

# THE quest FOR quality

## The home becomes a luxury showpiece

BY LISA KADANE

Leanne MacMaster is trading up. Except, instead of exchanging her Nissan Maxima for a Mercedes or BMW, she's chucking out run-of-the-mill home products in favour of more expensive, higher quality items.

When the 41-year-old marketing manager and her husband moved into a two-storey house in Victoria, B.C., they funnelled their disposable income into the new home's kitchen, bathrooms and furniture.

This meant a stainless steel refrigerator and gas stove-top, a convection wall oven, and a quieter dishwasher. In the upstairs bathroom the couple sought out top-of-the-line Grohe plumbing fixtures.

That quest for quality is just one factor driving people to invest in their homes instead of their cars. The trading up phenomenon, well documented in the 2003 book *Trading Up: The New American Luxury*, by Michael Silverstein and Neil Piske, has moved beyond cars, clothing, pet food and personal care products, to take up residence in the home.

Since the masses began "hiving" (using houses to reach out to, and socialize with, friends and family) three years ago, we're spending more money on appliances, furniture, plumbing fixtures, electronics, even beds and linens.

But it's not just the wealthy cashing in on more expensive items. As Cana-



This kitchen has all the trappings of a trade-up: appliances hidden behind cabinetry, sweeping granite countertops and an open-concept design. High-end appliances, like the Kitchen Aid self-cleaning electric range at left, are in demand.

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expensive merchandise.

In 1993, average family income after tax in Canada was \$50,500.

"People have been Martha Stewart-ized," says Julian Riley, a co-owner of Maria Thomas Design. "They're much



Kohler taps and faucets are stylish and add a new dimension to bathroom time.

## How to trade up

**KITCHENS** — Stainless-finished, professional-grade refrigerators, with names such as Viking and Sub-Zero. Even better are refrigerator doors custom made to match the cherry cabinets or freezers in deep drawers. Miele or Bosch dishwashers.

**BEDROOMS** — Buhi-bye plain white sheets, hello Egyptian cotton linens on a nice bed such as a king-size Tempur bed or a Hypnos.

**BATHROOMS** — Large Italian tiles, Grohe and Kohler plumbing fixtures, pot lights, towel warmers and steam showers. Pricy bathtubs such as those made by Bain Ultra and soakers with an air-jet massage.

**HOME THEATRES** — LCD TV with a flat-screen monitor and the residence wired so that music, lighting, heating, security, satellite and DVD/home theatre are all monitored from central seats throughout the house.

