



# Natural Balance

The use of glass and open space takes full advantage of the natural setting in Fonthill



### From Milan, to Toronto, to Fonthill...

Contemporary Italian living is forward thinking and steeped in quality, surrounded by the beauty of clean lines and timeless design. All of the home's furnishings are from Selene Furniture, a family-owned, Canadian furniture manufacturer inspired by the style of Milan, Italy. The homeowner's checklist: a sleek, custom look combined with practicality, comfort and durability. Ciao bella!

By Nadine Taylor  
Photography by Robert Nowell



Can your design accommodate a thirty by fifty-foot garage?"

When that's the first question a homeowner asks, a designer quickly gets the sense that particular element is important. And for Todd Barber, owner of Pelham firm Forestgreen Creations, the individual needs of each client are always paramount to the success of design projects.

This personal philosophy meant one thing to Barber: he had to incorporate a four-car dream garage of approximately 1,500 square feet—more than the total area of some homes—into the sleek, contemporary, walk-out bungalow plans “without having it be the focal point of the home,” he remembers.

The finished result is a grand accomplishment in both concealment and exposure. First, minimize the large garage at the front of the house by fully integrating its look with the rest of the structure, instead of giving it prominence. And second, welcome the outdoors at the back and sides of the structure, utilizing the addition of enormous glass walls, sliding doors and sophisticated, natural elements.

The homeowners bought the Pelham property, which sits adjacent to woodland and agricultural fields, in late 2006 and started the design process soon after. Beginning construction in April 2009, they had about 18 months of living in an existing wartime house on the premises before they could realistically move into their newly-built residence. Within the 3,000-square-foot home, the total experience feels very connected to the surrounding environment. Key to this, massive panes of glass greet you at every turn, allowing the design to purposely look out and look back onto itself while situating on the gentle slope toward the backing woods. It gives the concept of open living new meaning “when you can wave to one another from different areas of the house,” Barber remarks with a laugh. »



### Kitchen Revelation

Striped Macassar Ebony wood from Indonesia accents and frames the high gloss polyester painted cabinetry. The interesting, earthy contrast lends a linear, striated look to the sparkling, white kitchen. All counters are Cambria stone, a non-porous, easy-care, natural stone surface that is elegant and practical for every function. With careful positioning of the cabinetry, island cooktop, and eat-in dining area, specific areas can be creatively distinguished within an open concept floor plan. Wood-framed sliding doors open up to an impressive vaulted balcony area, adding a fresh-air dining option. Artcraft Kitchens in Niagara Falls completed the entire installation.

And it does so in remarkable fashion. The clear window panels that stretch floor to ceiling throughout the home are not tinted. Barber believes that using such a coating often gives a “false sense” of the weather conditions and location, much like wearing sunglasses outside. His intention was to draw inspiration from the naturalistic setting. Both he and the homeowner wanted to maintain a close relationship to the serene views and take maximum advantage of generous, shifting natural light at different times of the day. The glass walls create an artistic impression, making the landscape appear like an ever-changing, expansive gallery piece.

Designing a slender, glass-railed bridge from the front foyer, flanked by two mature exterior trees, Barber managed to maintain the property’s existing foliage and to provide an airy, transparent, wooded passageway to the main section of the house.

Another unique feature is a grand master bedroom section sitting lofty atop vaulted structural beams at the back of the house. It’s a high-flying way to increase visual interest, allow for a covered patio area below, and to architecturally compensate for the hillside.

After a painfully slow beginning working with various contrac-



### Daring Dining Décor

Todd Barber consulted closely with local interior designer John Kazmir in choosing the distinctive touches. Kazmir’s invaluable flair for individuality helped elevate the dining room lighting feature, suggesting one of Luminart’s stunning designs. Its dripping balls of light provide attention-grabbing, elongated focal points, instead of a visually distracting horizontal piece, which might compete with the outdoor scenery.



**Woodland Reflection**

The exterior finishes are a scenic reflection of the surrounding environment. Using a stacked bond pattern where the facing brick is laid with the vertical and horizontal joints aligned, rough stone walls contribute an earthy grounding. Done in Buckhorn, the stone is from Owen Sound Ledgerrock and was supplied by St. Catharines Building Supplies. As the name suggests, it is sourced from near Owen Sound, Ontario, and is carefully extracted so the bedface variations of the stone can be shown. To complement, a dark chocolate, modern acrylic stucco finish by contractor and craftsman Danny Continelli is a major feature for the second level portions of the home, and umber coloured structural beams imitate standing tree trunks. Aluminum and glass curtain walls, all Alumicor with professional fabrication and installation by Welland Glass, likewise display the beautiful majesty of nature.



For full list of suppliers on this job, see source guide page 72

tors, the homeowner decided to take the project on, building the structure himself and shaping some new aspects for the design with Barber as they progressed. They collaborated extensively on practical considerations such as finishing materials and sourcing suppliers. The evident main challenge with this “hands-on way forward” became co-ordinating the tradespeople’s schedules and the timing of particular installations, the homeowner now acknowledges.

Barber’s architectural and landscape design company, Forestgreen Creations, is gaining a stellar reputation for this ultra-progressive, contemporary style of house. He finds people are getting more comfortable with letting go of their inhibitions and gravitating toward this type of innovative, striking design.

“That’s fine with me, my own house is in this style, so it’s a design I truly find enjoyable and feel comfortable with,” Barber explains. “Except my house has a smaller garage,” he adds with a smile. NMI