

99 WINDOWS, TWO SPACES

Airy minimalism defines home that's been divided for sleep and play

BY SUZANNE WINTROB
PHOTOGRAPHY: BEN RAHN, A-FRAME INC.



THE FEROCIOUS DOWNPOUR HAS FINALLY STOPPED. As the sun peeks out from behind the clouds, droplets sparkle on the expansive lawns of this Mississauga neighbourhood. Dozens of towering white oak trees form a canopy over the quiet street; the sound of chirping birds beckons residents and visitors to take in the tranquil surroundings.

In this setting, most of the sizable custom-made ranch bungalows and two-storey homes on the street are designed with pitched

roofs, but high school sweethearts Richard and Gloria Patricio envisioned something different when they set eyes on a perfect 25,000-square-foot corner lot four years ago.

“Everything in the area was more of a Martha’s Vineyard type of home,” recalls Gloria, a stay-at-home mother of two boys, ages seven and nine. “We started researching and going online and found a lot of places outside Canada that had the particular style we wanted, mostly South American influence.”

(Opposite) With no vestibule, the front door opens directly into a grand room with a 22-foot ceiling. Nilton Tavares, principal of Structure Corporation in Toronto, was intrigued by the home’s commercial aspects, including that ceiling and the massive structural steel frame. The recessed trough lighting is something that would commonly be seen in retail stores. The room’s two-inch concrete flooring is diamond-polished to resemble terrazzo tile.



(Below) The Boffi kitchen, flown in from Italy, is anchored by a white marble slab doubling as countertop and eating area. A wall of white cupboards incorporates the built-in Miele stove and Sub-Zero fridge, microwave and espresso machine. For privacy, light streams into the kitchen through several large windows situated well above eye level as well as a narrow floor-to-ceiling window. (Opposite) Colour and textures are kept consistent, even in the floating staircase, which has had glass guards to create a light and airy flow.

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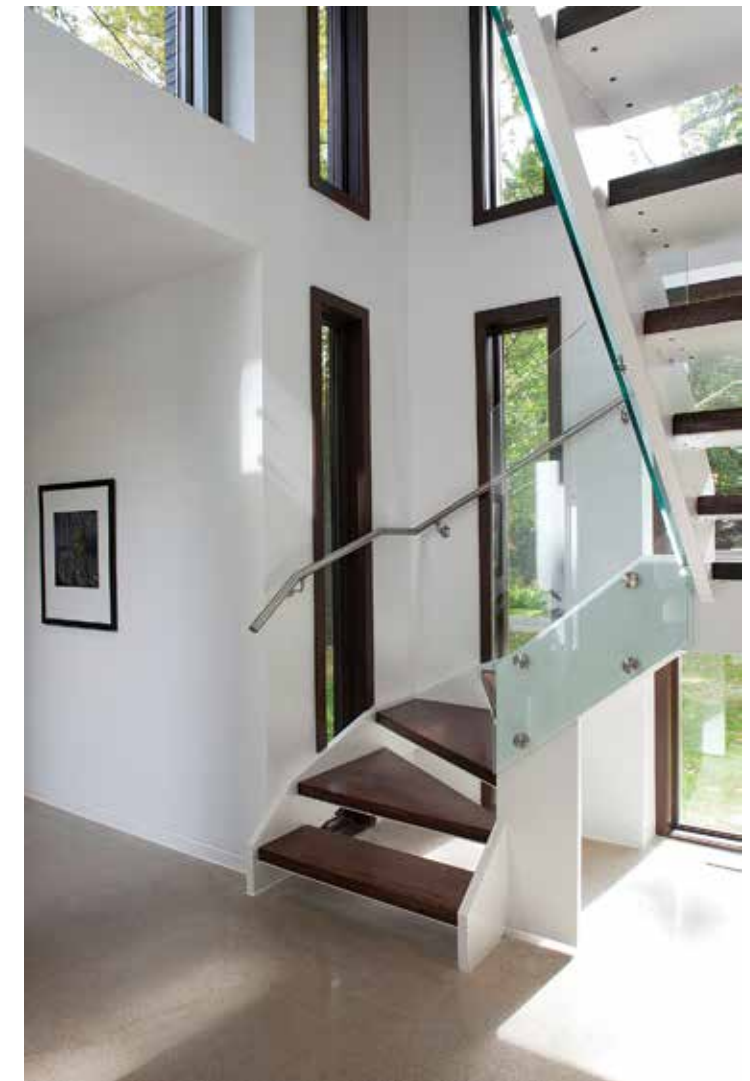
Richard, who works in the investment business, says extensive travelling has helped him develop particular tastes in décor, art and fine wine. So when it was time to build their dream home, he wasn't satisfied with run-of-the-mill ideas.

