

CLEAR VISION

The Marc Boutin Architectural Collaborative builds a private sanctuary where every square inch has been carefully considered.

BY KAREN ASHBEE PHOTOGRAPHY BY JARED SYCH

Great design can be a study in juxtaposition and this family home by The Marc Boutin Architectural Collaborative is certainly a testament to that idea. “We knew the project would involve two very conflicting values. While the couple insisted on absolute privacy, at the same time they wanted lots of light and to access the views,” says Boutin. “The inherent gift of the site allowed us to address both concerns to create such a sanctuary.”

The lot features a hill that slopes approximately 10 feet across its depth. Boutin embedded the main floor of the house into the hillside. This left the upstairs visible to the neighborhood and created a space that could be completely open with windows at the back of the lot while at the same time maintaining a very high level of privacy.

In addition, the homeowners stipulated absolutely no stucco, wasted space, or extraneous details. They were sure the home had to have not only a dedicated place for their pet tortoises, but that it should be a focal point of the whole home — an indoor green space for their beloved pets that not only functioned as an enclosure, but that also looked great.



“THE TORTOISE COURT DEFINES THE CIRCULATION OF THE LOWER LEVEL.”

MARC BOUTIN

In fact, when they had started looking for a local architect, Boutin’s modernist design credentials spoke to the homeowners, but it was the fact that he was involved in the design of the Edmonton Zoo that sealed the deal. Sure enough, at an initial meeting Boutin drew up a design that was not only appealing to the homeowners but also empathetic to the needs of their pets.

“The tortoise court defines the circulation of the lower level of the house,” he says. “From there the rooms flow seamlessly around it.”

Much of the home is restrained to whites and greys. A volcanic grey concrete floor runs throughout the entire home. Not only is it family friendly and easy to clean, but it also strikes an industrial urban note. The striking grey and white marble of the kitchen counter is repeated in all of the bathrooms’ counters, floors and walls upstairs and down. Wood elements in the dining and living room add a welcome warmth to the palette of bare concrete and white walls.

As the owners enjoy preparing meals together and are both over six feet in height, the kitchen island stretches over 11 feet and Boutin added three inches to the standard counter height. The refrigerator, freezer and microwave are tucked away behind a separate quartz counter with a pass through featuring ample workspace in addition to a dedicated coffee nook. Boutin and his team have eliminated clutter with an abundance of cupboard space throughout.

Upstairs a similar stripped-down aesthetic prevails. Sleek contemporary built-ins, a custom-designed mahogany bed by Boutin and Stickbulb sconces in the main bedroom contribute to the minimalist air of the space. There is a notable absence of knick-knacks.

In the end though, one of the most impressive elements in the home is the abundance of both natural light and privacy. The homeowners note that during the day they almost never have to turn the lights on.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP This focal point in the home exemplifies the delicate interplay of stone, wood and glass throughout.

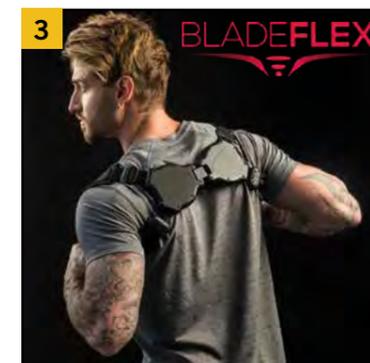
The warm woodwork at the entryway was part of a house-wide collaboration between the architects and Calmark Cabinetry and Woodworking.

The tortoise atrium was built to exacting specifications and features separate plumbing, heating and irrigation.

The private but light-soaked living room is outfitted primarily with elegant Knoll furniture. A whimsical Moooi carpet featuring sea creatures adds a pop of colour.

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KEEPING IT MODERN

Creating a comfortable yet streamlined modern environment tops many a design wish list. A hallmark of architect Marc Boutin's projects, here are a few of his tips for the look.

