

POST HOMES

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Award-winning results occur when nature meets a straight line



KERUN IP

The master bathroom of this home features a Kohler soaker tub that fills to the brim from a fixture in the ceiling, and overflows into a trough around all four sides. The floors, tub surround and counter are Arena limestone. The sink is a depression made into the limestone to maintain a solid mass. The cabinets are rift-cut oak; the shower floor is teak slats and there is sandblasted and back-painted glass in the shower area.

Polished to perfection

Judging an open house

BY JACK KOHANE

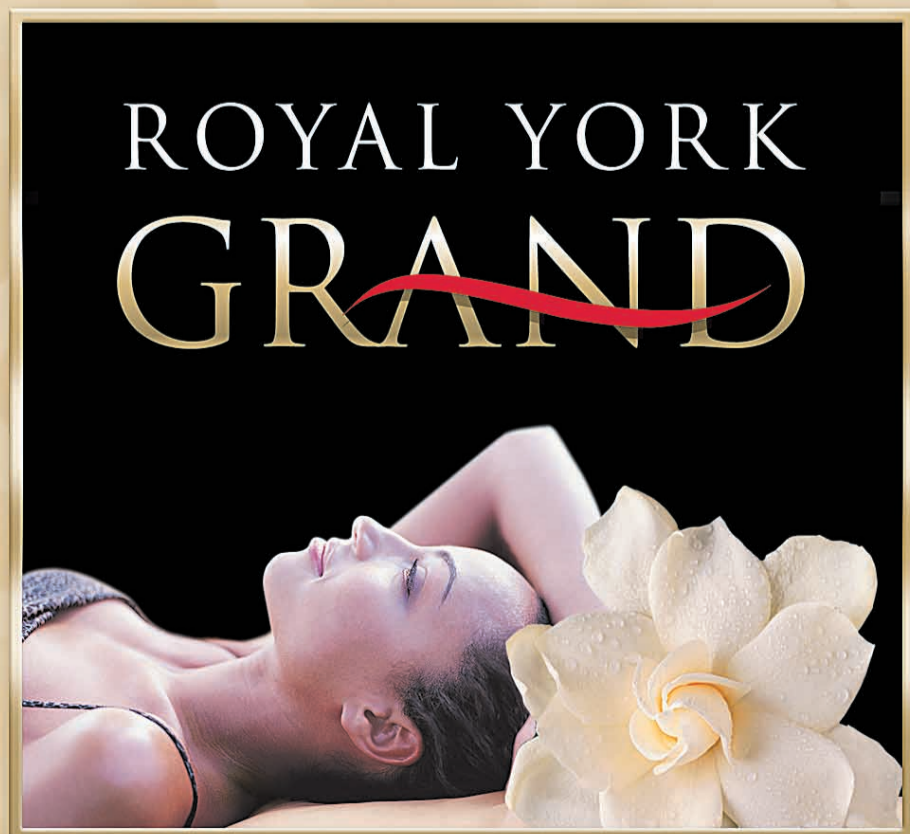
Winning both the National Post Design Exchange Silver Award for Interior Design – Residential, and the Best of Canada Award (presented by *Canadian Interiors* magazine) in recognition of his firm's modernist expression of a new 7,300-square-foot, ravine-top home, are accolades architect Michael Taylor says he didn't expect. "We had thought the home's dazzling interior, crafted by Munge//

Leung; Design Associates, would be a winner in and of itself," says the partner in Taylor Smyth Architects, resting back in a boardroom chair at his office in the Designer's Walk district. "We're pleasantly surprised to be jointly credited for our part in this project." Established in just 2000, Taylor Smyth's innovative residential, institutional and workplace concepts are rapidly reaping acclaim. "Our approach is simple: creating places and spaces with distinctive character," Mr. Taylor says. "This 'House on the Ravine' exemplifies that philosophy."

The award-luring dwelling backs on to a local conservation area, a semi-wilderness urban tract that provided the literal and figurative canvas for the home's design details. Trimmed with applications of a selection of natural materials, its exterior consists of a rubble stone base of Ontario limestone, custom mahogany windows and stuccoed facing. These elements are reflected inside, where a polished but unpretentious palette combines wide-planked walnut floors, custom designed millwork of walnut and rift-cut oak, sandblasted glass screens, and a light limestone base for the foyer leading to the

living room's fireplace surround. Flashings, canopies and garage doors are surfaced in zinc. "It's a wonderful metal to work with," Mr. Taylor says. "Zinc's natural finish has a soft, clean look. The metal's colour cast changes over the course of the day – from a warm green tinged with grey in the morning and at dusk, to an almost silver, though not overly shiny hue, in full sunshine." The client requested a modern, transparent residence to capitalize on the spectacular views over the forested landscape, but one that would also provide complete privacy. See *RAVINE* on Page PH6

Who doesn't love to sneak a peek? This week the Post Homes begins Open House, a weekly "review" of a home for sale in the Toronto area. Because many of us love attending open houses on the weekend, we decided it would be interesting to approach this modern cultural phenomenon with the same gently critical eye our reviewers bring to movies, books, plays and other current entertainment. Our first Open House, by writer Amy Rosen, is on Page PH3.



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'These homes are like my children'

RAVINE

Continued from Page PH1

To achieve this dual functionality, a two-storey-high screen comprised of mahogany slats visually anchors the front façade, and is articulated over the 10-foot-high windows by custom hinges to facilitate cleaning. "At night this transforms into a glowing lantern," Mr. Taylor says.

