

DESIGN ICONS

A new feature details how and why some pieces of furniture have become classics. *PH3*



TAYLOR_SMYTH ARCHITECTS

Hidden in the heart of Yorkville, this courtyard couldn't be more L.A.: Even the garage has a window so everyone can see the beautiful cars. A wall of glass rolls up to allow the living area to flow outdoors.

Conifers also lose leaves each fall

Not-so-colourful needles carpet forest floors

JANET DAVIS
In Bloom

Once met a University of Toronto botanist who, upon learning that I wrote about gardening, insisted I write a story on "the October complaint." I had no idea what it was.

I learned that early each autumn, the botany department gets calls from gardeners in a state of near-panic because their "pine trees are dying." They tell this botanist their pines have loads of needles that are turning yellow and dropping off. They then get the explanation that, yes, evergreens lose some of their oldest leaves every autumn, just like deciduous trees, and no, it doesn't mean they're turning up their toes and dying.

On the contrary, they're doing what they're genetically programmed to do, but in a more subtle way than the leaves of maples, birches and oaks, which drop from the tree in an annual blaze of colour.

Perhaps the alarmed callers don't spend much time in forests, where a thick carpet of pine or spruce needles often covers the ground under towering and obviously healthy conifers.

See CONIFERS on Page PH4

Adaptive reuse creates a sexy downtown home from an oft-morphed commercial building

The best courtyard in the country



KELVIN BROWNE
Right Angles

Michael Taylor, of Toronto-based Taylor_Smyth Architects, has a long-standing relationship with a unique building on Bishop Street, a cul-de-sac off Bay Street in Yorkville. This building has morphed a few times, from iron mongers, to a photography studio, to classy offices for a graphic design firm, and now it's an ultra-cool this-could-be-Los-Angeles house designed by Taylor_Smyth.

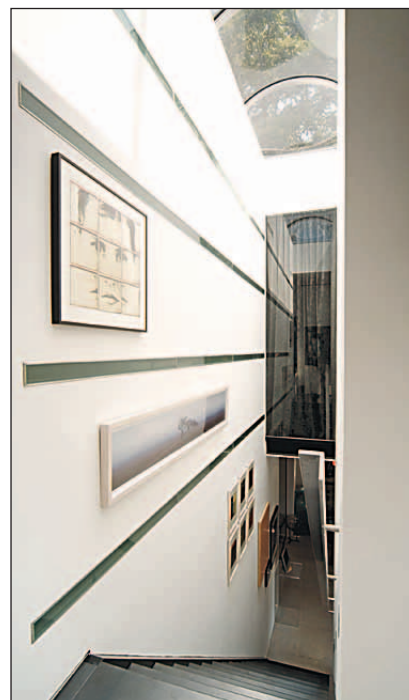
The conversion of the building to stylish, if austere, office space in 1985 by architect Barton Myers happened while Mr. Taylor was working in Myers' office. By 2003, Mr. Taylor had his own architectural practice and was reacquainted with the building when his client, developer Ken Zukerman, bought the property. Even though Mr. Taylor didn't work on the job in Myers' office, he admits to a "certain irony" in

being connected to two versions of the same structure. The Taylor_Smyth iteration was completed this year. Mr. Zukerman recently sold the house to move on to a new residential challenge working, of course, with the same architects.

The stark white box Barton Myers designed for the graphic design firm Gottschalk & Ash in 1985 fit its Swiss-perfect approach. Now it's difficult to remember that building. Today, it's clad in black zinc and oozes sensuality. But Mr. Taylor claims these superficial changes are not the most significant ones. "The building as an office didn't have a residential scale. It's not that the total size of the building was inappropriate but rather that the proportions had to change to make the office-to-home transformation."

Mr. Taylor says Mr. Zukerman collaborated on the project, and this was a good thing. "Ken was a driving force in the development of the design with us. We met almost daily to discuss ideas. During construction, the design continued to change and develop as the spaces took shape. He challenged us to try idea after idea, both inside and outside. He took an active role in the selection of all the fitments and fixtures."

The result is about as urban a house as you can get. The courtyard combines the L.A. icons of car and swimming pool — it has windows on the garage wall, so you see the owner's



car collection and a sleek pool that would look right in the Hollywood Hills. That said, it's a cultured, sophisticated L.A. style — it could well be the sexiest courtyard in Canada. The entire house is bold and not for the chintz-and-damask set; it's cutting-edge art, not hand-printed wallpaper, for these walls.

