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feature

LIGHT *and* LINE

STORY MARY HATT
PHOTOGRAPHY JASON HARTOG



Black industrial-style beams, a two-storey window and stunning fixture from Guildwood Lighting & Fireside pack a punch in the dining room. **LEFT:** Unique siding materials make a defining statement and the vertical architectural lines are, in Brad's words, "uplifting."

THIS HEAD-TURNING CONTEMPORARY HOUSE ON A SHADY BLOCK IN LONDON'S OLD NORTH WAS ONCE A SIMPLE BRICK STRUCTURE JUST LIKE MANY OTHERS SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE NEIGHBOURHOOD. AT 100 YEARS OLD AND WELL LIVED-IN, THE HOUSE WAS ALSO UNDENIABLY RUN-DOWN.

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“WORKING WITH THE FORMS OF THE EXISTING HOUSE IS WHAT MADE IT MAGICAL.”

– Bradley Skinner

The sleek, integrated kitchen forms a central gathering place in the home. **OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT:** A farmhouse sink works beautifully as a component of the waterfall island. A pantry wall and built-in beverage fridge opposite the prep area ensure the kitchen is both functional and stylish.



ABOVE: The main-floor powder room features a soapstone sink and countertop, backlit mirror and rustic wood base.

BELOW: Bradley Skinner of Skinner Architects and Andrew Dawe of Halcyon Homes relax in a sitting area overlooking the great room.



Nevertheless, its humble shape was architect **Bradley Skinner's** inspiration for the place now home to Kelly and Jason Parker.

“Working with the forms of the existing house is what made it magical,” **Skinner Architects'** principal says. After a total gut inside, Bradley recalls, “It was just a shell, but a shell that had some character.”

Character, maybe. Construction challenges, most definitely.

“We had to ask, is this even possible?” remembers homebuilder **Andrew Dawe** of **Halcyon Homes**, a London Home Builders' Association finalist for an Award of Creative Excellence for this project. Andrew recalls the prospect of removing the whole foundation from underneath in order to achieve a basement that would be useable. Later in the course of the renovation, the building team had to figure out a way to get heavy structural beams into the house by hand.

The shape of the house is reminiscent of the original, but its new exterior takes a strikingly different direction. In search of a product that looks like wood minus its maintenance requirements, Jason opted for Gentek Longboard for a smart wood-grain finish in lightweight extruded aluminum (**Dyck Exterior Installations**). Hardie board panels framing the new gable ends, a black roof and accents (**Convoy Supply Ltd.**) and black anodized aluminum windows and front door (**London Glass & Mirror**) create a sleek exterior. A simple landscape by **Disher's Landscaping Ltd.** and hardscapes by **PMC Concrete** complete the look.

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feature

RIGHT: A “cut-in” to the ceiling between the kitchen and great room creates extra natural light in the back portion of the narrow house. **MIDDLE:** The contemporary line of a bridge-style upper-level hallway counterpoints the rustic brick wall. **FAR RIGHT:** Homeowners Jason and Kelly Parker. **BELOW:** The great room blends a number of architectural details such as a dramatic stone fireplace surround, black steel beams, big-scale windows and reclaimed brick wall. Sleek porcelain tiles and wire-brushed wood floor add to the mix of components. The eight-foot sliding patio door in black anodized aluminium exits to a heated concrete patio.



Inside, Bradley’s architectural plans called for an extension of interior living space to the back of the house, augmenting its narrow shape, which now measures 65-feet long by just 20-feet wide.

Achieving a flow of natural light, therefore, became an important consideration. Bradley established what he calls “moments of light” in key areas to form a sense of airy openness throughout.

These moments are the result of cut-ins to the main floor ceiling at three different spots: one in the dining room where there is now a dramatic two-storey window, one between the kitchen and great room where the exterior wall of the house used to be, and a third at the back of the new great room. Bradley adds these cut-ins – instead of a more expansive two-storey ceiling – allow openness without compromising on a sense of shelter. The moments offered him an economy of space, creating opportunity on the home’s second level for the master bedroom to have a loft-like overlook to the great room at one end and a glass-walled bridge at the other that connects to the rest of the second floor.

