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HOME OF THE WEEK

Home of the Week: A designer's house, filled with

TORONTO
PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 16, 2020
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21 Clarendon Ave., Toronto

Asking Price: \$4.448-million

Taxes: \$8,503.80 (2020)

Lot Size: 32 feet by 80 feet

Listing Agent: Shane Carslake, Royal Lepage Real Estate Services Ltd.

A little more than two years ago, interior designer Montana Labelle and her husband, Russell Gozlan (owner of home-construction company Gozlan

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Group), were looking for something different after starting their married life in a loft apartment.

"We were looking for a project for us; something unique that had an L.A. vibe," Ms. Labelle said. And while 21 Clarendon was a little unusual and suffering from some previous bad renovations, "we fell in love with the curved windows," Ms. Labelle said. "It's the perfect house to make a masterpiece."



Planted cedars lend privacy to the back yard.

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The previous owner had obtained permission to put an addition on the back of the house, and so Mr. Gozlan's first job was to rip off the back wall and bump out the three-level addition to add close to 10 more feet in length.

Ms. Labelle's studio does about eight to 10 home projects a year, but with her own home she wanted to push and try out new techniques she wouldn't insist a client spend their time and money on to road test. As a result, the house has some high-end finishes that are well beyond your typical renovator's playbook. "It's kind of a testing ground for what we want to do in our clients' homes," Ms. Labelle said.



The home's drapes run on integrated tracks that are cut into the ceiling.

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"One of my favourite things is the integrated drapery tracks; with drapery it's either on a decorative rod or on a KS-track," Ms. Labelle says. That means, open or closed, you'll see some of that hardware. Integrated tracks are cut into the drywall on the ceiling and mounted flush so the curtains appear to hang in mid-air. "It's the first time I tried doing that in a project. That was one of my things I absolutely adored."

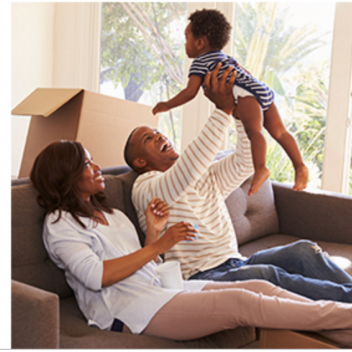
"There are no baseboards, which is different and cool; I had never seen that



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done except for on Pinterest,” Ms. Labelle said. Baseboards can be decorative, but their primary purpose is to hide any flaws in the joint between floor and wall. "When you do details like this, it gives you much less room for error. It took an extra three or four weeks. My husband said, 'I'm never doing this again, just so you know.'



The home features no baseboards, a design choice that risks exposing any flaws where the flooring meets the walls.

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“This house was an experiment, but I’m a whip-cracker: anytime my husband said ‘this isn’t going to work’ we made it work. These tiny little details we were super-persistent on getting done make it more interesting and unique.”

The house today

The façade of the house is cool and white with black-trimmed windows. Up a short flight of concrete steps the entry foyer sits on a landing between the lower level and the main floor.

The plan is open, but because there’s a chimney that runs through centre of the house the couple decided to make a feature of this and box-in both the chimney and some of the bulkheads running from the basement. On the side facing the stairs they added a bookshelf, on the front side facing the huge sectional is a fireplace with a flat-screen TV mounted flush with the wall above it. Leaving a column in the centre of a space may not be ideal, but here “it was a happy mistake,” Ms. Labelle said.



This Calcutta-marble dining room table was the first piece Ms. Labelle designed for the home.

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Ms. Labelle describes her aesthetic as “lived-in modern,” or “cozy modern,” meaning clean lines and uncluttered spaces, but rich fabrics and textures to add warmth. Examples of her home products line are all over, but this level is dominated by the first piece she designed for the house: a massive brown-and-white Calcutta marble dining room table (the picture of “dining tables” on her website is of this table with her Pierre Jeanneret Chandigarh chair tucked in). “It became the centrepiece for our everyday lives, especially now,” and she spends most of her working days at this table. “We’re pretty well known for our marble items; this marble [type] is showing up again in the design community.” If a buyer loves it she might be willing to part with it. She recalls it took 12 to 14 men to move the massive slab into the house.