See BROWNE on Page PH9

GARDENS

SHOW ME SOME I.D.
You may think it's a maple, but it might actually be an imposter.

Page PH4

FLOOR PLANS

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

Our panel of critics is back with some smart 'n' sassy views. Page PH9

FOR SALE

LESLIEVILLE

It's part Victorian, part art deco; all updated. Page PH6



Set of waterfront cottages will eventually have their own winery. That's B.C. for you

Salt Spring Island in the Gulf Islands of British Columbia is rapidly becoming the place for nature-loving Canadians to own a second home. But the distance from Toronto raises questions about security of the property in the homeowners' absence. The Cottages at Salt Spring Village Resort might be one answer — it is

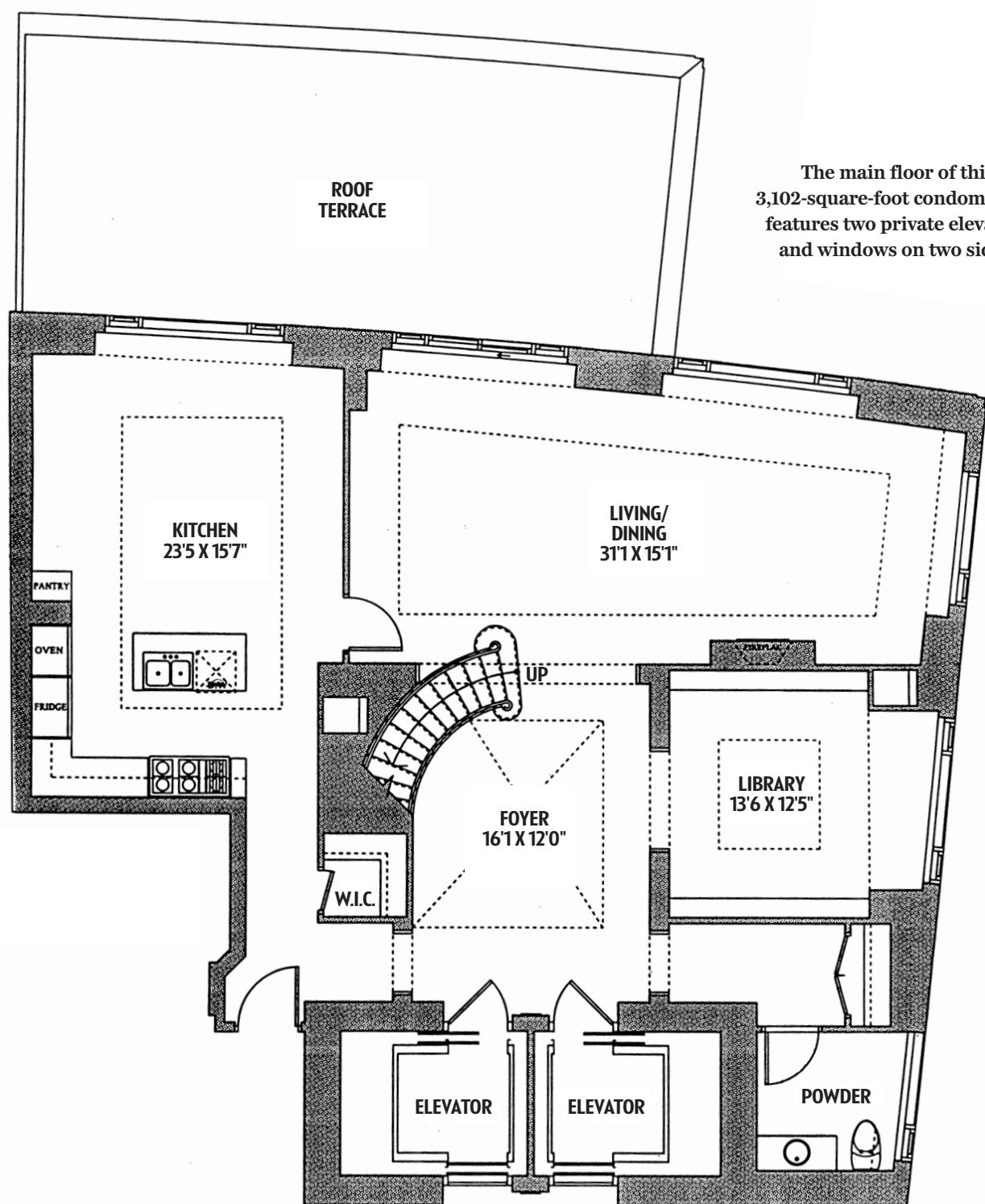
SALT SPRING ISLAND

an upscale, full-service waterfront resort that has just begun selling fractional ownership of its 123 stacked cottages. The resort lodge will include a restaurant, a spa, fitness facilities, conference

centre, swimming pool — and eventually an onsite vineyard and winery. Units come fully furnished, and can be placed in the resort's rental pool when not in use. The Cottages have been named the first EcoNeutral resort in North America. Visit thecottagesonsaltspring.com. *National Post*

