

# Winter by Design

Kim Williams offers Insights on  
Fireplaces and Heating

Having the right fireplace in your home can bring an elemental warmth that not only heats your home but comforts the soul. Choosing which fireplace will work best for your needs will depend on aesthetics, the ambience you want to create, the fuel that you want to burn, the size of the space you need to heat and in some cases, whether you wish to cook on your fire or not.



Today, the choices of fireplaces, big and small, mean that there are very few places where you cannot find a heating solution adapted just for you.

Kim Williams shares with us her top insights on selecting the perfect heating solution.

#### AESTHETICS AND AMBIANCE

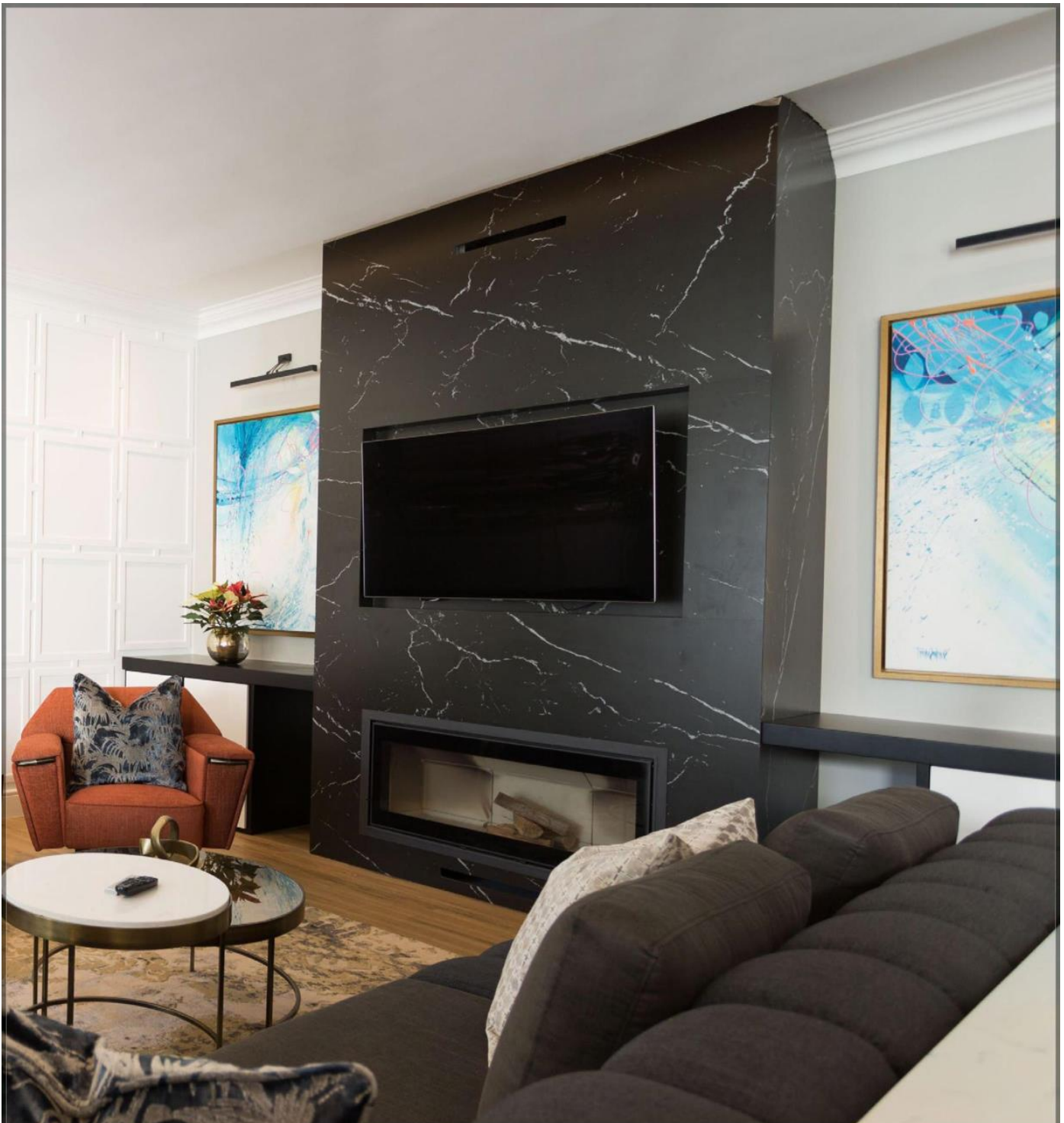
Fire brings such energy into a space because it represents passion, zeal and motivation and brings literal and

