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D'être*

Rooms
for living,
not
working



Tackling Equity Fatigue

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Far left *Moon Light* by Adam David Brown; a photograph of Paris at night by Gabi Trinkaus; and Stephen Wilkes' aerial shot of Times Square during COVID. Centre Placing an Inuit sculpture casually on a windowsill seems to add to its humanity; on the wall nearby is the owner's collection of rock n'roll photographs. Above A quintet of very-high-resolution photographs of folded paper by Kristiina Lahde.

— The clean, open expanses, abundance of natural light, and simple, pared-down profiles that typify most modern residential architecture lend themselves naturally to the display of art. But when you are working with clients who already have a great art collection and want their homes to showcase it to maximum advantage — while also keeping it functional for daily family life — the assignment becomes a bit more complex.

Ideally, having a sense early in the design process of what specific works will go where can be helpful, since walls and other display surfaces can be tailored to fit (or at least, things like light switches and wall outlets can be placed where they won't interfere). But what stands out about the homes here is how well the design and art work together, creating a whole that really is, to coin a phrase, greater than the sum of its parts. In each case, there's a strong sense that art is something to be enjoyed rather than revered from a distance; while all are beautiful spaces on their own, the art is what brings them to life.

Photography: Lauren Miller

Down Below: Toronto Basement Gallery

The owners of this space already had a private art gallery in their basement, which they shared with friends. But according to Mason Lane Art Advisory curator Laura Mann, "During the pandemic, they came to realize they needed a place where they could relax, watch the game and maybe have a few friends over." They asked Mann to help them make it both homier and functional, without compromising its original purpose.

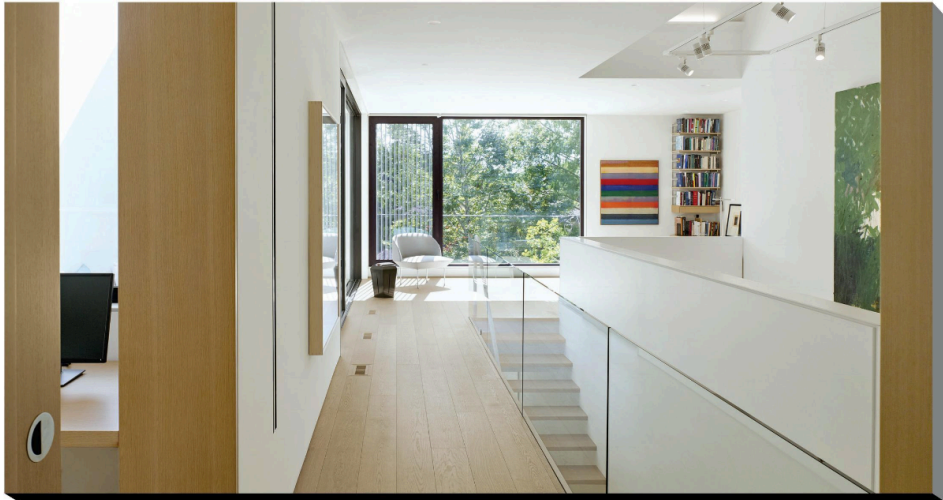
She called in a colleague, designer Clarisa Llana, to help reconfigure the space. Llana turned out to be an inspired choice; as an art collector herself, she had the right synergy for the assignment. "I had actually heard about the basement art gallery through mutual friends," she laughs, "so it seemed like fate to be working on it."

One of the early decisions was to install a bar in one corner. Most commercial galleries have one, for serving white wine and hors

BRUSH STROKES AND BEDROOMS

By Martha Uniacke Breen

Three homes designed to prioritize and display clients' extensive art collections, in essence dressing a gallery in residential clothing.



Upper left Next to huge sliding doors that frame a suitably artistic view of the garden, Sky Glabush's high realist painting, *Cut Tree*. Centre Thrush Holmes's 84-in. by 114-in. piece has an equally oversized title: *dimly lit gleaming universe of budding leaves, blown by overwhelming night breeze*. Right Soaring walls are made for art, with openings that send light through the space while minimizing direct sun on the art. Lower left The more intimate scale of the upper hall suits Sky Glabush's wool and acrylic piece *Keeping Something For Yourself* and the homier subject of *Deer House* by Thrush Holmes.

d'oeuvres at openings, but this one features three stools where friends or family can have a conversation, or watch the big-screen TV, discreetly concealed behind unfussy cabinetry.

In the centre of the room, a pair of curvaceous white leather-covered sofas frame an organically shaped stone coffee table; the grouping feels a little like sculpture on its own. Sitting on these sofas, says Llaneza, makes you feel "submerged" in the centre of the art that surrounds you, rather than gazing at it from a distance.

That immersiveness certainly feels true in the current collection, with its theme of the night sky, including the floor sculpture *Moon Light*, complete with paper "moonrocks," and aerial night view of Paris, along with Stephen Wilkes's pandemic-era photo of Times Square, as its neon panels thank healthcare workers.

"Galleries can be sterile, and that's on purpose, so that your eye goes to the art," says Llaneza. "But this is a home, so you want it to also be cozy and comfortable. It's not just for lounging, or just for art; it's for both, and it's a wonderful space."

