



DESIGN

FALLING IN LOVE

WITH AN A-FRAME

Contractor is so enamoured of the house he builds that he moves in

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The contractor and designer agreed on mostly everything during the build, except the floor. The contractor wanted the warmth of wood; the designer, natural stone. In the end they went with stone, but added walnut stairs and a vintage wood bench “to finish off the feeling.”

EVERY GOOD CONTRACTOR KNOWS to pour the concrete driveway last, but Sean Jack knew it was the first thing he had to do.

He had bought a house on a rolling, one-and-a-quarter-acre property in south Surrey. Built in 1976, it had a driveway that led straight from the road to the garage. It would not allow him sufficient access to achieve his intention of rebuilding the house. “It was a bit of a challenge to put in and we ran into a lot of water, which was a bit of a nightmare,” says Sean—who is both contractor and homeowner—of the new

driveway. “But I did it so we could have good access.” The project demanded it.

Sean engaged the services of Adam Becker, of Adam Becker Design, to give the re-imagined home the “West Coast-contemporary look” for which his firm is known.

“We took it right down to the studs—everything was gone—and built from the original foundation,” says Becker. An extension over the garage, master bedroom and bathroom was added, and the back was extended to allow for a larger kitchen and additional living room. 



“We took it right down to the studs – everything was gone.”



Becker incorporated high, vaulted ceilings – “a classic, West Coast A-frame” – to keep the interior of the house in harmony with the nature outside. “There are such big, tall, cedar and spruce trees in that pocket there, so it’s nice,” he says. “From everywhere you look, you get a nice [look] of their full height.”

The build took the better part of a year, finishing last January. By the time it was

completed, Sean had decided he wanted to live in the house rather than fulfill his original intention of selling it. “I took a real liking to it and now my wife’s pregnant with our first child, so it was [good timing],” he says. “It came together perfectly and it’s a great place to raise a family.”

An additional room, featuring the upper loft space, complete with a 100-year-old ladder, has since been turned into a nursery. 

(Opposite) Creating an open, flowing space was at the heart of this project, so Adam Becker designed a pivoting steel front door to set the tone. A piece of red, reclaimed wood from Stanley Park was salvaged by a local artist.





Designer Adam Becker wanted a big block of marble in the middle of the room. Sean also wanted a casual place for dining besides the dining table. So the designer mounted a piece of reclaimed wood from Yaletown at one end of the marble island.

A social person with a large family, Sean says he and his wife enjoy the home's open-concept kitchen, dining layout, entertainment area and deck. Some 3,000 square feet of cedar decking is large enough to have "cousins over and running around," he says, adding they make good use of the newly installed swimming pool and hot tub.

Sean and Becker agree that the collaboration between contractor and designer felt natural. The only disagreement they had initially

was about flooring: hardwood or natural stone? The contractor wanted wood; the designer was pushing for stone. "I always listen to my friends and clients, but then try to incorporate my own ideas into the picture," says Becker. "Over time, he started to agree with me, so I got my flooring. But Sean still wanted something to finish off the feeling, so I designed those walnut stairs." A happy compromise, the stairs add warmth to the contemporary design of the home. ☞

“A classic, West Coast A-frame.”

The house is designed in a contemporary black-and-white colour palette without baseboards and crown moldings, something Becker describes as “a signature in my design: clean sharp lines.”

But the travertine floors also provide warmth, as the natural stone is fitted with a Nuheat under-floor heating system, which can be automated along with the rest of the house, which is Control4 compatible.