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

A regular feature in which three design experts analyse a layout for a condominium or a single storey of a house



The main floor of this 3,102-square-foot condominium features two private elevators and windows on two sides.



The bright two-storey living room opens on to the courtyard.

Skylights, glass floors bring light to the home

BROWNE

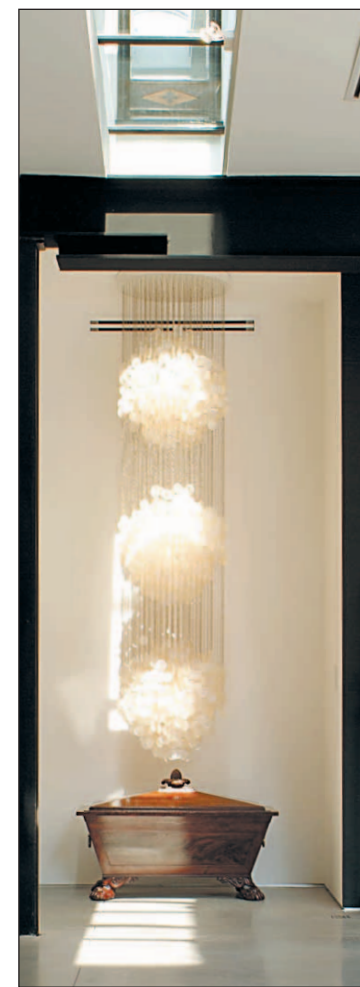
Continued from Page PH1

On the ground floor, there's a two-storey living room with a kitchen and dining room at one end and a media area at the other. In the main space, the window literally rolls up like a giant garage door and allows the space to connect directly to courtyard.

On the second floor, there are three bedrooms, all ensuite. The master bedroom has glass walls overlooking the two-storey main space with curtains when the space needs to become private. The upstairs hall has skylights above and a glass floor below to let light filter down. Concrete floors on the ground level and blackened steel upstairs contribute to the tough ambiance. But it's a finessed tough and the result is not a warehouse but an art gallery you can live in.

The challenge of a retrofit? "We never know what we're going to run into when we start opening up/demolishing existing components," Mr. Taylor says. "In many cases, at the end of a project, when you look at the construction cost, it would have been almost the same to tear down a building and start over. What you lose if you tear it down, however, is the sense of history and layering that comes from combing new and old. We refer to some of our renovation/addition projects as 'architectural palimpsests,' which have been 'written' over, while still allowing the original to show through in some ways."

More prosaically, Mr. Taylor also points out that the other thing you can lose when you demolish is a better footprint than you'll get with newer, more stringent bylaws. The footprint allowed today, versus what you inherit, may not be as large and the setback requirements may be stricter.



To my eye, this house on Bishop is not much of a "palimpsest," at least with its immediate predecessor, the Gottschalk & Ash office. If there's a memory this reno brings to the surface with its concrete, steel, zinc and glass, it's that of an industrial building, like that for an ironmonger. Odd to think that what was the least architecturally revered of locations 100 years ago has inspired this fascinating contemporary house, and so much that was admired back then — think Georgian — inspires only the drek of suburbia today.

National Post



The kitchen retains a slight industrial feel; a niche, middle photo, has been painted white to contrast with the dark walls.

LINDA MITCHELL
Vice-President, Monarch



This lower level of a 3,102-sq.-ft. penthouse is laid out to accommodate gracious living.

Accessing the grand foyer from an elevator is impressive, but why two elevators? The space taken up by the second might be better used as a

larger coat closet. The walk-in closet door should open into the foyer instead of the hallway so owners do not have to round the corner to hang coats.

Having immediate access to the library/home office works well, as business clients would not have to travel through living areas to get to the office.

Although the large living/dining room invites entertaining, some modifications could enhance that potential. A half-wall with columns would open up the space more, or installing French doors between the rooms would offer the option of opening or closing the spaces depending on the function. The fireplace could be two-sided and shared by the library.

