

INSPIRED BY A RAVINE

A Humber Valley home built beside a gorge takes its design cues from nature

BY LAURA BEESTON • PHOTOGRAPHY: REVELATEUR STUDIO

THE EUREKA MOMENT for Rose Barroso occurred the first time she surveyed the adjacent ravine while walking on the lot that would become “Hillside House.”

The property wasn’t technically hers yet, but the vision was certainly there. “I thought to myself, ‘This space is amazing,’” says Barroso, who designs and builds contemporary homes. Staring at the deep gorge in the Humber Valley neighbourhood and the existing home on the property, she began planning where she would put balconies and patios “and right away, I started doodling.”

To bring her vision to fruition, Barroso called her longtime architect, Ali Malek-Zadeh of Toronto’s Urbanscape Group. Malek-Zadeh walked the lot with her and they began to plan. “What we were trying to achieve in the first place is to bring the exterior to the interior,” says Malek-Zadeh.

Fast forward three years to 2013 and Barroso Homes has bought the lot and is breaking ground with a demolition, done by hand—a partial teardown that lasted nearly two months but allowed the designer to keep 75 per cent of the existing foundation intact. For permit purposes, “we had to work within the condition of the existing property,” Malek-Zadeh recalls. “And I asked myself, ‘How can we keep the view but create a new, completely modern-looking house on that existing footprint?’”

DESIGN

The kitchen features a full-size fridge and freezer, two full-size ovens and a micro/convection oven, a custom-made hood in scale with the 10-foot ceilings, and a full-height wine fridge. Cabinet doors are made of touch-latch Polyglass. White resin salad bowl and serving utensils, and black resin trough on patio table: from Pimlico.



The home's open plan, high ceilings and generously proportioned windows create a sense of spaciousness. The house was constructed upon the foundation of a former bungalow that had occupied the site. Yellow resin plate beside red chair: from Pimlico.



Other design challenges, says Barroso, were what ultimately makes the property great: how to build without disturbing a natural ravine, and around a number of trees.

“This is a brand new home on a few old walls.”

They charmed Toronto’s conservation authority by building on the existing foundation and by creating a natural look on the house’s exterior. The use of salvaged barn wood and other sustainable materials on the facade, they say, was meant to reflect the surrounding nature.

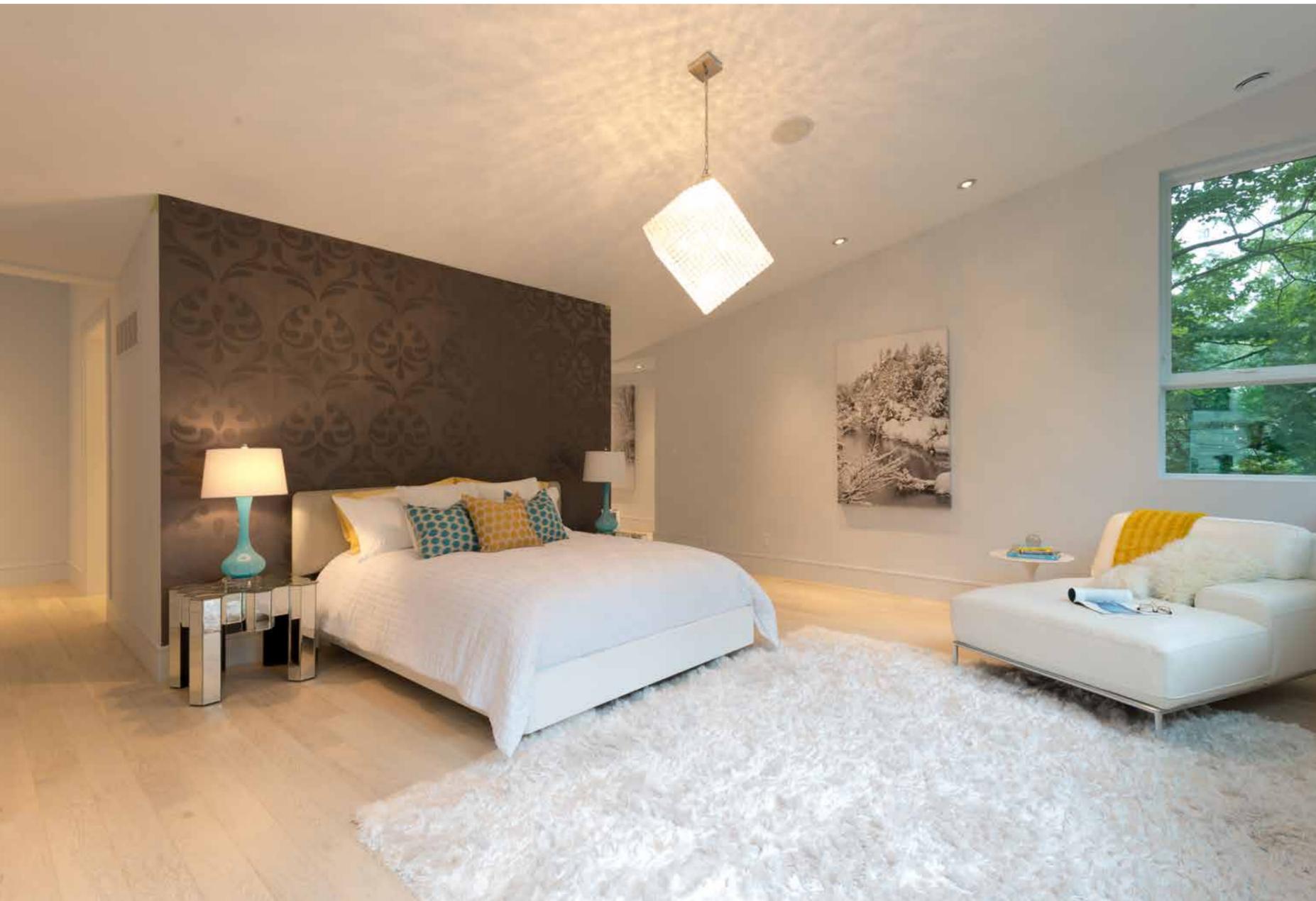
The façade is clad in black stone, and grey, German-made, concrete slats called Öko Skin, which provides a maintenance-free exterior for as long as 50 years.