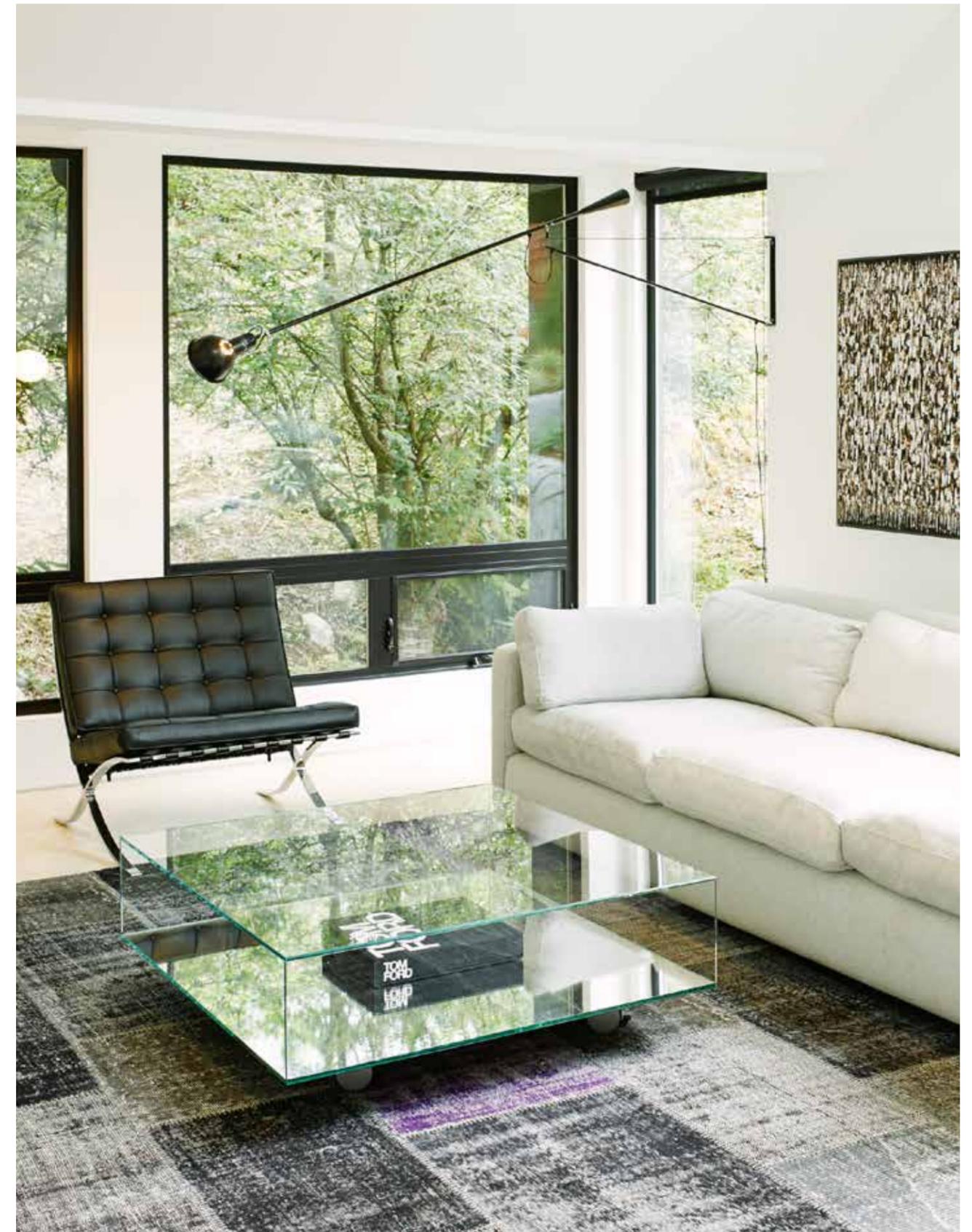
One complication the contractor and designer had to contend with was the installation of a 14-foot pane of glass to extend to

the top of the 14-foot vaulted ceiling in the master bathroom’s steam shower; it took five men to carry it in unscathed.

Sean says his favourite escape is the tv den, where the coffee table is by local furniture designer Tim Grant, founder of WoodReform Furniture. A sustainable statement piece, the table is a limited-edition original, as is every item in Grant’s collection. His furniture is handcrafted of solid wood, which is found or repurposed. The orange chest in the guest bedroom is also by Grant. ↵



The home’s white walls provide the perfect backdrop for art.





Sean says he spends a lot of time in the den. He loves supporting local artists. Indeed, his home is adorned with expressive pieces from such artists as Carla Tak, Karl Stittgen and David T. Cho, sourced with Becker's assistance. "When I do minimal places, at the end of the day, I like to provide a very clean palette," says Becker. "It allows for that final touch: art on the walls, to really make a statement."

Becker says he wanted to take this old house and make it "sharp, stark and modern," but allow both nature and personality in the decor to shine through. ☛

Becker punctuated his modern, A-frame minimalism with Vancouver-based Bocci Design light fixtures throughout, including the contemporary one above the freestanding Aquabraxs tub in the master bathroom.