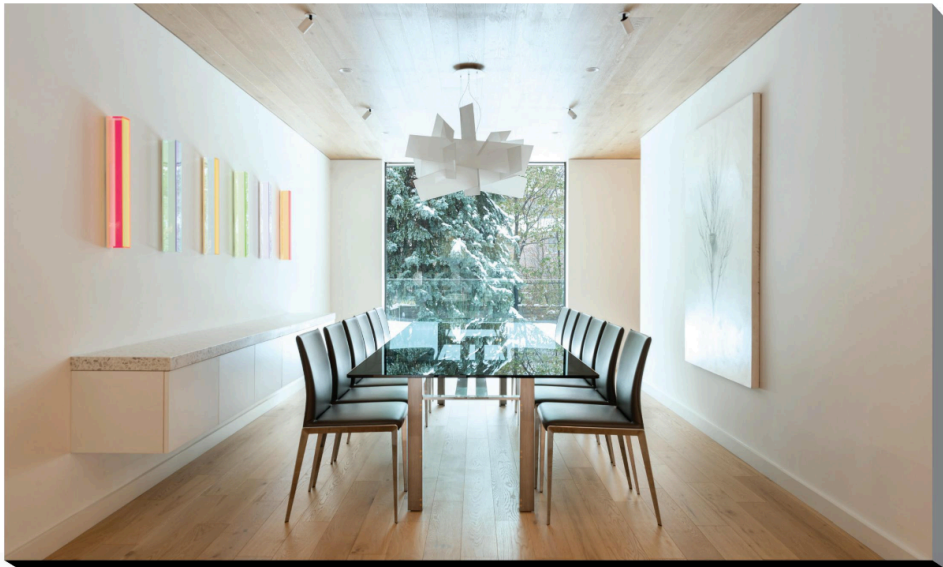
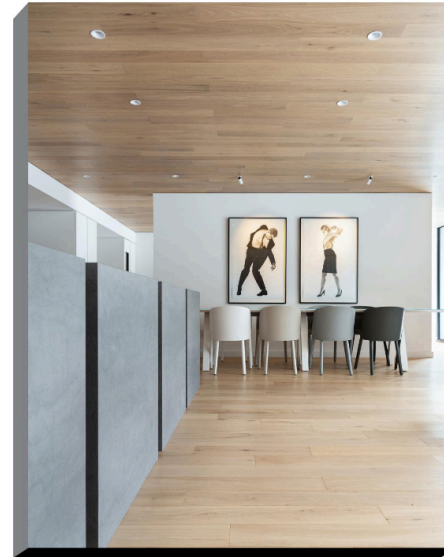
Tall and Tight: What Remains to be Seen

Superkül's design for this airy West Toronto home is interesting for a number of reasons. The first is its abundance of glazing, in the front as well as the rear — Torontonians aren't always so extroverted about revealing themselves to the street — and how, with its soaring walls, almost complete lack of interior doors, and just a single bedroom (there's a guest suite in the library downstairs, but still...), it's completely custom-tailored to its owners.

Oh, and then there's the art. "The art very much entered into our thinking from the beginning," says Superkül's partner-in-charge on the project, Meg Graham.

The house, situated on a typical neighbourhood street, had a relatively modest footprint, so the ideal (and only) solution was to go up: the central hallway is formed by a pair of gigantic two-storey walls (on the staircase side, the wall's upper edge becomes the upstairs railing). It's a perfect setting for large-scale art, such as Thrush Holmes's big mixed-media-on-metal piece with neon dogs racing across it.

Photography: Ben Rahm | A+Frame



Upper left: A pair of amiable figures by Gosia adds to family room conversation. Centre: Robert Longo's angular dancers at the end of the kitchen, whose island was influenced by the work of Donald Judd. Right: A woman's face by Alex Katz directs sleepy kids towards bed. Lower left: Regine Schulman's parade of neon blocks brightens one side of the dining room, while a large canvas by Dorion Scott takes up the wall opposite.

In spaces large and small, the art interacts with its surroundings: in the living room, another big canvas, a high-realist painting of a tree stump by Sky Glabush rhymes with the sylvan view of the garden through sliding patio doors next to it. In the more intimate environs of the upper hallway, two smaller paintings (in both size and subject) make for more contemplative viewing: a striped piece in acrylic and handwoven wool, and a portrait of an old house hidden in the leaves.

"We've done other houses that were the same square footage, but not with the same openness," Graham observes. "But it's not at all cavernous or empty; it's actually very intimate. It's designed not just for art, but for people."

Room for Growth: Shallmar Residence

So often there's a fear that when you have young children, valuable art pieces need to be kept out of harm's way, or even out of sight altogether. That was obviously not a concern in this wonderfully artistic space by StudioAC, where the art is not only front and centre (and even, in the form of two sculpted figures in the living room, literally joins the party) but in some places actually inspired the design itself.

According to StudioAC co-founder Jennifer Kudlats, the couple had moved here in the 2000s, but although they had already begun what

would become an impressive collection of Canadian and international art, they hadn't turned their attention to remodelling right away. While there were some larger spaces where art could be hung, the original layout worked neither for art nor for a growing family.

The designers started from scratch, gutting the house to the studs. Then instead of just adding walls back, partitions with wide archways help to organize the space without enclosing it. But what really sets the space apart is how it "quotes" contemporary artists.

The island that fronts the kitchen features a quartet of boxy stone squares, a nod to Donald Judd, one of the fathers of the Minimalist movement. The ridged wall of cabinetry that runs the length of the room recalls the monochromatic lines of Canadian abstract painter Agnes Martin. Other pieces interact with the space playfully, like Robert Longo's dancing hipsters, who seem ready to sashay right out onto the open dance floor between family room and kitchen.

There's plenty of room to play and live in the new space, and the art is fully included in family life. "The home feels refined and elegant, but flexible, and at times playful," says Kudlats. "In many ways, these characteristics reflect the clients, their family, and the art collection." ■

Photography: Jeremie Wrasidlo