The former house was a modest bungalow. The new home is a contemporary showstopper, ready for professionals who like a good party. It features the luxuries of hardwood radiant-heated flooring throughout, a chef’s kitchen, wine cellar, dry sauna, games room, gym, exercise pool and a spa-like master bathroom.

Wood-framed windows have a low-e coating that reduces heat loss and blocks the transfer of ultraviolet rays.

“This is a brand new home on a few old walls,” Barroso says, which is a five-bedroom, seven-bathroom, 7,500-square-foot house. 





The house was designed to allow occupants to take in the view from all angles. The natural environment of the ravine beyond is evident through every window.

Boasting 10-foot ceilings and many windows, Hillside House is bathed in light. The designers made as many vantage points as possible to permit views of the surrounding natural environment. “The area itself commanded a grandeur as the neighbourhood is no stranger to massive lots and multi-million dollar homes,” says Barroso. “If you have this house, you don’t really need a cottage. You can live in the city in a contemporary home, but it still feels like a cottage because of the views.”

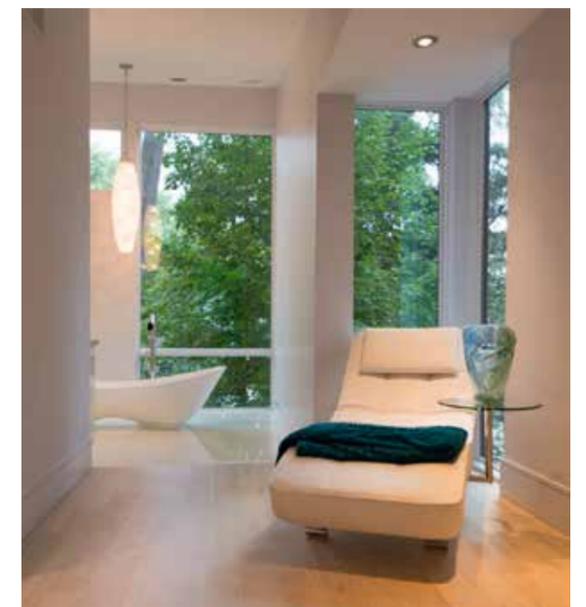
Indoors, the staircase is the focal point, connecting the basement with the main floor and second storey.

Two diagonal “wings” of the house allow for the distinction between an open-concept plan—featuring a dining room and sitting room separated by a linear, double-sided Napoleon fireplace—and a more secluded office space and powder room off the kitchen on the other. While one wing allows for privacy, this home was built for entertaining, says Barroso. The dining room provides ample space for hosting large meals, but the kitchen has a 22-foot-long island, which features a Flambe Square faucet by Disegno; it needed a reinforced floor to support a Ceaserstone countertop.

“My stone guys really hated me,” Barroso jests. “We had to make some maneuvers to make that island a table. But if you look closely, you will notice it floats. This is an island in every sense of the word. I wanted a place people could gather for drinks or dining in the kitchen. You can have a huge party around that island.”



“The area itself commanded a grandeur.”





A 400-square-foot patio adjacent to the kitchen is another area for entertaining and al fresco living, and the property features a swimming pool.

All of the layout decisions were made to incorporate and maximize the use out of the outdoor space, including the second floor, where a balcony offers a view of the ravine.

But it's the master bathroom that seems to excite Barroso the most. An ample-sized shower and Italian-made bathtub shaped like a shoe, create a Sybaritic environment.

A Control4 home automation system controls aspects of the living space remotely or in-house from an iPad or iPhone, or on touch-screen control panels throughout the house. It can adjust heat, set or disengage the alarm, switch on lights or the sprinkler system, open or close the garage doors, and turn on the television or shower. "It gives you the ability to view your surveillance cameras and get email advisories if your fire or burglar alarm has gone off," says Barroso. "Even if you left your garage door open as you left for the office in a mad rush, it will close it for you with a touch of a button on your your iPad or iPhone."

Barroso says the home is for owners who "know who they are and what they want, who entertain, throw parties, and like getting people together. This is entertainment heaven on a deep ravine," she says. ☛

The bathroom's design is characterized by clean lines and a neutral colour palette. The home automation system controls many elements, including the shower and lighting. (Opposite) White resin tray and bowl, specialty soaps under sink: from Pimlico. (Right) Wicker basket: from Pimlico.