The home’s original bricks, painstakingly cleaned by Kelly’s son, now make a feature wall between the kitchen and the drop-down great room where a Montigo fireplace ([Copperline Hearth & Home](#)) with custom black-and-grey stone surround ([Casey’s](#), stone division) takes centre stage.

The great room’s brick wall adds rustic warmth, complementing contemporary elements like exposed black iron beams and the glossy kitchen, featuring cabinets by [Martin Jesko Custom Cabinetry](#), quartz and granite countertops and waterfall island by [Progressive Countertop](#), fixtures by [London Bath Centre](#) and hardware from [North Pole Trim & Supplies Ltd.](#)

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Also blending rustic with contemporary, flooring choices for the home include wire-brushed blonde wood (supplied by **Moore Flooring + Design** and installed by **RKS Design and Build Renovations**) and oversize grey porcelain tiles (supplied by **Centura London** and installed by RKS). **RB Plumbing** was responsible for radiant in-floor heat on the main and lower levels, as well as in the driveway, outdoor stairs and back patio. RB also completed the plumbing throughout the house.

A custom glass-walled stairway (**Brandao Carpentry Ltd.** and **CW Welding & Custom Fab Ltd.**) in grey-stained white oak and painted steel leads to the lower level, where there's a bedroom and media room, and to the home's compact but carefully planned upper level. Here, there's a cosy guest room, a long hallway of useful closets behind sliding doors (supplied by North Pole and installed by RKS), laundry room and, of course, the master suite. *Continued on page 54*



A guest room occupies the front part of the upper level, its vaulted ceiling adding volume to a small space. **LEFT:** Sliding doors are a practical way to cover storage closets and add dramatic detail to the hallway into the master suite. **ABOVE:** The stairway's glass panel is one piece instead of the more usual three. It was an installation challenge but one that rendered a smooth, clean finish.



ABOVE: The master suite includes a powder room featuring a free-standing marble sink with black steel base and exposed plumbing pipes.



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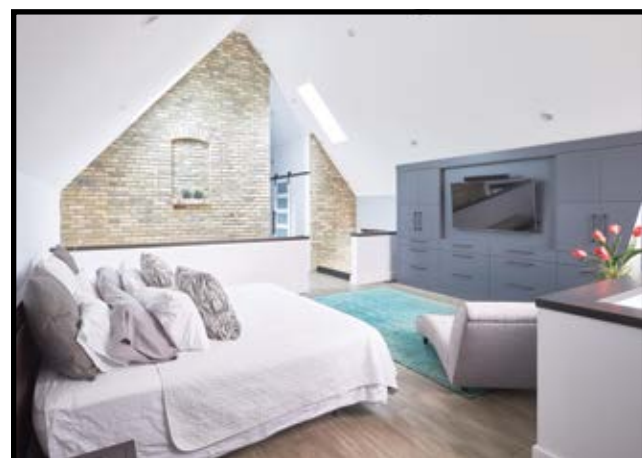
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The master bathroom features vanities by Casey's, countertops by Progressive and plumbing fixtures by London Bath. The master bedroom is all about light, line and openness, with dramatic detailing from the home's two-storey brick wall, grey painted oak built-ins (Casey's) and the overlooks to the floor below.

Audio/video and security by **Blu Signal Audio**, electrical by **Total Electric Solutions** and heating and cooling by **H & C Solutions** finish off a checklist of special features. And while the home may not exactly be a new build, Andrew adds, "It certainly performs like a new house." **OH**



TOP: Custom-built by Casey's to fit into the slope of the pitched ceiling, the large armoire also houses a big-screen TV making the master bedroom a serious relaxation zone. Paint throughout is Benjamin Moore's Pearl White. **ABOVE:** The reclaimed brick wall dividing the master bedroom from the rest of the upper level creates an artistic line that accentuates the room's peaked ceiling and complements the asymmetrical window on the opposite wall. **RIGHT:** The master bathroom, smartly tiled in charcoal grey with fresh white fixtures and countertop, features a double-sink floating vanity with clever u-shaped drawers that fit around plumbing.

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