“We wanted something contemporary and fairly minimalist,” he explains. “We wanted a lot of open space and a lot of glass. We also wanted something smaller,” referring to some of the “monstrosities” he finds in his neighbourhood.

In the end, the inspiration came from a Brazilian home he discovered in a magazine.

“It had a giant circular room that was the centre of the home, with glass and trees all around it,” recalls Richard. “We were looking for one space that we could eat in, play in and relax in, with the bedrooms as a separate area.”

The concept was a breath of fresh air for architect Michael Pettes. The challenge, he says, was to make the Patricios' residence look like it “belongs” on the street amidst more conventional styles. Drawing on Illinois's century-old Unity Temple designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, Pettes envisioned a house with two distinct zones: a two-storey open-concept living space with floor-to-ceiling windows facing the backyard at one end of the property, and a two-storey garage at the other end, connected by a glass passageway. The idea was to play on transparency, offering privacy to the living spaces within but building mystery for onlookers trying to figure out the layout from outside. *ES*



The master bedroom, with bleached Quebec hardwood floor, feels modest compared to the huge adjoining Boffi ensuite and walk-in closet area. Windows feature prominently throughout but are frosted in key spots for privacy.



(Opposite) Labourers had 238 corners to deal with when laying down the black Belden face brick. The colour makes an attractive frame for the long breezeway leading from the living space to a two-storey garage. Douglas Fir was chosen for the exterior and the backyard pergola to complement the surroundings.

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“It’s all spread out, with a larger mass on the west corner and another large mass on the north corner. In between is the principal room,” explains Pettes.

It’s in that great room that the family hangs out and parties happen. The 28-foot by 48-foot space typifies minimalism and uses furniture rather than walls to distinguish functions. Area rugs, sofas and chairs help define three small lounging spots while a long Indian suar wood table with low chairs sits in the middle of the room. Floor-to-ceiling windows and patio doors open to the backyard. A white Boffi kitchen takes up the entire left side of the room, yet the streamlined design makes it almost inconspicuous. The Patricios have no family photos and few toys lying about, which adds to the simplified look and feeling.

Just off the kitchen area is a narrow hallway leading to the bedrooms and the basement. The modest master suite is also sparse save for a king-size bed by Hästens, an LC4 cowhide chaise longue, and a floor lamp by FLOS. The white Boffi ensuite has a floating sink, large glass-encased shower, and deep square soaker tub that the children adore. The bathroom gives way to an open closet area with Molteni wood cabinets.

A sleek staircase of glass and wood leads upstairs to the boys’ bedrooms, also sparsely furnished with woven upholstered beds from Blu Dot that are low to the floor, a wall of built-in cabinets, and nightstands by Ligne Roset. Desks might be added when the boys are older. ☞



At the opposite end of the house is a long, glassed-in breezeway, used as a mudroom and connecting the house to the two-storey garage, where two mechanical lifts accommodate a collection of sport and family vehicles.

It took just 12 months to complete construction, which Pettes and builder Nilton Tavares of Structure Corp. attribute to the Patricios' constant involvement and quick decision-making.

The couple is delighted with how their house turned out, as are neighbours who were initially sceptical of the atypical design. The family often retreats to their cottage for getaways, but this home is their undisputed sanctuary. Although the 99 windows make it tricky to find enough wall space for their art collection, Mother Nature provides a breathtaking substitute.

"Right now you see the trees and the greenery," says Richard. "The real beauty is during the seasons when it changes completely. You're sitting in the great room and it's all green around you. In the fall it's all red and orange and in the winter it's gone. The colours in the room and how you feel about the room changes. It's pretty dramatic." ❦



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