

Reclaimed creations

Artisan makes chic furniture from architectural bric-a-brac and fashions unique pieces, U7



RESTYLE

YOUR HOME

A WOMAN'S VIEW

Pimping the man crib: help wanted

Bachelor allows designer to guide decorating choices

ROBERT CRIBB
TORONTO STAR

At some point, the bachelor will be judged by his pad.

Sure, he can hide an unsightly inner sanctum from a prospective mate for a while. But soon enough the hideous frat-boy horror in which he squats must be unveiled. From here, romantic prospects hang in the balance.

"I'm not sure I've ended a relationship because a guy lives in a disaster zone, but it's been a factor," says a thirty-something female pal with the ocular ability to spot shelf dust at 20 paces. "At some point, watching a guy mindlessly exist in his own squalor every day changes how you view him."

Translation: A deer head mounted on the wall, hockey stick furniture and NHL-themed wallpaper dramatically undermines a chap's romantic allure.

Most of us bachelors are oblivious to the silent revulsion induced by our ineptitude at decorating. Where we see sacred fortresses of male solitude, she sees an expression of our inner selves, a crystal ball revealing the future of what life might be like lived under the same roof, an early distant warning.

We are unaware of the female science of décor-based personality assessment. We are unknowing in the ways of fabric swatches and paint chips. Linking window covering choices to relationship suitability seems as incomprehensible as practicing restorative yoga.

The take-away here is that if you're the typical single-and-seeking suitor, your domestic surroundings could likely use an upgrade.

And you needn't waste your time or money trying to do it yourself. That's what got you into this literal mess in the first place.

Consider an expert.

"I hate these shiny pillows," Toronto interior designer Laura Hay declares upon entering my living room for the first time, her face gradually reshaping itself into a grimace.

"And silk drapes? No. We're not in China. Shiny, dainty, silky pillows on a canvas slipcover can't be more wrong."

Hay isn't what you'd call an interior design diplomat.

She possesses the kind of unyielding female vision that the single man needs — discerning and frank, like that of a sister who understands what your girlfriends would be thinking if they were standing where she is right now.

"If I walked in here for the first time, my first thought would be, 'I don't want to hang out in here. And I don't even want to touch those pillows.'"

This explains so much.

BACHELOR PAD continued on U2

ALL-ENCOMPASSING APPROACH



Grand stand: Exterior of 33 Kelso after the wholesale renovation.

The good reno



Simply put: 33 Kelso before the complete home renovation.

Functioning of the house is the key consideration, experts advise

RYAN STARR
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Are homeowners dropping the ball when it comes to renovations?

Contractor Brendan Charters, who spends a great deal of time carrying out major renos on older homes across the city, thinks so.

All too often, he laments, owners seeking to upgrade their abodes focus more on sexy things such as granite countertops and stainless steel appliances and less on improving the critical working elements: the air, moisture, ventilation, water and temperature management systems.

"It's all well and good to rip out that kitchen or change the colours on the walls," says Charters, development manager with Eurodale Developments. "But not enough time is

spent talking about what's behind the walls, and how does this house as a system provide shelter from the elements and a healthy environment to live in."

Charters is a passionate proponent of the "House as a System" (HAAS) principle, a construction methodology that ensures all parts of the home function in an integrated way.

"The idea is to look at how everything works together, from the insulation to the ventilation, to make it a healthy and comfortable living space," he explains.

When it comes to major renovation jobs, Charters says owners who fail to

treat their home as an integrated system of operations are only creating problems for themselves down the line, no matter how great that stove with the big red knobs might look. "It's like putting flashy new rims on your car, but failing to fix the brakes. You're basically setting yourself up for disaster."

BLENDING OLD WITH NEW

Charters cites a recently completed Eurodale job as a case study that highlights how to blend old with new.

RENO continued on U4

» RESTYLE YOUR HOME

Foam holds in warmth

RENO from U1

The project involved adding a two-storey rear addition to an older home on 33 Kelso Ave., near Avenue Rd. and Wilson Ave.

While the new addition was well-insulated and energy-efficient, the original house itself had no insulation and old school single-pane windows.

"We were putting an addition on to the back of the house with a great tight thermal envelope, but the original house was completely porous," Charters explains.

His team stripped the walls of the existing home down to the brick and insulated the building envelope with spray foam. They also installed new Energy Star-rated windows and doors throughout.