The kitchen is separated from the dining area by a large island with a Caesarstone top.

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“Before COVID we had a lot of dinner parties. We really wanted a space where we could entertain,” Ms. Labelle said. The floor is open in an L-shape from the living room to a dining space that turns to the kitchen separated by a generous island with Caesarstone top.

There is a powder room on this floor, but it’s virtually invisible in the floor plan, tucked between the pantry wall off the kitchen, backing into the stairwell.

The new back wall is filled with windows and there’s a door to a 7-foot-deep and 27-foot-wide sun-deck that looks over the backyard.



The rear wall is filled with windows that look onto the backyard.

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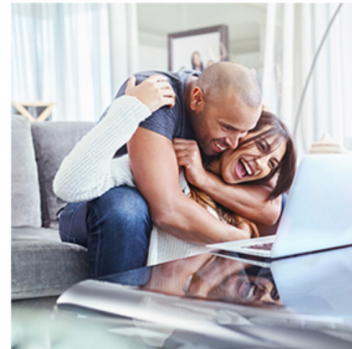
The kitchen is Mr. Gozlan’s domain – Ms. Labelle said she likes to stretch out on the couch while he cooks. Downstairs is Mr. Gozlan’s other sphere of influence: “My husband said, ‘All I really want is a comfortable area to play video games.’” and so she designed him an “elegant man-cave” where he can



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hang with his bros. The room is done in cooling beige tones and whites, fireplace in the corner, leather couches opposite the big screen TV. There's a three-piece bath with shower and laundry around the corner with access to the garage. A wall of windows and a walk-out look onto a garden with artificial turf for their jumbo dog, a massive retaining wall and planted cedars for privacy. Stuck at home like most of us, they've taken to doing family workouts back here.



The bedroom walls are finished with Venetian plaster.

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Up on the second floor the floor plans will tell you it's a three-bedroom, but the second bedroom facing the street is used as the office. This level features another experiment: Venetian plaster on the walls in all the bedrooms.

"We did our bedroom in it at first," as a trial said Ms. Labelle. "As soon as that was done I said we have to do the other rooms. There's so many things you can do with it," she said. "It feels more like tile; it's cold and smooth; it's a lot more durable than drywall. With paint you have to redo it: with plaster you never have to touch it again."



The master suite's bathroom has a glassed-in shower and a soaker tub.

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The master bedroom takes up close to two-thirds of the back half of the house, with a massive walk-in closet just to the right of the doorway. The plaster here is white, and there's a sliding pocket door on the left to the shallow but wide ensuite bath. The glassed-in shower is on the north side and a soaker tub is on the south. Grey and white Carrara marble tiles on the floor wrap around the walls in the shower. From the landing in the master's bath, you can

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run up the walls in the shower, form the basins in the custom-built vanity in the middle and run under the modernist white soaker tub. A floor-to-ceiling window faces the yard. The vanity has matte-black wall-mounted plumbing and the medicine cabinets are hidden behind the mirrors, which are flush-mounted to the wall.



The third bedroom's ensuite features darker marble.

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The third bedroom is a comfy modern guest suite with two closets, continuing the dominant decor theme but with a darker marble in its own ensuite bathroom.

The market


Ms. Labelle and agent Shane Carslake think the potential buyer could be someone looking for an urban condo alternative. “There was a recent sale in the Four Seasons, about the exact square footage, it sold for \$7.1-million; this home is \$4.488-million,” Mr. Carslake said. “South Hill has some real big mansions – one listed for close to \$15-million – but it’s a neighbourhood that’s not as well known as Forest Hill; it’s one of the ones that’s not a catchphrase. People like it because it’s right off Avenue Road and still a walk to the shops in Summerhill.”

“I think its one of those homes that’s unique enough once it’s sold you won’t see it again,” Mr. Carslake said. “An alternative might be to hire Montana to do your house, but that takes a lot of time and patience. And you have to find a home that’s special enough to work with; she’s very picky. We’re looking for her next project now.”





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