

OF LIFE & LUXURY

Designer Iván Meade lives his life around one simple philosophy: spoil yourself with everyday things. “Spend the money on the things you touch every day — taps, doorknobs, teacups — and you will know what it feels like to live in luxury,” he says. It’s a principle his stylish mother taught him years ago, and today, as a cancer survivor at age 40, it’s the credo Meade lives by.

DEREK FORD

Where he gets his design sense >

Meade grew up in San Luis Potosí, a city in north-central Mexico named after Louis IX of France, its patron saint, and known for its colonial charm. His upper-class Mexican family revered the arts and supported Meade’s degree in business and his master’s in cultural diplomacy, but each time Meade confessed his real passion was design, he was met with scornful remarks about the flamboyant stereotypes that went with the profession. He found solace in the company of an aunt who was an interior decorator and had a sharp eye for fashion. Meade quietly started taking lessons from her, alongside his other schooling.

When he got his first client >

At age 25, Meade headed north and came to Victoria, which he saw as a small town with a rich cultural diversity. He quickly fell in love with the idea of starting his own business here. While waiting out the legal paperwork, an eager Meade went to every design firm in Victoria to volunteer his skills. Not one company accepted. By the time Meade’s residency was finally approved, he was bursting to get started.

“I told the immigration officer, ‘I have my business cards, my website is up (back when no other designers had websites) and I’m ready for clients.’ He said, ‘You must be the most prepared person I’ve ever seen walk through these doors.’” With no office space, Meade set up in a neighbourhood coffee shop. One day, he heard the Peruvian owner talking about how his new shop needed more inspiring colours. Meade had his first client.

How design infuses his life >

Twelve years after arriving in Victoria, Meade is now one of Victoria’s most sought-after design minds. His work graces projects like The Chelsea Penthouse, The Hudson and The Village Restaurant in Oak Bay. His global reputation is also growing, thanks in part to his design blog which features interviews with some of the world’s

most revered design personalities, including potter and designer Jonathan Adler and Parisian designer star Jean-Louis Deniot.

Where he looks for inspiration >

With a soft spot for textiles, Meade recently launched his own line of fabrics. “All the patterns reference my life experiences ... Mariposa was inspired by my mother and her love for butterflies and cherry blossoms. It is an homage of sorts.” Another pattern, Vista Hermosa, mimics the outdoor flooring found on his grandparents’ veranda in Mexico. It’s a fresh, contemporary interpretation of the pattern Meade saw throughout his childhood.

When he’s not designing homes, brands or fabric, Meade is as much culinary architect



One of Meade’s favourite patterns in his new line is Grabado, shown here on this couture gown. He designed the pattern in homage to Swiss engraver Matthäus Merian (1593-1650), one of his favourite artists.

as he is designer. “My mom was a chef and I learned a lot from her,” he says. “I love having people over and cooking for them. If you see my Instagram account, half of it is focused on food, while the other half is what I see around me.”

How he dealt with a tough diagnosis >

Meade’s world was turned upside down in 2011 when he was diagnosed with stage III B testicular cancer. In only a matter of days, the then-37 year old went from “feeling fine” to being told cancer had already

spread from his testicles to his abdomen, liver and lungs. He was given one week to get his affairs in order and prepare for an extreme surgery. “The first thing I did — well, after I calmed down my partner — was to call [designer] Kimberly Williams who is a breast cancer survivor,” he says. “I told her, ‘I’ve just been diagnosed with cancer; can you tell me how you handled your business?’” Williams gave him advice and soon other designers began to offer support.

When he set priorities >

The experience shifted everything for Meade, who will now only accept the projects he feels passionate about and will turn down business in favour of “enjoying life.” Meade says he’s secretly a homebody who loves reading, relaxing and keeping things casual. Still, he turned his healing time into the campaign *SaveThoseNuts.com*, which uses humour to educate people about testicular cancer and the vital importance of self-examinations. Launched last spring, the campaign has raised major awareness in Victoria and beyond. “There are many cancers we do hear about, but no one ever told me it’s important to examine yourself as a man,” said Meade, who is still fighting.

“This is one of the most treatable forms of cancer if it’s caught early, and it’s important for people to understand that this does not make you less of a man. Being proactive strengthens your self-worth.”

What he’s learned to value most >

If Meade’s experience with cancer has taught him anything, it’s to take great pleasure in the simplest things in life (yes, he uses the good china every day) and to be selective with his to-do list. Above all, he knows he came to the right place to pursue his passion. “Victoria,” he says, “is really the Cancun of Canada. People don’t realize how fortunate we are here; we are a small city, but we have the cultural richness that reflects cities much larger. This place is all about enjoying life to the fullest, and that’s what I’m doing.” ∴



MUST-HAVE FURNITURE PIECE

Barcelona Stool

“The Barcelona chair is unfortunately overused, but the stool is beautiful. It has gorgeous lines.”



GUILTY PLEASURE

Antiquing

“I have a knack for finding beauty in things that are often disregarded. It’s not about what it costs, it’s the find.”



FAVOURITE MATERIAL

Sterling Silver

“It’s something from my heritage, and I love the look.”



STYLE ICON

His Mother, Maria Celia

“She was one of the most elegant ladies; she had a natural sense of style and she taught me what luxury is.”