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Summer Issue



A HARD ACT TO FOLLOW

This dramatic home, built by Red Design + Build, is a true showpiece — both inside and out.

By Lisa van de Geyn
Photography by Ryan Fung

The grey Italian porcelain on the fireplace wall is the same material used in the moody kitchen.

Derrick Robinson, the founder of Red Design + Build, a Toronto-based design and construction firm, couldn't have imagined what he'd be up against when he started building this Etobicoke home in December 2019. The tear-down-and-rebuild project was finished this spring, but not before COVID-19 wreaked havoc on Robinson's plans. "We did this house in the midst of the pandemic and we had to pivot — we quickly adapted to supply-chain shortages, closures and had to procure what we needed as fast as we could," he says. "But we did it and what we created was a visually stunning home that the homeowner always wanted to build." ▶



TOP: Wood is used as an accent throughout, and there are custom built-ins in the dining room.

ABOVE: The kitchen is dramatic and dark, with gorgeous hints of gold.

This 5,000-square-foot, four-bedroom home was designed to suit the homeowner's needs and his specific list of desired details. "He didn't want any wood on the exterior — he wanted something that would be easy to maintain and manage. He also requested tile in the kitchen — not the engineered hardwood that runs through the rest of the home. One of the key things he asked for was to create bedrooms that would almost act as hotel rooms — each with a sitting area and desk space — for his grown children to feel comfortable in. He also wanted to be set up for entertainment — he enjoys hosting friends and family," Robinson explains. "The homeowner is a past client, so I understood his style. He knew how he wanted to use the space and we collaborated back and forth during the build."

Robinson and his team were vital in every aspect of the job. The exterior architectural design of this modern-style home was done by Marin Zabzuni, the founder and owner of Toronto-based architectural design firm Contempo Studio, and the interiors were done by RZ Interiors. "This home is designed like a man in a well-tailored suit with a nice gold watch. It's as custom as it gets," says Robinson. "It has many dark, dramatic elements that pair perfectly with gold accents." ▶





LEFT: The home's façade was designed by Marin Zabzuni of Contempo Studio.

BELOW: The house was designed for a gentleman and his adult sons and daughter, so it's spacious and has a more masculine vibe.



Take the kitchen. This is a dark, moody space, with grey Italian porcelain on the wall and matching dark-grey cabinetry, but it has shiny gold accents, such as the faucet and light fixtures above the island. "It's very dramatic and this was done purposely. It's a very masculine space — the homeowner has three sons — but it's also female-friendly for his daughter," he says. The same tile in the kitchen is used on the wall in the family room where the fireplace is for added impact and continuity. "The family room is where everyone comes together when the homeowner is cooking. It's comfortable and spacious, and brings in elements from other rooms, such as the wood built-ins."

Upstairs, the vision for the second floor was to lighten things up. The master bedroom is bright and airy — it's hotel chic. That's a style that carries on into the other three bedrooms. "They're all set up to look like a hotel room. You could imagine the details — such as the separating wall in the master — in a really posh hotel. The homeowner's adult children each have sitting areas and desks in their spaces, which works well for them." The ensuite off the master is sexy — it's dramatic without being overwhelming, with porcelain covering the floor and porcelain slabs on the wall.

Perhaps the centrepiece of the home, though, is the exposed staircase. "Instead of it being behind a wall, we wanted to open it up and let it flow. The staircase is in the centre of the home and the glass that surrounds it really heightens the drama. It also allows so much light to come through. It's a central feature," Robinson says.

While the staircase is the interior's showpiece, there's no denying the exterior is the showpiece of the neighbourhood. Robinson sourced the stone and brick and the team opted for a very dark façade but added a light stone to contrast the overall look and feel. They then placed ACM panels horizontally, which adds to the visual interest of the house. "What's more," says Robinson, "the windows are huge. We did this purposely. Not only do they bring the outside in and create plenty of natural light, but they also make the decor and homeowners part of the overall design and artwork. It's no secret that passersby can look directly into the home during the day and admire the design." **11**

