

SCOTT BROWN

FROM ILLUSTRATOR



Top: The solid exterior structure was created through a massing of the strong stone corners and a simple material palette of stone and stucco.

Above Left: From the front entrance and throughout the home, a reliance on natural materials infuses Skinner's modern design with texture and warmth.

Above Centre: Floor-to-ceiling windows from the family room overlook an outdoor patio.

Above Right: Two frosted glass walls enclose the shower in the ensuite bathroom.

Left: A computer rendering of the front elevation of the home. The Hopper home was designed by Brad Skinner of Skinner & Skinner Architects.

Below: A unique room divider of rich walnut doubles as a headboard and night stand unit.
Right: The kitchen overlooks a sunken family room.
Bottom: A cathedral ceiling, large windows and a floor-to-ceiling fireplace give the family room a strong sense of space and light.



TO HOME BUILDER

AN ARTISTIC EVOLUTION

By Christopher Clark

Scott Brown knows the number by heart. He moved 22 times as a child, travelling with his family when his dad's computer industry job required a move.

So, did all that moving make him a sedentary adult? Far from it.

In the last six years, Brown and his wife, Karen, have moved eight times. His moves were also job-related, although he's never been transferred as his father was. Instead, Brown began renovating and flipping London homes, earning a living while honing his skills.

Two years ago, he jumped from renovating homes to building them. He created Brownstone Homes and immediately began building uniquely beautiful homes in and around London.

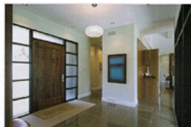
Brown, 46, is an illustrator by trade, having studied in Toronto and Albany, N.Y. His work – both renovations and new homes – reveals an art school influence, an attention to detail that clients notice and appreciate.

"My first renovation was for myself," he says. "When people saw what I had done to my home, they liked the style of what I did and they asked me to work on their homes. That's how my business grew. It's the same thing with building. People like what they see and ask me to work for them."

Brown works alone, contracting with trusted trades as he needs them. He tackles three or four projects a year, giving clients his full attention through the entire process of planning and construction.

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Four photos above:
The four photos above show the different views from within the foyer. The entrance faces a glass wall that overlooks a patio with an outdoor fireplace.

Left: A computer rendering of the home's rear elevation.

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On a warm spring day last month, he sat down in one of his homes to talk about his business and his vision. The home belongs to Lesley and Colin Hopper and is nestled along the Thames River, down a private lane off Riverside Drive, west of Wonderland Road.

Designed by Brad Skinner of Skinner & Skinner Architects, it represents an evolution of some of Skinner's work at Waterstone Place, also along the river, next to Thames Valley golf course. It won the City of London Urban Design Award and inspired Skinner's work for the Hoppers.

"Brad's awesome," says Brown. "Some architects don't like to make any changes, but as we went along we worked with him to change some things that worked for the owners' lifestyle."

The stone-and-stucco home takes full advantage of its location near the river, with large windows along the entire rear elevation, which encompasses a sunken family room off the kitchen, as well as a dining room and a master bedroom retreat. The kitchen, with its off-white hydrofoil cabinets, walnut woodwork and quartz countertops, is the literal and figurative centre of the home.

A cathedral ceiling with beams that stretch from side to side gives the kitchen and family room a strong sense of space and light. The beams conceal potlights, as well as uplighting for dramatic night-time effects.

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"The Hoppers like to entertain, and this central area – the kitchen and family room – are the ideal place to do that," Brown says.

Throughout the 2,400-square-foot main level, the floors are a combination of rich walnut hardwood and taupe-coloured limestone tiles, which reveal the fossilized remains of ancient creatures. The home's reliance on natural materials infuses Skinner's modern design with texture and warmth.

From the front of the home, floating stairs lead to the lower level. The 1,000-square-foot area features a cosy and modern guest suite with its own access to the backyard, which overlooks woods along the banks of the river.

The lower level also houses the hub of the home's audio/visual and smart automation systems. With speakers throughout the home, the system is built to connect to an iPod or other music source, sending music to any or all rooms. The system was installed by Multi Media Systems and also includes a custom home theatre system in the main-floor family room.

To top it off, the automation system incorporates security, temperature, lighting and audio controls – all accessible remotely as required.

As he leads a visitor on a tour of the home, Brown points out a dozen or more subtle features – elements that clients may not even think about during the planning phase. The steel rollers that suspend and move the custom glass and walnut door in the master bedroom were imported from Germany and allow the door to glide smoothly with virtually no effort.

"I like doing research for my clients, and I always try to achieve the look they want while saving money in the process," Brown notes. "They appreciate that."

The Browns are busy people. Karen owns Custom Cuisine Catering Ltd., which she purchased a year ago after the death of her friend and mentor, J.P. Baillargeon, in May 2006.

Her hectic schedule has her treating home as more of an oasis now and, so, says Scott, the couple's chances of moving again anytime soon are remote.

"We have a home we like just off Upper Queen, near the Highland golf club. We have some renovations we'd like to do there, of course, but they are at the bottom of the list of priorities," he says with a laugh. ■

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