

SUMMER 2015

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MODERN VIEWPOINT

STORY **MARY HATT**
PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON HARTOG**
FOOD STYLING **STEEL GRILL CATERING**

It's not every day a cottage in steel, glass and concrete goes up on the Lake Huron shore. Contemporary design is still considered a bold move and, although gaining popularity, remains unusual for these parts. However, modern architecture makes a stunning statement and, as one London couple has found, their new place provides a haven for rest and relaxation, too.



One of the pair had spent childhood summers nearby. More recently, he and his wife had rented in the area and that holiday led to a chance peek at pictures in the window of a local real estate office. A few days later they were scouting available properties with a realtor. When they came upon a lot that was twice as wide as the area's typical 75-foot beach frontages, and protected by an unbuildable ravine on one side, they were sold. Being at the dead end of the access road was a bonus.

Before they could remove the existing A-frame home from the property, the owners faced a slew of regulations from the local conservation authority dealing with erosion protection and waste water management. They provided an engineered slope stability study and worked with the authorities to satisfy setback requirements. Fortunately, dense cedar growth on the bank descending from the height of the property to the lake made their land quite stable.

Architect **Brad Skinner** of **Skinner Architects** worked his plans to comply with the stringent guidelines. Those plans also evolved from key words the owners had noted in a wish list: "striking," "low-maintenance," "big and open (but not too big)," "easy access to outside." Brad developed blueprints for a modular structure in the form of two light-filled rectangular boxes, one cantilevered on the other, with views to Lake Huron through windowed walls on both levels and many access points to the rustically landscaped outdoor living space. *Continued on page 20*

ABOVE: Industrial-style exterior finishes on the upper level contrast intriguingly with the rustic warmth of Wiarton stone on the main level. **RIGHT:** Architect Brad Skinner and his signature floating, glass-walled stairway. **OPPOSITE:** Bright and glossy blue kitchen cabinetry (Starry Night by Benjamin Moore) and warm wood and leather Italian dining table and chairs (Quantum) mix nicely with grey, glass and concrete for a sophisticated finish. Pendant fixtures are from Living Lighting.





One side of the 2,400 sq. ft. cottage is an open-concept living area anchored by an indoor-outdoor fireplace (**Guildwood Lighting & Fireside**) that is surrounded by a wall of Wiarton stone at one end (**Tri-County Brick** installed by **Andrew Kinsman**), dining area in the middle and a kitchen on the other end. Further along the main level are a den, a bathroom and a handy elevator to the second floor for those not wanting to climb the glass and wood stairway (wood stair treads by **Wood Concepts**).

Jennifer Sanders of **GCW Custom Kitchens & Cabinetry Inc.** was hired to consult on many interior built-in features, and worked with her clients in selecting hues and finishes to complement the abundance of grey and glass throughout the cottage, notably the expansive polished concrete floor (BNE Contractors Inc.).

“The owners wanted lots of colour,” Jennifer says, adding that many shades were inspired by a vibrant woven place mat they had purchased in Peru.

Lambeth Painting Inc. was hired to paint the walls. The owners decided on a rich red for the den. Vivid iris blue was chosen for an upstairs bathroom and laundry room, and shades that mimic Lake Huron’s ever-changing blue-greens and greys have gone on bedroom walls. Bright, glossy blue cabinetry in the kitchen delivers the biggest colour punch of all.

The kitchen is sleek and minimal. There are glass backsplash tiles by **Centura Flooring London** and an Italian-style range hood by Zephyr. **London Major Appliances** supplied the hood as well as the dishwasher, range and refrigerator.

Minimalist interiors require lots of storage space; as Jennifer puts it, “beautiful white quartz counters should be left uncluttered.”

With that in mind, she took advantage of the room’s high ceilings to install extra-tall cupboards. She then planted a pull-out pantry beside the fridge and added a butler’s pantry behind the kitchen for preparing beverages and storing small appliances and extras. GCW also installed silent, self-closing drawers to minimize noise in the largely open space.

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TOP LEFT: The indoor-outdoor fireplace invites cosy conversation on the covered terrace just off the living room. **LEFT:** The owners were committed to rich wall colour, such as Chipotle Paste (Behr) in the den. Leather chair and loveseat are from Austin & Taylor Home Furnishings Inc.



Floor-to-ceiling windows and six sets of sliding glass doors effortlessly connect the cottage interior to its surrounding landscape. Rich leather plus decorative touches in earthy orange complement stone and concrete around the living room hearth. **BELOW LEFT:** GCW’s custom millwork included a textured melamine that mimics driftwood in one of the bathrooms. The wall colour is Dark Iris (Behr). **BELOW MIDDLE:** In one upstairs bedroom, the owners selected Tasmanian Aqua (Behr) to capture an elusive Lake Huron blue. **BELOW RIGHT:** Kelsey Catcher (left) and Jennifer Sanders of GCW Custom Kitchens & Cabinetry Inc.





LEFT: Engineered ceramic tile and gleaming glass create a sleek walk-in shower in the master bathroom. **MIDDLE LEFT:** Subtle contemporary touches continue in the master bath with a suspended vanity (GCW), streamlined hardware and HanStone™ quartz counter top. **BOTTOM LEFT:** The owners' Ekornes Stressless recliner (Austin & Taylor Home Furnishings Inc.) is a favourite spot for rest, relaxation and taking in the view from the master bedroom. **BOTTOM:** Integrated cabinetry in the master bedroom and built-in headboard and night tables keep the look minimal without compromising on function.

GCW crafted millwork elsewhere in the cottage, too, with Jennifer making sure to involve the same contemporary flair: suspended vanities in the main floor and master bathrooms and an integrated, stained maple headboard with strips of stainless and under-lit floating night tables in the master bedroom, as well as glossy, white built-in closets and drawers.

Pro Electric Inc. handled the mechanical and electrical work in the cottage as well as supplying bathroom and kitchen plumbing fixtures chosen by the owners. The owners selected engineered ceramic tiles (supplied by Centura London/installed by **Bernardo Group Ltd.**) for their glass showers, one of which is a Fleurco system.

Outside, a louvered overhang between the two cottage levels on the western exterior adds sun protection while providing visual interest.

"I love incorporating the rhythm and movement of nature," Brad says of the beams of sunlight that stream through the cross pieces of the structure and repeat like "stepping stones" on the floor. "This design was very much about light patterns, transparency and openness."

Hardscaping in Permacon stone (**Dan**

Rathwell of Gold Coast Landscaping

Supply and Garden Centre) wraps around the cottage while many sliding glass doors allow breezy in-out access. **Brian Deveau** of **Green With Envy** finished off the exterior with low-maintenance plants and ground cover that frame and soften the grey aluminium and walnut-stained Prodeema wood exterior panels. (Aluminum and wood panels, sliding doors, exterior doors and stairway glass and rail were all supplied by Westmount Storefront Systems Ltd.)

The owners, who managed the project themselves, looked after hiring their building trades and were impressed by their enthusiasm and competence. Many were not used to working with concrete and steel but were up to the challenge, nonetheless.

"**C.D. Drywall & Acoustics Ltd.** did a wonderful job working with the unique angles of the floor plan, with the excellent assistance of our site manager Peter Carson," the owner says.

He adds that he and his wife thoroughly enjoyed the experience, as well. "I have lived in old houses all my life," he says, "but I've always loved modern design, too. Here was an opportunity to go for it." **OH**

