

GLORIOUS GLASS

*Clever use of transparent material
fills this home with light*

BY BRYAN DEMCHINSKY • PHOTOGRAPHY: ROBERT HOLOWKA • STYLIST: ROSE BARROSO AND ANA SANTOS

DESIGN

THE GLASSBRIDGE HOUSE, which is the latest creation from builder/designer Rose Barroso, bears a name that is appropriate in both a literal and metaphorical sense.

The glass bridge is a walkway on the upper floor connecting two sides of the house. It allows light from a skylight above to flood the main floor below. The effect is airy and seamless.

The bridge is made of three layers of glass. One, in the middle, is tempered and the other two are laminated so it can't shatter. "It's a space that could hold an elephant," Barroso says, yet it creates "the sensation of walking on air."

Clearly, pun intended, a showpiece element.

But the house itself is also a bridge, one leading from the past to the present. Its Modernist aesthetic is evolved from an older tradition but remains respectful of it. The house fits in like a child of the neighbourhood. The GlassBridge House is on The Kingsway, a name that refers both to the street in Etobicoke where it is located as well as the surrounding area. It is a highly desirable place in which to live, an enclave where "you will see kids riding their bikes and playing road hockey," Barroso says.

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The Kingsway was once property that belonged to the Church of England and was developed for housing at the beginning of the 20th century. It is appropriate then that the neighbourhood has a distinctly English look – full of neo-Tudor, English cottage-style and Queen Anne homes. Many are quite large but they are never ostentatious.

All told, says Barroso, The Kingsway, for all it offers, is still under-valued.

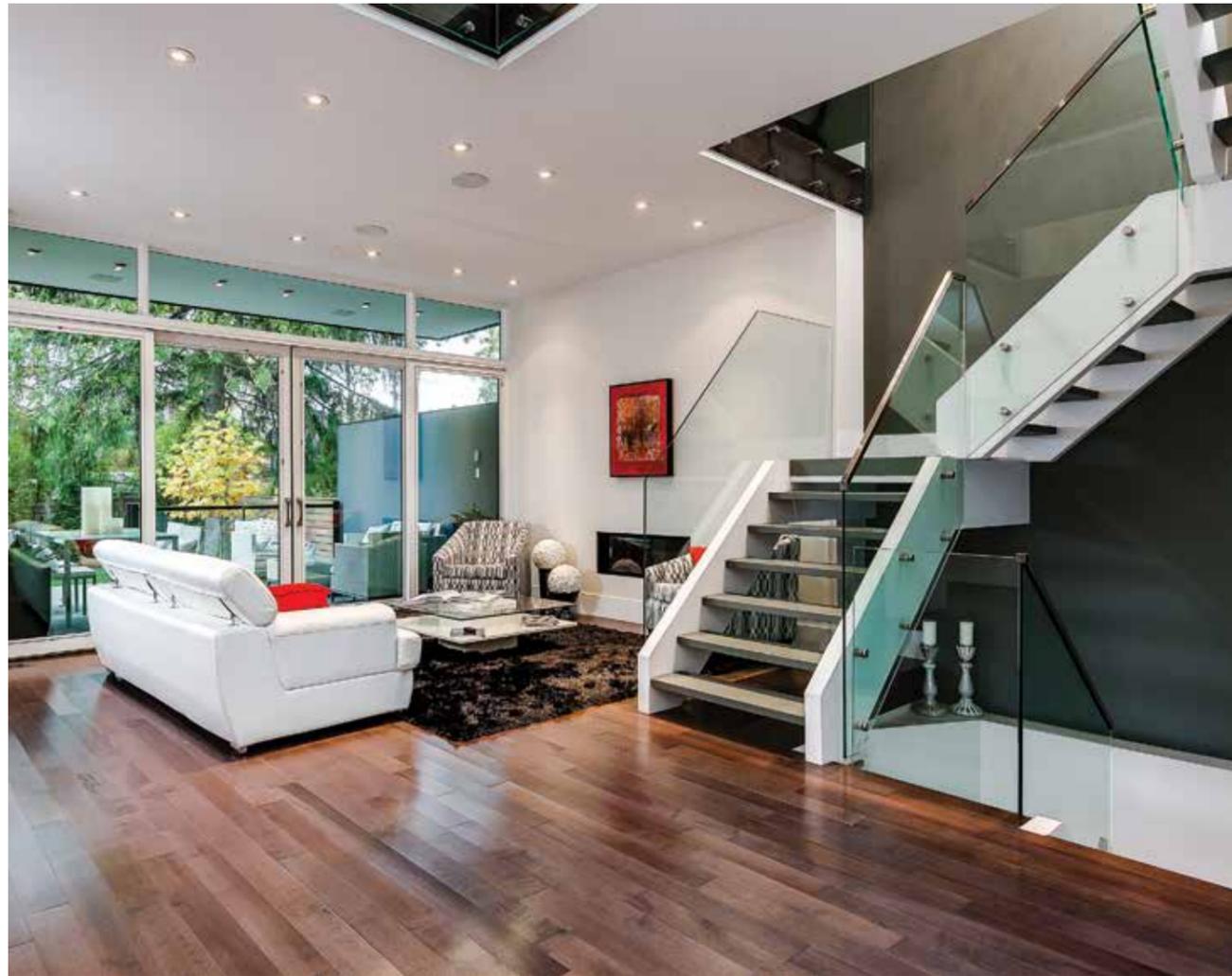
But for herself and Ali Malek-Zadeh, her longtime architect, building here was a challenge. “The bylaws are so restrictive and the neighbourhood is so protected that new builds are nearly impossible,” says Barroso. “The best bet is to rebuild in lieu of a new build.”

