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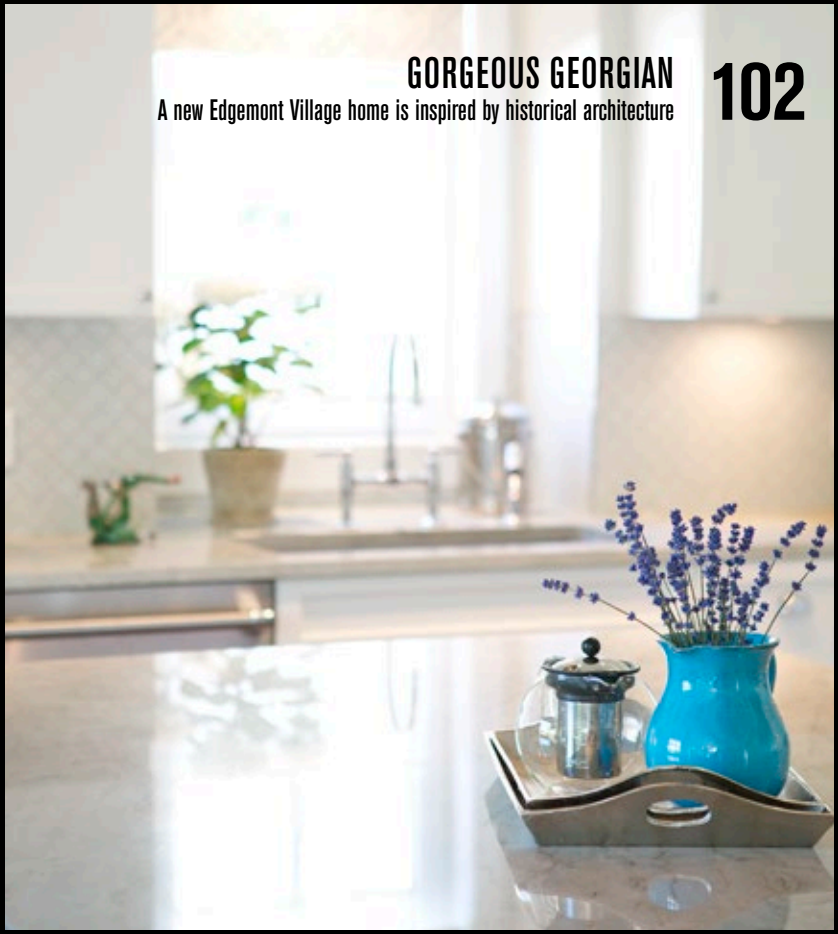
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NURTURED BY NATURE

A Gambier Island home is
cleverly concealed by forest

BY JULIE GEDEON
PHOTOGRAPHY: PATRICK BARTA



(Opposite) The fireplace and floor tiling are made of the same durable black porcelain, albeit in varying patterns. The wall containing the gas fireplace reflects the room's varying light conditions throughout the day.

PEOPLE WHO SAIL IN CENTRE BAY rarely see this award-winning home on Gambier Island. “You have to know its exact location because it blends so perfectly with the environment,” says Graeme Hugué, the managing director of the My House Design/Build Team, who created it for two Vancouverites. For years Gary Mynett and Johnny Bellas enjoyed boating from Vancouver to Gambier Island. They bought a waterfront lot in 2003 but had only a dock for a long time. “We

originally wondered if a house could even be constructed on our steep hillside, but have since learned you can build most anywhere if you get the right experts,” Gary says. The My House Design/Build Team first created a topographical map detailing elevations, views, and tree locations and heights. “The home looks plunked in the middle of the forest because the homeowners didn’t want trees destroyed,” Hugué explains. “We only removed about three and some shrubbery.”



“The home looks plunked in the middle of the forest because the homeowners didn’t want trees destroyed.”

“When we look out, it’s like we’re floating in the forest.”



