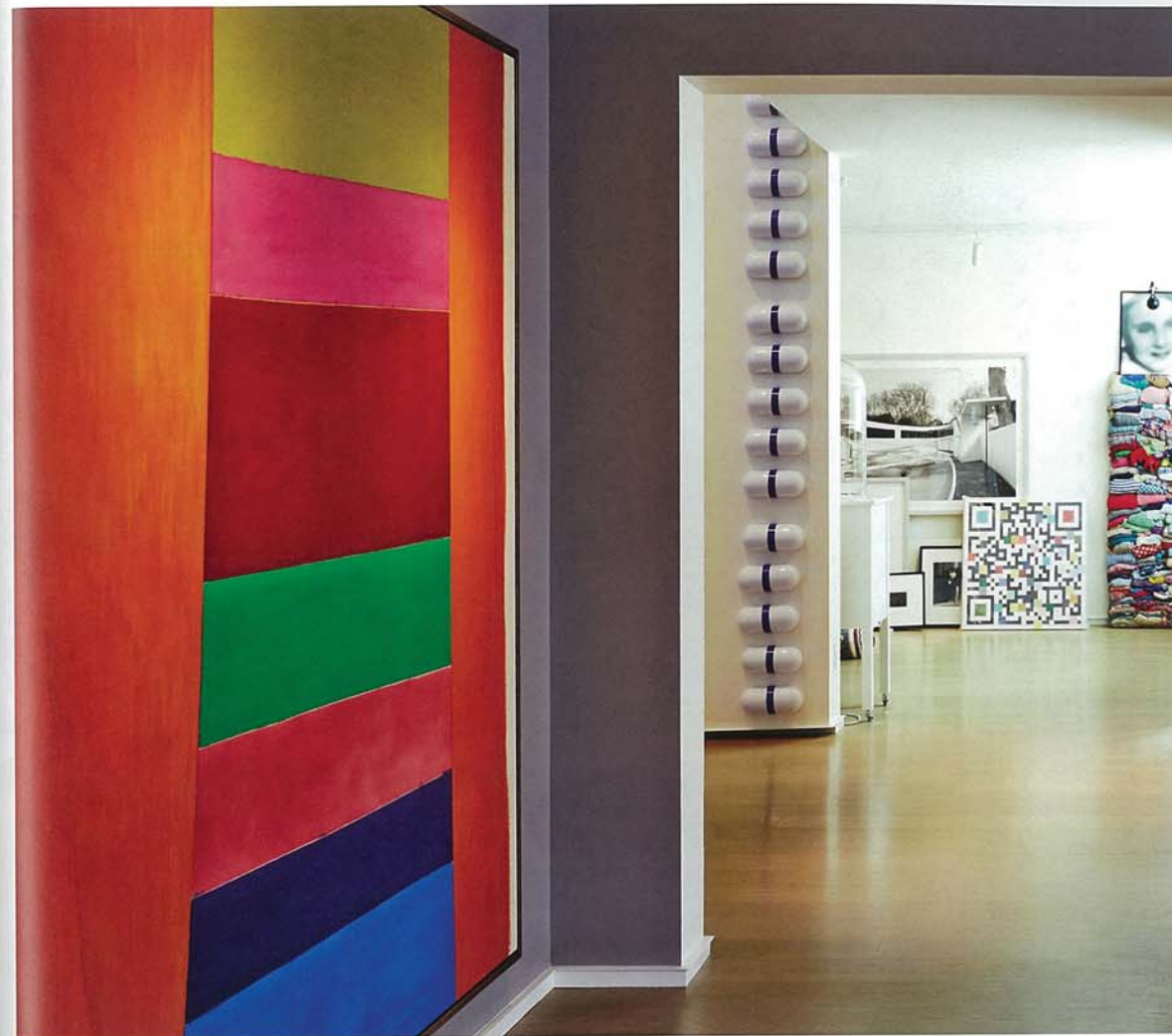




A sculpture by Joana Vasconcelos sits at the centre of the dining room, which functions as a gallery space. Opposite page: Wide doorways allow much of the collection to be taken in at once. Abstract painting by Jack Bush.

PHOTOS BY NAOMI FINLAY



ART OF THE MATTER

Taylor Smyth Architects overhauls an existing house to accommodate a vast collection

BY ALISON GARWOOD-JONES / PHOTOGRAPHY BY NAOMI FINLAY AND VIRGINIA MACDONALD

A WOOD-PANELLED TUDOR HOUSE on a quiet residential street is hardly an ideal environment for viewing large-scale works of art. There are too many dark rooms, too few long views. For a Toronto couple who are passionate about art that doesn't fit neatly on walls or above mantelpieces, the architecture of their house, built by Henry Fleiss in 1969, posed various limitations in displaying some of their favourite pieces. These include a sculptural installation by Christian Boltanski, with long ropes of electrical wire hanging down; and video art by Bill Viola, which runs on two monitors.

Michael Taylor, of local firm Taylor Smyth Architects, found an approach that effectively rejuvenates the two-storey house and puts the focus on the artworks while keeping it as a very livable family dwelling.



↑ General Idea's *One Year of AZT* fills a four-metre-high wall in the entryway, which was specified to accommodate it.



↗ Taylor refashioned the fireplace with a low-key limestone surround that doesn't compete with the video art by Bill Viola.



→ The floor plan allows for dedicated areas to adequately display single artworks.

As a result, art is everywhere. The original dining room is devoid of table and chairs, to make room for a rotating display of large installations, currently a sculpture by Portuguese artist Joana Vasconcelos. The boxy piece sits at the centre of the room, with giant hand-knit and crocheted balls that extend outward like entrails.

The centre hallway underwent the largest transformation, says Taylor; a heavy oak staircase and dark wood panelling dominated, and restricted the art to a smattering of smaller works. Now stripped away, the entrance doubles as a bright, white-walled exhibition space, which radically alters the feel of the house. "This is the first project in my career where individual artworks figured so prominently in my CAD drawings," says Taylor, who

configured feature walls to match the dimensions of two large pieces in particular: a Jeff Wall photograph of a backyard summer scene that spans three metres, and a 3-D installation by Canadian collective General Idea. Part of the floor space of the upstairs study was sacrificed to create the double-height clearance required for that statement-making work, which rises up the wall four metres and reads as an oversized bubble pack of prescription capsules. Taylor maximized the flow of natural light with reflective white oak flooring, large door openings, and glass railings that allow for unobstructed sightlines between floors.

To further illuminate the collection, Taylor hired lighting consultant Suzanne Powadiuk, who has lit the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto



Taylor enlarged the entrance and increased the flow of natural light with full-height windows, glass railings and white oak flooring. The back wall was measured to accommodate a photographic artwork by Jeff Wall.



← Large double glazing replaced mullions in the family room and kitchen for light flow and views to the yard. Chandelier by Lindsey Adelman. Walnut veneer cabinets by Neff.

↙ In the master bathroom, acid-etched grey mirror on the walls and porcelain charcoal tile give a matte appearance. Mirror tiles by Walker Textures. Tub by Blu Bathworks.

↓ The exterior of the Tudor revival house was modernized with a random pattern of black-painted marine plywood, and a larger square window for the master bedroom.