This meant much more than a gut reno. Only the side walls and the front foundation of the property’s former structure were kept intact with the back wall completely removed and a second-floor added to make a larger house. It was, as Barroso describes it, a demolition by hand, and the reconstruction took 11 months to complete. *✍*

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The kitchen and dining areas offer gleaming expanses of white with custom-built cabinetry by Perola Kitchens and built-in appliances by Thermador. A partial peek into the powder room (opposite page) reveals a free-standing vanity from Decolav.



The glass bridge that gives this home by Rose Barroso its name stretches from one side of the house to the other, letting light flood from above onto the main floor. There are four bedrooms upstairs, including the master with its ensuite bathroom (bottom, opposite page). Custom built-in closets in the master bedroom are by Perola Kitchens.



It was also another example of the type of collaboration Barroso has developed with Malek-Zadeh, which she describes as “eight years in the making and getting better and better.”

In her projects, the build is hers, but “I work with Ali on the design. Sometimes it’s 50-50, sometimes 75-25 to his side. After I purchase a property, I visit the site with Ali and I tell him my ideas and visions. Sometimes he’ll tell me I’m completely

off and at other times, he’ll tell me he agrees and that he was thinking along the same lines.”

The extra time and care expended on the GlassBridge House have paid off. It is at once bright and contemporary without being overly austere. This is achieved by a number of eye-catching architectural features and design touches. Expansive Pella windows in the kitchen look out into a backyard that has a wilderness

aspect thanks to a combination of existing old conifers and new plantings. Barroso deliberately placed the sink in front of the window instead of in the island to provide the user with this view, and to make it possible to watch the children if they happened to be playing in the yard.

Glass also melds the living room with a back patio, the two spaces together representing another highlight. ✎



Two of the basement rooms: the rec room (opposite), features red oak flooring, which has under-floor heating as does the office (above) and the second-floor bathrooms.

The house is fully automated by Control4 with touch control from smart phones and other devices for lighting, garage door, heating and cooling systems, alarms and video surveillance. As Barroso explains, in her work this level of service isn't just for a much larger house. "A custom house is a custom house, regardless of size," she says. At 4,000 square feet, the house is the right

size for a growing professional family. "It's contemporary but comfortable, family-oriented, cozy, because even though it's open-concept, the spaces are not too grand," she says.

It's also the kind of home that conforms to Barroso's building philosophy: "It's not about how much (the home) is worth," she says. "It's about how much people love it." ❧

