

STATELY, NOT STUFFY

Lakeside home inserts a burst of burnished modernity into leafy neighbourhood

BY VICTOR SWOBODA

PHOTOGRAPHY BRANDON BARRÉ AND PETER FRITZ

STYLING KAREN KIRK

Water works: Disc-shaped organza chandeliers by Aqua Creations hang at different levels in the living room and help to create a more intimate feel in a large-space environment. The slightly transparent organza material changes its look under varying light. Photo by Brandon Barré. Flowers in this story courtesy of Carisma Florists.



Ground floor powder room with mosaic wall has custom-designed basin and cabinet by XTC.

(Opposite) Elegant spiral staircase with laminated balustrade ascends from basement to upper floor around a hanging cluster of Bocci crystal orbs. The curving forms echo the elliptical shapes of the entry foyer. Photos by Brandon Barré.

FOR THREE YEARS, the couple looked for the right Lake Ontario waterfront property to build a spectacular new home, and they waited another three years while it was meticulously designed and constructed. When finished, the façade with its artfully mixed lines, sharply sloped roof and irregularly shaped windows added a burst of modernity to a leafy neighbourhood south of Port Credit, where tree-lined traditional brick homes and bungalows are the norm.

Rising unobstructed on Water's Edge Road, the home has 21st-century stateliness. Stately, but not stuffy – for once you pass the front door of custom-laminated exquisitely burnished steel, you enter a world of soft curves that undulate throughout the interior and continue to the outside surrounding landscape. The curves subtly link spaces and invite movement.

"There's a sense of flow around the house, a feeling also that the flowing energy extends outside," says Christopher Simmonds, the architect cited when Water's Edge won the 2010 Ontario Home Builders' Association Award of Distinction for most outstanding custom home over 5,000 square feet.

The flowing energy derives from the Chinese feng shui principles of harmony that Simmonds, who is also a landscape architect, incorporates into his designs. Elements of air, fire, water and stone are constantly in view.

"There's a sense of flow around the house, a feeling also that the flowing energy extends outside."



“When people walk in, they often comment, ‘Am I in a home or in a hotel?’”



Circular sofas by Roche Bobois serve as a sitting area for homeowners' quiet reading or as a central gathering point for party guests. The German-made art carpet on the wall was supplied by Modern Weave. The view through the panoramic windows overlooking Lake Ontario takes in the distant Toronto skyline to the north.

The entrance, for example, opens on to an expansive living room whose two-storey-high window panels offer an unbroken panorama of sky enhanced by the waters of Lake Ontario at the property's edge. Wrapping around the lake side of the house, the windows were constructed to withstand high winter winds.

“Sometimes we get spray off the lake,” says the homeowner husband, a tax and financial planner.

Central to the living room are white semicircular sofas from Roche Bobois that virtually embrace a round standing fireplace whose soaring flue descends like a black metal waterfall from ceiling to floor. Hanging overhead in delicate counterpoint to the flue's vertical lines are three flat circular chandeliers of crushed organza silk on metal frames, made by Aqua Creations. The wife chose the materials with the help of Danielle Hannah of Ottawa's 2H Interior Design.

“Whenever you have two-storey spaces, it's important to make somebody feel comfortable in that space, sometimes by creating the illusion of lowering the ceiling. You do that with lighting,” says Hannah, who styled not only the lighting but much of the furniture.

“People ask why I went with white for the sofas,” says the wife, an experienced hostess whose parties can involve more than a hundred guests. “I didn't want to mix too many colours.”


Indeed, the home's basic palette has three colours – aubergine walls, pale-white floor slabs of veined bella limestone perfectly honed so no lippage shows between adjacent tiles, and dark-stained oak for the dining table, walk-in closets, and master and upstairs bedroom furniture designed by Alexander's of Etobicoke. The repeated colour scheme enforces the impression of unity. All the parts of the house are related to each other like the parts of a sculpture. Style is everywhere.

“When people walk in, they often comment, ‘Am I in a home or in a hotel?’” says the husband.

The open-space dining area has a sparkling chandelier with thirty-five golden blown-glass drops around a central light. Created by AM Studio, the chandelier's vertical lines echo those of the ten straight-backed chairs surrounding the dining table.



The fireplace, imported from France, is fitted with a dramatic California-made flue. The oak dining table and chairs are from Alexander's. Photos by Brandon Barré.



Dropped ceiling accents and gently curved counters conceal the functionality of the main kitchen, a Neff Kitchens design. The predominant aubergine colour scheme was derived from the kitchen counter top. Breakfast stools are by De Boers. Photo by Brandon Barré.



“In the evening, I read a lot, so I have different sitting areas.”

Elegance in simplicity. Bed and headboard in the master bedroom were custom designed for the room, whose lower ceiling creates a feeling of intimacy. Photo by Peter Fritz.

Opposite the dining table is the main kitchen, created by Neff Kitchens of Brampton. The appliances are elegantly shielded by a curving counter so that only four white-topped metal bar stools from De Boers hint that this is cooking central. Breakfast is taken either at the counter or at a small, simple table to one side. Next to it by a window huddles a banquette, one of several nooks that Simmonds included at the wife's request.

“In the evening, I read a lot, so I have different sitting areas,” says the wife, who manages the household and supervises a home caretaker team that includes a landscaper, maintenance man and pool man.

Just steps from the living room are the couple's private quarters, located on the ground floor to allow direct access to the outside terraces. Unobstructed banks of windows bring ample morning light into both the bedroom and ensuite bathroom, designed like all of the home's bathrooms by XTC of Etobicoke. Privacy is ensured by automated Luxor horizontal blinds that scroll up and down noiselessly. The same system screens the panoramic living room windows against the summertime sun.

Off the bedroom is a small exercise room where the husband trains for expeditions like his climb up Mount Kilimanjaro. His main hobby, however, is golf, which he plays at the Glen Abbey championship club close by. At home, he whacks golf balls into a net in a nook in the basement family room, where there are also comfy sofas for watching videos or TV on a 100-inch drop-down screen.

Master bedroom's ensuite bathroom designed by XTC has wrapping windows overlooking the outdoor patio and lake beyond. Automated blinds descend noiselessly for privacy. Photos by Brandon Barré.





Harmony in the design of the ensuite bathroom comes from curves arching gently in opposite directions amid the straight-line frames of the mirror, shower stall and windows. Photo by Peter Fritz.



Lakeside façade glows at night behind the layered terrace with its pool and Japanese footbridge. “Our biggest attraction is the outdoor patio – the house is secondary,” quipped the homeowner, an avid host. Photo by Peter Fritz.



A rivulet full of tiny pebbles joins the pool with a human-sized stone chosen at a quarry in Kingston, Ont. A look through the stone’s bored round hole brings air, water and stone into a single view – a feng shui experience that represents the whole spirit of Water’s Edge.

Photo by Peter Fritz.

The home has a small elevator handy for transporting articles from the four-car garage, but a more attractive way up and down is by the custom-designed circular staircase that twines from basement to top floor. Bocci globe lights, which Hannah notes are becoming increasingly fashionable, hang in a ten-metre cascade the height of the staircase.

“That staircase was quite a project!” says Simmonds. “It’s self-supporting. The balustrade on the interior side is essentially a curved, laminated structural beam that supports the stairs top to bottom. We made this elegantly curved notch and set the handrail into that.”

Quality construction was ensured throughout the house by contractor Michael Rossini of Rossini Custom Homes, a firm that takes on only a few projects a year.

“I like to do different things above the norm,” says the husband. “When you look at a traditional home with square walls and four bedrooms, what’s so special about that?”

“I like to do different things above the norm.”