The company worked with the property owners to conceptualize a home that had everything they wanted. “People come to us with ideas that we turn into reality,” Huguet says. The Gambier Island project has been deemed a Best Custom Home by the Greater Vancouver Home Builders’ Association. It also garnered two Georgie Awards from the Canadian Home Builders’ Association of British Columbia and an additional three awards

(two gold and one silver) from the National Association of Home Builders in the U.S. One look at the house and it’s obvious why. “You would be hard-pressed to find an element that doesn’t fit,” Huguet says. “It’s a work of art.” Steep landscape required the builder to bore deep holes and then dowel steel to secure the foundation to the island’s granite. The house is warmed by geothermal energy, channeled from far below into radiant-heat flooring. The

continuous air curtain, which moves through a horizontal grille along the oceanfront window wall, provides excellent air movement, creating warm, snug interiors. Contemporary furniture is complemented with the paintings done by Johnny. A hallway at the far end of the dining area leads to a powder room and a media room.




Absolutely everything is tucked away in this contemporary kitchen with its durable wenge cabinetry. The art overhanging the foyer is actually repurposed oil barrel covers that the homeowners found in a decor store.



Intricately engineered post-and-beam construction facilitated the three-storey home's open concept and expansive windows. The numerous windows blur the indoor/outdoor boundaries, as do the black porcelain tiles most everywhere, including on the deck and walkway. The windows that wrap around the L-shaped great room seem to erase the boundaries between indoors and out. The 24-inch ceramic tiles, used on both sides of

the 21-foot lift-and-slide door, augment the effect by creating a seamless floor. Outside, cantilevered glass rails with tempered safety glass permit the views to be visible. The pièce de résistance indoors is the loft suspended over the kitchen with three of its four sides enclosed by only a glass railing. "When we look out, it's like we're floating in the forest," Gary says. It's also fun to look down into the great room or right above the kitchen sink.

On the same top floor, the master bedroom and ensuite also look onto the bay. Sailboats can be spotted from the elevated soaker tub. Translucent glass cordons off the bedroom and the water closet without diminishing the natural light. "We achieved the luxury hotel atmosphere the homeowners wanted with the clean lines of the cabinetry and sinks," Huguet says. For quiet space, there's also a den/office/library steps away. 



The homeowners agree that the changing light throughout the day and the bay views are the home's most remarkable features. At dusk, a myriad of stars begins to appear in a sky free of light pollution.



“You would be hard-pressed to find an element that doesn’t fit. It’s a work of art.”

Sea-green translucent glass divides the master bedroom from the ensuite. The black framing of the marble floor provides a link with the porcelain tiles used throughout the rest of the home.

On the main floor, the great room earns its name from its large expanse, its 20-foot-high ceiling and two-storey windows. All of the home’s windows exceed the province’s standards—among North America’s highest for energy efficiency, as well as rain and wind resistance—by having a lamination between the panes that makes them sturdy and glare-resistant without tinting. Johnny chose all of the furnishings and fixtures with interior designer Sarah Gallop. “The

living area furniture is Mid-century Modern classic, except for the orange chair and ottoman that are contemporary takes on the same look,” he says. Porcelain tile around the fireplace has a metallic shimmer depending on the light. In the dining area, the table and sideboard from Gus Modern Furniture have the same contemporary lines. A discreet hallway leads to a powder room and media room equipped with blackout drapes; it’s

connected to the home-automation system. The kitchen is an exercise in sleekness with appliances hidden behind wenge cabinetry, built by My House Design/Build or tucked away in the island that seats up to five. A basement that’s actually at ground level holds Johnny’s art studio, Gary’s woodworking shop, a guest bedroom, and storage for mechanical elements. The home has remote-access monitoring, temperature setting, lighting, and

music and television programing. “But the most amazing things about the house are the natural light and the beautiful view of the bay and how it changes throughout the day,” Johnny says. *The post-and-beam construction is evident in the loft that appears to float in the middle of the house. It boasts spectacular forest views.*

