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Out of site

The house doesn't have to end where the backyard begins. In this home, life extends far beyond these four walls.

BY JIM SUTHERLAND
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEREK LEPPER



designed

Because the house is L-shaped, the living room and the kitchen are perpendicular, with an outdoor courtyard in between. By way of a sliding door, someone in the living room can go outside to get to the kitchen—truly indoor/outdoor living.

for themselves and their family by a husband and wife who are, respectively, a prominent architect and a prominent interior designer, the winner of our Large category displays impressive detail and refinement of form and finish. It also catches the eye with assertive proportions that say Bauhaus as loudly as “our house.” Yet it was not so much this that had the judging panel reaching a quick and unanimous decision. Rather, it was the way the entire property seemed geared to leading a sunny, carefree and very enviable existence. More than a machine built for living, this is a machine for lifestyle.

Interior designer Juli Hodgson laughs at the idea that the house, pool and ingeniously incorporated cabana must have been the object of long and arduous consideration. In fact, the original intention of Hodgson and husband David Thom had been to add on to the back of the post-war

bungalow they had purchased in Vancouver’s Shaughnessy neighbourhood. Then the planning department decided that the proposed addition extended the home six feet too near the back of the lot, stopping the project in its tracks.

With both time and budget constraints looming, Thom ended up completely redesigning the project over the course of a single weekend. Thom is a managing partner in the IBI Group, a large architectural firm, and spends considerable time master planning developments around the world. As much as any architectural training, he credits his experience in urban design with enabling him to quickly sketch out a building plan on a tricky, 160-foot deep property that rises some seven metres from street to back alley.

Having lived for several years in a beautiful but inward-looking traditional turn-of-the-century home, the couple agreed that connecting their



“The house utilizes the whole site, blending indoor and outdoor living, and going well beyond the walls to consider the site and landscaping and how these are used in lifestyle terms. I would love to come over for a champagne garden party!”

—RDA judge Cedric Burgers



“This house has style from floor to ceiling. The architecture is simple and strong; the interior design is the perfect balance of hip and liveable.”

—RDA judge Paul Lavoie

Clockwise from top: The corner windows in the bedroom completely open to the outside; the island has built-in display for Hodgson's pottery collection; the table was once a dark oak, but Hodgson lacquered it green. “I felt there was a enough wood in the place.”

lives to the outdoors was an overriding priority. Accordingly, living areas are mostly oriented toward the backyard, which is on the same grade as the house. A square, one-storey kitchen and great room (with partial basement and roof deck) lines up with the pool and cabana while an adjacent two-storey (plus basement) rectangle contains six bedrooms. Better ocean and mountain views would have been obtained by reversing the arrangement, but that would have blocked late afternoon and evening sunlight to the pool area. The same sun-loving ethic led to the use of numerous large windows, many of which open or disappear. For the most part, landscaping takes care of privacy concerns, leaving little need for window coverings.

Truly this is a study in contemporary best practices. Hodgson has used the home as a kind of

interior design laboratory, with forward-looking furniture choices and a wide and entertaining variety of bathroom schemes (there are seven). Meanwhile, three other IBI Group architects, Ian Pratt, Sean Best and Cameron Owen, pitched in with neat details. For all that, the aspects of the home that most please Hodgson are almost entirely site-related. She loves the way she can sit on the deck of the cabana, looking down the length of the pool, through the house and toward the leafy cityscape beyond. Similarly, seated in front of the gas fireplace, she can gaze along the surface of pool and lawn. Finally, from almost every window there is a view of lush greenery, an urban forest dotted with houses illustrating some of the greatest architectural hits of Vancouver's past 100 years. It's a roster to which this home can now be added. **wl**

Problem Solving 101

Most renovators have problems. Designers like David Thom and Juli Hodgson merely have challenges.

Challenge Hodgson wanted white cabinetry for the kitchen but knew it would chip or discolour.

Solution The cabinets are faced with ultra-durable back-painted glass installed on aluminum brackets.

Challenge School-age kids defy all organizational principles when putting stuff in the fridge.

Solution Separate fridge drawers from Sub-Zero each has a specific purpose, such as holding cheese or beverages.

Challenge Flooring surfaces used elsewhere in the home seemed too hard for a basement playroom.

Solution Seagrass flooring from Colin Campbell is environmentally sound, cushions like carpet and smells like a freshly mowed meadow.