Screens are a signature treatment of Taylor Smyth's architecture, a motif that recurs in many of its residential projects. "They present a continuous outer plane, superb for privacy," Mr. Taylor says, "but each slat is precisely positioned to the next to afford unimpeded vistas of the environment when looking out."

The client also stipulated a studio-like home office that could operate independently from the living spaces. "We attempted to redefine the sensibility of a live-work environment by using similar colour schemes, materials and furniture for both home and office so living and working become part of a single experience," says Alessandro Munge, a principal of award-winning interior design firm Munge/Leung.

Fuelling the footprint challenge was the below-grade physicality of the grounds, stepped down to street level from the porch and inclined steeply away from the rear of the house. Morphing a construction obstruction into an inspired solution, Taylor Smyth's team bevelled the hilly slope and devised a series of limestone staircases connecting the structure imperceptibly to the rolling grounds beyond.

"These grade changes allowed the studio to be sited on the lower level of the house, so visitors could have immediate access without trekking through the rest of the house," Mr. Taylor says. A minimum of interior overhead bulkheads for mechanicals offer added headroom, while a dearth of outside overhangs feed natural light well inside.

Full-height mahogany-and-glass doors (which can slide past each other) along the length of the studio, living and dining rooms effectively blur the threshold between the interior and the exterior.

Landscaping is also used to lash together inner and outer settings: A wood screen, separating the entry from the dining area, grows out of river rock; a grove of bamboo inside the conservatory provides visual shelter; a water feature begins in the kitchen/conservatory as a series of bubbling spouts, then trickles outside in a linear conduit, culminating in a fountain flowing from a stainless steel scupper at the end of the paved terrace — all enveloped by lush gardens of wildflowers and grasses.

Indoors, the main floor wraps around an open concept double-height dining/living room and adjoining kitchen, crested by a staircase of solid walnut treads on cantilevered steel angles welded to a walnut-clad steel bridge linking the two wings of the second floor.

"Although this is a project I'm especially proud of, I don't prefer one I've designed over another," Mr. Taylor insists. "These homes are like my children. I can't favour just one."

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The exterior based is an Ontario rubble stone called Algonquin, which is extended from the house to become low garden walls. The canopy at the entrance, as well as copings and the garage door, are zinc panels. An Ingo Maurer light fixture illuminates the double-height dining room, left. The living room, below, features a fireplace surround of stone and marble-dust plaster that houses a slab of river rock at its base, in which are embedded gas nozzles to create a linear row of flame.



HOME OF THE WEEK

A hands-on mix of the contemporary

26 Frybrook Cres.
(Sixteenth Avenue
and Leslie Street)
Asking price: \$1.38-million
Taxes: \$8,783 (2003)

BY CONNIE ADAIR

The couple who designed this home and had it custom built were involved in every step of the process, says listing agent Caroline Bokar, of Forest Hill Real Estate Inc. "The homeowners wanted to create an environment that would be elegant yet suited to family living."

The contemporary home, a mix of California, Florida and New York design, has many special features, she says. "The owners, who are interested in design, sought out finishes and details of an extraordinary nature."

The owners saw a 360kg fibre-glass front door from California in a design magazine and had it shipped to their home.

Custom built in 2002, the approximately 4,700-square-foot house has high ceilings, intricate wrought iron details, maple floors and luxurious bathrooms, says Ms. Bokar.

The front door, which has a mahogany finish, leads to an ante room with a granite floor, recessed lighting and crown mouldings. The flooring continues into the grand foyer, where there is custom-designed black granite inlay. The two-storey ceiling is topped with a skylight.

A powder room with black granite flooring and crown mouldings, and a walk-in closet, also with granite floors, are other features. The closet has a wall sconce that is automatically engaged when the door is open.

There are maple floors, custom windows and crown mouldings in the living room, and built-in speakers and custom windows in the dining room.

Granite has also been used in the eat-in kitchen, which has granite countertops and antique



finished maple cabinetry. There is a breakfast bar, an eating area with floor-to-ceiling windows and a vacuum sweep pan. Double doors lead to the professionally landscaped property and a pocket door with glass inserts leads to the family room.

Extra insulation has been added to the dropped ceiling and walls of the family room. Features of this comfortable area include a

gas fireplace with a granite surround and double doors, which were also featured in a Florida design magazine.

The main floor also offers a butler's pantry and laundry room, both with granite floors, and a library with recessed lights. There's a door from the laundry room to the insulated three-car garage.

The upper landing, with custom-designed wrought iron rail-



The foyer, far left, offers a granite floor with custom-designed black granite inlay and a two-storey ceiling topped with a skylight. The kitchen, above, has granite countertops and antique finished maple cabinetry. The exterior is at left.

ings, has a circular hallway, a skylight and cove lighting.

There's a master suite with an adjacent sitting room, a dressing room with a skylight and a six-piece temperature-controlled bathroom with a soaker tub, granite floors and instant hot water. Bathrooms throughout the house are insulated and have quiet exhaust fans. There are more than 90 recessed lights and touch

screen control panels can be found in the kitchen and main hall.

The partially finished lower level has a recreation room and a storage area under the stairs for home automation components and accessories.

The 98 x 164-foot irregular lot has a private double driveway and parking for five cars.

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