"We got an equal R value (for thermal resistance or insulation) around the entire envelope," says Charters. "So the addition and original home now functioned the same, avoiding energy loss and uncomfortable conditions as you go from one area of the house to the other, which is so common in older homes."

In the basement, Eurodale installed an electric-fired tankless water heater, an energy-efficient alternative to a hot water tank that heats water on demand, not continuously.

The contractor also put in a high-efficiency boiler to heat the concrete subfloor in the basement and the tiled floors upstairs.

"It allowed us to turn down the thermostat on the forced air system," Charters explains. "Because



In need of assistance: The kitchen before the renovation.



Dowdy: The family room with fireplace before the renovation.

when your feet are warm, the rest of you is warm."

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

With the Kelso Ave. home sealed up tight, it was time to address air quality. The ventilation system was upgraded with the installation of a heat recovery ventilator (HRV), which uses interior air to warm up incoming outside air to provide a constant supply of fresh air without extra heating costs.

"Now that we've made this house super, super tight, if we're not bringing in fresh air, we're creating a potentially dangerous situation in which we're just recycling stale, contaminated air in the home," Charters says.

Eurodale used locally harvested oak hardwood flooring that was finished on-site, so the contractor

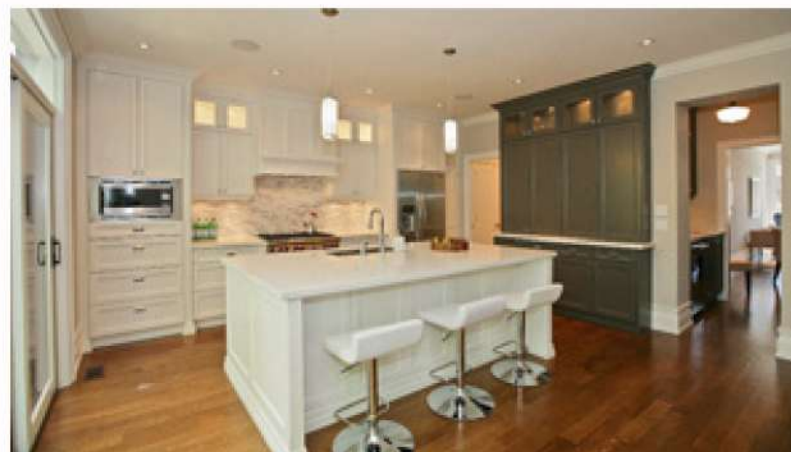
could apply finishes that were low in volatile organic compounds. They also used low-VOC paint, which reduces toxic off-gassing, and put in kitchen cabinets that are formaldehyde free.

The renovated Kelso Ave. home, priced at \$1.69 million, not only has more floor space but it will actually cost the homeowners less to live in than the original smaller and inefficient version, Charters notes.

It will be a healthier and more comfortable living environment, too, no longer vulnerable to humidity, water damage, heat and cold.

A properly built home that operates efficiently will eventually fetch a greater sum in an increasingly green-conscious real estate market, some experts say.

"In the coming years, I expect the performance of a home and its (en-



Complete transformation: Custom kitchen with butler's pantry.



Sharp: The family room with sealed gas fireplace after the renovation.

ergy) rating will affect the value and saleability of the home," says Sandra Baldwin, owner of Lifetime Contractor.

"So, I think, when people are contemplating a renovation, it's wise to build in that sustainability factor, because down the road, when they do look at selling, they'll have a much more saleable asset."

CHANGING ATTITUDES

Chad Attard, owner of Attard Construction in Mississauga, thinks most homebuyers still have trouble appreciating the long-term value of a greener home.

"It comes down to money," he says. "Unless we can show an actual trade-off, dollar for dollar, very few people are willing to bank on the fact that (greening their home) may save them money over a 10-year period.

"If they're given a choice, most homeowners will almost always opt for high-end finishes that give their house the wow effect."

Attard thinks attitudes will change, however, as newer generations of homebuyers enter the market with sustainability at the top of their must-have lists.

Charters agrees. "The consumer is getting savvier," he says. "They're not just going to stand at the curb and say, 'That house is gorgeous I want it!' They're going to say, 'This house might look good, but it performs horribly compared to that other house which also looks good.' And that will shape their decision."

"And, let's face it, energy prices are not going to be going down over time," he says. "So we're all going to get hit in the pocketbook, and that's always where change is initiated."