," says Dickinson, who is also in the process of making a studio for Marayna upstairs.

The bathrooms are to die for. The guest bathroom has a tin ceiling, Deco tiles and a claw-foot tub. The master bath has a Jacuzzi and the adjacent dressing room/walk-in closet features a hanging dress sculpture made into a lamp.

The hall table has a horn base. It comes from [Snob](#), as do a lot of her furnishings and decor items including a headdress from Kenya, which hangs on the dining room wall; groupings of African dolls; and a decorative lamb/art installation made from felt pieces.

Snob is owned by Denise Zidel, a fellow South African expat. Dickinson was born in South Africa (her father could speak Zulu) and emigrated with her family to Calgary, where she was raised, the youngest of three girls.

"My dad told me to buy a piece of art every year on my birthday," she says. "Art is a good investment but mine is not investment art. I have a lot of Canadian stuff. I can't draw a stick figure but I appreciate art. I bought my first painting, which I considered 'art,' for \$150."

Her father didn't need to tell her to buy shoes. She is an unrepentant shoe whore: The higher the heel, the better. She shows off her two latest pairs of sexy, black vertiginous stilettos. The funky boots she is wearing are by Ron White.

"As a kid, we were quite poor," she recalls. "It was 'the immigrant story' — we came with \$50. I didn't have my first new dress until I was 13. I bought it with babysitting money I had earned. My dad was a teacher (of electronics) and he worked hard. He became an entrepreneur in software, creating the first self-paced learning software for post-secondary so people could learn at their own speed."

**Dickenson insists** that she is not a math whiz.

"I failed math four times," she confesses with a laugh. "I can't do algebra and calculus but I have a skill: I have an intuitive knack for marketing; I understand what the market wants. There is a ton of psychology in marketing. The biggest skill is studying people and listening intently. It is about understanding what drives people."

Yes, she has her analytical side, but she is not afraid to get her frivolous freak on. The "bum" chair at the dining room table (made from South African wood by Zidel), is representative of her assortment of quirky, whimsical yet sophisticated furniture, including a wing chair from France upholstered in a print by pop artist Roy Lichtenstein, and a chair made of felt and foam from [Italinteriors](#).

In the formal living room, which bumps up against her more casual office space, there is a working fireplace.

"I spend a ton of time in this room," she says. "I listen to music and look out the window — it is a southern exposure."

The floor-to-ceiling glass doors all open up so she can let the outside in.

There is exposed brick on one side, the living room drapes are grey, and a huge orange painting of kids jumping hangs on the kitchen wall.

"I got it five years ago at the [Engine Gallery](#) in the [Distillery](#)," she says. "I hate the brown-and-white thing which everybody does."

The cigar-box banjo in her office is from *Dragons' Den*. Near it, is displayed a 25-year-old army trunk with an assortment of helmets on it.

"I went to Afghanistan for a [True Patriot Love](#) dinner and bought it at auction," recalls Dickinson. "The money goes to military families all over Canada. The helmets are given to artists to decorate."

"**The decorating theme** is warm elegance," explains Botten. "The space is inviting and relaxing. It really shows how Arlene is."

The Dragon lady is not an iron lady. The Dragon lady is a homebody — totally warm and welcoming.

"She loves her home and loves people to come over," Botten says.

"People are welcome yet it is private and secure," Dickinson elaborates. "I'm a Libra so I love order and security."

The action shifts to the kitchen for tea. At the foot of the island, there's a basket from Horsefeathers in which she stores bottles of her Persuasion wine. Dickinson was inspired to create the product lines when she was writing her book.

"Whenever I read, I drink coffee or wine and I love chocolate," she says. "I created the skin line because you don't have to spend a gazillion dollars to feel good in your skin."

The wine is a 2010 Sonoma County vintage.

"I sourced a winery in California and worked with the vintner to develop a blend," she says. "The coffee was developed with Balzac's Coffee because I did a deal with her on *Dragons' Den*."

The chocolate was made specifically in collaboration with a local chocolatier.

Dickinson's skin-care line includes face cream, body butter, soap and face wash: a set of five sells for \$80. The wine is \$50; the coffee is priced at \$26 and sold in a reusable tin; the chocolate is \$56 for a package of four — two dark and two light.

It can all be purchased online at [arlenedickinson.com](http://arlenedickinson.com).

What's next for Dickinson?

"I have other business projects — maybe a clothing line," she hedges. "There is not enough clothing for older women that is fashionable."

Can a footwear line be far behind? It doesn't take much Persuasion to make women buy shoes.