



Real Sweat Equity

By Megan DeLaire

On either side of the country, two gyms flex different sets of design muscles in the face of setbacks.

— On opposite sides of the country, two relatively new gyms are using distinct design approaches to achieve a common goal: motivating members to show up and break a sweat. During a time when fear of COVID-19 and its variants has kept many members out of gyms, this is no small task.

Power10 Fitness, in Toronto, uses an immersive, high-tech atmosphere to keep members energized and takes a more specialized approach to fitness. Prime, in Kelowna, B.C., favours biophilic elements, industrial materials and refined accents and takes a holistic approach to wellness. Both opened before the first waves of the pandemic reached North America, and both feature elements that could potentially help them weather subsequent waves.

The Immersive: Power10 Fitness

Power10 is a high-tech, high-intensity rowing studio and gym that takes its name from a rowing term that refers to the moment a crew concentrates all its strength into 10 consecutive strokes that can make or break a race. Dubbeldam Architecture + Design applied this concept to the space, too, using dynamic colour-changing LED lighting and a bold, high contrast colour scheme — including the gym’s signature colour of “power gold” — to create an immersive interior engineered to help push members to their physical limits. In a nod to the image of crossed oars and the Roman numeral for 10, X-shaped light fixtures hang from the ceiling in circulation areas and decorate the walls and ceiling of the rowing studio.



Riley Snelling

This spread For Power10 Fitness, Dubbeldam Architecture + Design used a shared branding scheme, integrated graphics and bold colours to activate a high-energy design concept. Dynamic lighting is an integral part of that, seen in the use of large bell pendants from Normann Copenhagen, alluding to the equipment used in strength training, and X-shaped LED lighting, alluding to the Roman numeral 10, installed on



the walls and ceiling throughout and which, during training sessions, pulsate and change colour to the music. Integrated custom lockers, coat rails and shelves are located at the entrance. White oak millwork by Canara Woodworking Inc. is combined with smooth Master Plan Cinder tiles from Stone Tile on the floor, conveying an elevated fitness club experience.



This spread **Forme Interior Design's** vision of refined industrialism extends from a recycled shipping container mezzanine to rebar and metal mesh room partitions, exposed concrete walls, solid wood beams, suspended wood ceilings, a globe chandelier, warm pendant lights, live plants and a moss wall, all of which create visual cohesion among the three integrated health and wellness spaces.

The Holistic: Prime

If Power10 takes a high-intensity approach to training, Prime is designed with holistic fitness in mind. Prime is the product of a close-knit collaboration between owner and athletic performance coach Brandt Fralick, builder Worman and Forme Interior Design's principal, Tamara Jones. The project grew from Fralick's desire to build an integrated health and wellness centre, and comprises a gym, physiotherapy centre and medical clinic.

Prime opened in June 2019 and occupies 14,400 square feet over two floors of a new building owned and constructed by Worman in Kelowna's South Pandosy neighbourhood. Designing the space in tandem with the build afforded Jones, Fralick and Worman the opportunity to incorporate a novel feature while there was still ample space to move it in. Hovering over the lobby of the first floor fitness centre, at the top of an open staircase connecting the fitness centre with the physiotherapy clinic, is a shipping container that serves as Prime's mezzanine and showers.

"Brandt had a very clear vision of this refined industrial look, which is unique, especially for a medical clinic. But what's unique about the gym is, not only the interconnected staircase to the physio centre, but the mezzanine," says Jones. "We needed to create showers in the space, but we couldn't fit it all in, so the builder put all the showers inside of a shipping container and that became the mezzanine."

Fralick's vision of refined industrialism extends from a recycled shipping container mezzanine to rebar and metal mesh room partitions, exposed concrete walls, solid wood beams, suspended wood ceilings, a globe chandelier, warm pendant lights, live plants and a moss wall, all of which create visual cohesion among the three integrated health and wellness spaces.

"We were really trying to use a lot of natural materials and it just seemed worthwhile to bring plants into the space," says Jones. "Because I think people thrive in nature, so it's important to bring natural elements into the interior."

Prime opened more than a year before the first wave of COVID-19 cases in Canada temporarily closed gyms, and while it was not designed or constructed with a pandemic in mind, it benefits from an open floor plan and ample air circulation between two open floors. Prime Fitness doesn't use enclosed studios — which have been shown to create the conditions for COVID-19 transmission — and is fitted with four HVAC units with an integrated heat recovery ventilation system that exhausts stale indoor air and replaces it with fresh outdoor air. Considering these features, Jones feels like Prime has proven resilient in a post-COVID world. "At the time we were designing this, who knew what we were going to be faced with a year later?" **IN**

Inside, the lights can be programmed to change colour, shape-shift to create a chevron pattern and pulse in rhythm with the music to boost a workout's intensity. "It's amazingly dynamic because they can get any colour and do any pattern with the LEDs," says Heather Dubbeldam, lead designer and the firm's co-founder. "They curate the lighting to sync with the music and you kind of get the feeling of the chevrons racing toward you with the music."

Dubbeldam counterbalances the intensity of the gym and rowing studio by softening the lounge and change rooms with live plants, white oak and walnut millwork, terrazzo tiles and warm light cast by Normann Copenhagen bell pendants. "The change rooms are more calming," Dubbeldam says. "The music is different in those rooms so after an intense workout you get to kind of relax a bit."

Occupying a 4,210-sq.-ft. ground level unit on Toronto's Queen Street East, according to Dubbeldam the project was "95 per cent" finished when Ontario announced the first wave of pandemic closures in March 2020, but nevertheless is designed with features that could help set members at ease. By virtue of their size, Dubbeldam says rowing machines in the studio are spaced out so that each rower has a cushion of six feet. The rowing studio and the rest of the gym are equipped with two air handling units each, fitted with ionizing air purifiers and HEPA filters. The studio also has an exterior door that can be propped open to allow fresh outdoor air during rowing sessions. "Being able to open the door outside is a good thing," says Dubbeldam. "Things are pretty spaced out in there, just inherent to the nature of what's in there."

Jon Adrian

