



## MARTINA SOMMERS

### OPEN SPACE: CLUTTER CLEARING & BEYOND

902-476-1508 • [www.open-space.ca](http://www.open-space.ca)

Tucked away in a cozy corner of the Trident Café on Hollis Street in Halifax, Martina Sommers greets me with a familiar smile, and welcomes me to her little round table. We have chatted on the phone a couple of times, and met previously at Janet Kimber's photo studio. Dressed in a smartly tailored outfit, Sommers seems equally at home in the bright open space of the studio and the moodier, more intimate atmosphere of the café. I imagine this is one of the qualities that has helped her business Open Space: Clutter Clearing and Beyond to be so successful in its inaugural year.

Originally from Germany, Sommers immigrated to Halifax in 2001 with partner Mattias Jaepel, also an entrepreneur, after several years of vacationing throughout Canada. "We fell in love with Halifax because of the lifestyle," she admits. "We decided, much to the surprise of many of our friends back in Germany, to choose a lifestyle in a setting that we loved, and then fit our work in around our lifestyle."

Sommers is quick to admit that her European heritage has a great deal to do with her innate ability to banish clutter and have organization reign supreme, but she hopes people will not identify her too closely with the stereotypical taskmaster of a *hausfrau*. "I see myself more as a coach of sorts, helping people to identify the clutter that exists in their homes, figure out why it is

there, and devise the best solutions for working through the associated issues in order to free them up both physically and psychologically."

Sommers, by choice, does not own a television, so she admits that she doesn't know much about the whole design-show phenomenon. However, she says she thinks that many of the homes and renovations that are showcased on television set up very unrealistic expectations, often are based on the consumerist idea that everyone should have more, and unquestioningly follow the current trends. She believes our homes should be unique expressions of our personalities. "Just as you develop a signature wardrobe, with a few classic pieces in styles and colours that appeal to you and flatter your form, so should you develop a home that suits your own individual personality and lifestyle."

In the relatively short time that Sommers has been in business, she has developed some really wonderful ideas. From a newly developed, clean and uncluttered website offering seasonally packaged and specially priced services, to complimentary spa treatments and consultations with qualified nutritionists, this is one innovative venture. "Clutter clearing for me is not just about the physical environment," she offers. "I really see it as a holistic endeavour encompassing our entire being—everything from how clear our physical and emotional bodies are, to whether or not we are able to function optimally in our home environments."

Her work with a client begins with an initial visit, either at the client's home or in a more neutral place if the clutter has gotten to the point where the homeowner is embarrassed to have people into their home. "People are putting themselves in a fairly vulnerable situation by inviting a complete stranger into their home," she points out. "I try to make that process more comfortable by being emotionally open and nonjudgmental—I even open my home to my clients by way of photographs on my website so that they hopefully feel less vulnerable."

From there Sommers takes her cues, and her pace, from the client. "People really need to work at a pace that is comfortable for them, and let go of things as they are ready." Borrowing a

#### MARTINA SOMMERS' TIPS FOR SPRING CLEANING

1. Walk around your home and evaluate which area you would like to grow – how could you use the space differently? Choose one room to start where you feel motivated and have a goal. Not just to clean the spare room, but to envision it as your future music or craft room. Start with the end in mind.
2. Go through your wardrobe. What have you not worn all winter, what did you not wear last year? Purge. Think, "how would I like to present myself this spring?" Letting go of winter empowers you to do that. Ruthlessly discard and donate — we wear 20 per cent of our wardrobes 80 per cent of the time.
3. Consider sorting and organizing garden tools and bulbs. Prepare your garden for the new season. Formulate a plan and a budget for new plantings

term from her previous life as a scientist, she sees herself as a catalyst in the process of clutter clearing, and sees clutter not as a negative, but as a positive—a source from which one may glean all kinds of self knowledge, and an opportunity. Having dealt with their clutter leaves clients open to all kinds of possibilities. "Expect the unexpected," Sommers says grinning impishly. "Anything from weight loss to a transformed relationship to a new outlook on life could be your reward!" •