USE FEWER COMPETING ELEMENTS

Create a soothing setting by combining a single monochromatic neutral colour palette with light woods and seamless flooring for a consistent look throughout. The simple dark grey metal staircase here is in keeping with the modern look.



EMBRACE NATURAL MATERIALS AND LET THEIR FLAWS SHINE

"We ascribe more authenticity to natural materials," says Boutin. "They have more of a timeless quality because of their authenticity."

REDUCE DAY-TO-DAY CLUTTER

Lots of storage space is a must for a modern look. For example, wall-to-wall closets with built-in dressers and shelves keep everything in its place and out of sight.



OPEN UP AND CONNECT

The kitchen, living and dining room are all open to one another. "This nuanced openness allows for multifunctional spaces which facilitates choice in whether we use the space formally or informally," explains Boutin. "A much more modern concept in keeping with the way we live now." 



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

The sky-lit atrium organizes the upper level into two distinct sides. The matching planters on the patio were fabricated by local company Mercedes and Singh.

The luxurious but low-key kitchen features a marble-clad island and Skan pendants by Vibia. Barely-there hardware suits the minimalist aesthetic.

The ensuite bathroom has a crisp, clean look. The sinks are by Catalano and the towels are from Parachute.

The custom chandelier in reclaimed ebonized oak by Stickbulb paired with the walnut table from Made Design evokes a clean aesthetic.



SOURCE

Architecture and home design by **The Marc Boutin Architectural Collaborative**, 100, 205 9 Ave. S.E., 403-261-9050, the-mbac.ca

Custom millwork throughout by **Calmark Cabinetry and Woodworking**, 1323 43 Ave. S.E., 403-276-7399

Aluminum gate custom fabricated by **Mercedes and Singh**, 612 36 Ave. N.E., 587-889-5511, mercedesandsingh.com

Landscaping by **Shamrock Mountain Building**, 1628 15 Ave. S.W., 587-350-9902, shamrockmtnbuilding.com

Custom bent-steel stairs fabricated by **Mercedes and Singh**

Island countertop is frozen grey marble from **Hari Stones**, 1112 and 1118 46 Ave. S.E., 403-229-9666, haristones-limited.com

Frameless glass enclosure installed by **Thermal Aluminum & Glass**, 20, 1410 40 Ave. N.E., 403-451-5443, tagyyc.com

Tortoise enclosure plant design and irrigation system by **Shamrock Mountain Building**

Curtainwall is Alumicor ThermoWall TW2200 installed by **Thermal Aluminum & Glass**

Florence Knoll sofa from **Knoll**, U.S.A., knoll.com

Womb chair and ottoman from **Knoll**

Bertoia Diamond chair with full cover from **Knoll**

Klaus Haapaniemi rug from **Moooi Carpets**, Netherlands, mooicarpets.com

Nelson Platform Bench from **Herman Miller**, U.S.A., hermanmiller.com

Tolomeo Mega floor lamp (with parchment shade) from **Artemide**, Italy, artemide.com

Case Study Ceramics XL cylinder with stand from **Modernica**, U.S.A., modernica.net

Glass guard rail installed by **Thermal Aluminum & Glass**

Curtainwall is Alumicor RainBlade 1900 installed by **Thermal Aluminum & Glass**

Custom aluminum planters fabricated by **Mercedes and Singh**

Custom three-truss chandelier from **Stickbulb**, U.S.A., stickbulb.com

Dew trivet by **Objecthood** for Skultuna, Sweden, skultana.com

Bevel-edged dining table by **Made Design**, Toronto, madedesign.ca

Eames molded fiberglass chairs from **Herman Miller**

Ensuite washroom sinks from **Catalano**, Italy, catalano.it

Towels from **Parachute**, U.S.A., parachutehome.com

Posh chrome faucet by **Blanco**, Ontario, blanco.com

Skan pendant lights from **Vibia**, Spain, vibia.com

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