physical warmth into the home. With so many options, from gas-oil hybrids, to ergonomic pellet fireplaces and classic stone hearths, there is sure to be one that fits your ideal aesthetic. Considering the style and ambience you want to create, will determine which option will work best. My personal favourite is cast iron wood burning stoves; not only are they super-efficient, but they also have a beautiful vintage charm.

#### GO HIGH QUALITY

The final fireplace you choose should fit with your lifestyle requirements and be realistic for you to run in terms of fuel and effort. If you want to simply flip a switch after a long day and relax with a glass of wine, a gas option is probably better than wood because it eliminates much of the labour associated with a wood-burning fireplace. The longevity of your design choice is also paramount on both essential materials such





as fire bricks, and in terms of style. I always recommend clients go for what they truly love, not just what is on-trend, because fireplaces are expensive to repair or replace.

#### SIZE UP YOUR SPACE

The most successfully heated spaces are where the heating source is proportional to the room to ensure it is kept warm but does not use unnecessary fuel and therefore cost more. Many experts focus on understanding

the science behind space and airflow and how sunlight and energy interact in a room. When I design a space, I collaborate with them to ensure that the result matches both the heating and lifestyle requirements so that my clients end up with a functional and beautiful space.

#### FOLLOW THE SUN

The sun is often overlooked when home builders collaborate with architects, yet

light is the most fundamental factor in how a house feels, lives, and changes with the day and seasons. Having a sunny space will make an enormous difference to how much energy you are putting into heating your space because of the solar gain that will naturally build up as the sun filters in during the day. If you are buying a home that doesn't get a lot of sun, before installing heating systems, try to open it up with windows or skylights. The sun will always







be the most efficient way to heat a home because, after all, it is free.

#### KEEP IT CONNECTED

If a home is cold, we tend to retreat to the warm embrace of our duvets rather than gathering in a communal area. A fireplace creates a warm social hub and the perfect ambience to bond as a family, relax as a couple or cook and eat together. When building your fireplace, consider how space will be used and use furniture that makes it easy to gather safely around the fire and facilitates being together.

#### REMEMBER ALL THE ELEMENTS

Making a space warm is also psychological. By considering elements such as the floors, wall coverings, lighting, colour and textures, you can make even the darkest room feel cosy. To find balance among all these elements, I often look to nature and incorporate earth, air, water and fire. Vibrant plants in open spaces infuse a home with life, and cool ocean blues make the perfect inky backdrop for warm colours and earthy tones. Lush rugs and dim candles, as well as rich wallpaper, also help to add psychological warmth and insulation.

#### MAKE IT MULTIFUNCTIONAL

Fireplaces are amazing places to display paintings and hang mirrors, while a mantle has always been a fantastic place to hang Christmas stockings and display family

photographs. Nowadays, it is easy to make space for recessed TV's above fireplaces, or make the fireplace central and move the TV to the side. Wood storage can also be magnificent if built floor to ceiling or using large decorative baskets.

#### TAKE THE FUN OUTSIDE

Using your outdoor space with the kind of weather we have in South Africa is also very much an option. With us spending much more time outdoors, we see a massive resurgence in the popularity of the fire pit. I personally love them and adore how versatile they can be - from a simple, cost-effective metal pit to grand sunken landscaped arenas, there is something for every budget. If a fire is not your preference, or perhaps you have a smaller courtyard garden, outdoor heaters are a lovely alternative.

The cold can make us retreat into our spaces to cocoon away from the harshness of the world. Building a fireplace is so much more than a heating solution; it is a way to draw us together to find comfort in the bonds we share with family and help us revive our souls after the haste and confusion of a busy day.

For more tips from Kim Williams, sign-up for her blog at [www.kimwilliams.co.za](http://www.kimwilliams.co.za) or follow her on Facebook and Instagram @kim\_williams\_design.

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