The kitchen seems weak for a suite of this size. I would expect a lot more cupboard space, a larger pantry, and a bigger island with a generous breakfast bar.

■ Linda Mitchell is vice-president, sales and marketing, high rise, for Monarch Corp.

SUZANNE DIMMA
Interior designer, editor, TV host



Looking at the kitchen's relatively minuscule pantry, this home could have been designed for some waif-thin celebrity like Lindsay Lohan — or anybody on the "Don't Bother to Eat" diet. I'd happily give up the excess lounging space

and the overly dramatic foyer for a place to stash a few snacks — and some more counter space.

Even with the large foyer, the staircase lands undecidedly in the entrance to the living room. God forbid you're ever in a rush to get out of the house or you'll wind up running into the wall directly across from it or pulling a muscle making the turn to the elevators. If the walk-in closet opened into the foyer, you could at least enjoy all that wasted space while hanging your coat.

There could have been such a phenomenal open plan across the front, with each room sharing the view through all three windows. Instead, the kitchen is entirely blocked off. Who lives this formally anymore? And good luck creating a cohesive furniture plan with those angled walls.

The best feature is the double elevators. A couple could potentially schedule their lives so they never had to see each other. ■ Suzanne Dimma is a Toronto-based interior designer.

DEE DEE TAYLOR HANNAH
Interior designer, architect



A beautiful grand entrance to a two-storey condominium. This suite is probably already sold as the windows suggest amazing views with a roof terrace to beat the band. The private elevator elegantly opens on to a foyer that should have

panelled walls and a centred round table with a vase of flowing flowers in stark white. The chandelier can have a cascade of crystals dropping two storeys, directly centred on the table below.

The powder room is cleverly placed down a hall, which gives it privacy and drama. Remove the closet at the end and replace with an antique armoire.

The library should be detailed out in a warm mahogany with polished nickel accents. Forget the brushed hardware; use polished for the sparkle. I cannot get enough of this plan, it is soooooo good!

I feel very positive that with or without furniture this space will sing. It would be a dramatic touch to try to avoid the regular lighting approach of potlights and explore wall sconces and chandeliers in either modern or traditional style — or better yet, a combination of both.

■ Dee Dee Taylor Hannah operates Taylor Hannah Architect and is a principal of Montclair Construction.

Watch for upholstered-furniture prices to rise

HIGH OIL PRICES HIT HOMES

BY BRADFORD MCKEE

Gasoline prices are making people want to stay home and enjoy their living rooms more, assuming they already have furniture. If not, they are probably in for more sticker shock.

The cost of making home a comfortable place is on the rise. Furniture prices, particularly for upholstered chairs and sofas, are likely to increase by more than 10% in the coming months because of recent rises in the price of oil and the disruption of petroleum supplies.

While most businesses are ex-

periencing some form of shock over fuel costs, the impact is great for the furniture business because much of the soft stuff of upholstered furniture, such as foam cushions, polyester fabrics and trimming fibres, comes from petroleum, as do plastic moldings and adhesives and protective wrapping for delivery.

In addition, consumers are likely to begin paying surcharges to cover fuel costs for shipping and home delivery — or, in cases where they are already doing so, paying as much as 30% more.

In the American furniture industry, where profit margins are narrow, prices have stayed remarkably steady from year to year, in part because of competition from less expensive import-

ed products. Manufacturers worry that even an increase of 5% in their prices could seriously disrupt business.

Century Furniture Industries, based in Hickory, N.C., which has already seen fuel costs for shipping rise by 60% since early 2005, has been asked to pay higher prices for at least a dozen types of raw materials and supplies.

Roger Jones, vice-president of operations at Century, noted in an e-mail message that the recent oil-related price increases closely follow price increases for steel. Last year, "anything with commodity metals as a component went up big time," Mr. Jones said. "This year oil and availability seems to be the factor."

Century's upholstery fibre

prices have risen by 10% in recent months, and are expected to rise more this month. Foam products for making cushions have risen 14% since the beginning of 2005; increases of another 20% are likely by year's end, Mr. Jones said.

Foam shortages, accompanied by increases in foam prices, have begun to hurt big furniture makers. The foam shortage hits hard at La-Z-Boy, according to a report released last week by UBS Investment Research, because about 75% of its products are upholstered. The furniture company has 336 stores and 340 furniture galleries within other retail stores.

The brands Broyhill, Lane, Thomasville and Drexel Heritage, will also be affected, as their upholstered goods make up about 50% of sales.

The New York Times