

THE HARMONY OF SPACE

On moving day, the owners didn't have to worry that their couch wouldn't fit through the door or how it would look in their generously sized living room. Their house was carefully planned down to how the furnishings would be accommodated in the space, taking the idea of custom home to the next level.

The owners are international people with a sense of European design. They wanted a home with clean architecture to create a backdrop for their more classic ornate antique pieces, says Amedeo Barbini of Barbini Design Build. He worked mostly with the wife, an artistic person and an artist, from floor plans to final details.

The main floor has 11-foot-high ceilings, windows that stretch almost from floor to ceiling and a symmetrical sensibility. Nine-foot-high doors were chosen to give a sense of proper scale to the main floor. "Eight-foot doors with 11-foot ceilings would look scrawny. It's important that everything be properly proportioned, so along with the higher doors, higher baseboards were used," he says.

The wood front door includes glass and wrought iron. It opens on to a bright hallway with classical Italian marble flooring that gives way to hardwood laid in a chevron design with detailing around the edges. "It's very Versailles," Amedeo says. "In old European palaces, this type of flooring was popular." Walls, mouldings and baseboards are painted the same light neutral colour to create a calming Zen ambiance.

The owners wanted large living spaces on the main floor, so they moved the library to the second floor and incorporated the square footage into the kitchen, family, living and dining rooms.

The inspiration for the salon (living room) was an antique fireplace, which was imported from Europe. Unfortunately it arrived broken and with pieces missing, so Amedeo says he and his team



THE COVER STORY





“put it back together again like Humpty Dumpty.” They also redesigned the hearth and created a black honed granite surround.

The owners wanted to hang a gilded mirror from their collection above the fireplace, but it was too small for the space. Amedeo’s solution? Layer the smaller mirror on top of a larger mirror with matching trim. “It looks like an original piece.”

The gracious dining room is open to the salon and hallway, which adds an airy feeling. The dining room has a sense of formality and is intimate yet spacious, he says.

The kitchen is massive, Amedeo says. It has ample cupboard, prep and pantry space. The owners requested that the island have a hand-finished look. A substantial furniture-finish workspace with wrought iron handles was custom made.

The south-facing morning room has a wall of windows. A view of the pool and backyard can be enjoyed with breakfast. Walkouts lead to a terrace made for entertaining.

The kitchen also includes a desk with a nine-foot mirrored french door to either side. The doors lead to the family room, which faces the backyard.

“The family room has large doors opening on to the terrace,” Amedeo says. “The family room is nicely scaled and has a woodburning fireplace.” Between the mirrored french doors is a custom-designed built-in cabinet that was created by a craftsman by hand on site. It was inspired by a stand-alone cabinet that the owners asked Amedeo to recreate.

A calming retreat, the master suite has an ante room with a circular vaulted ceiling and a sleeping area with a Juliette balcony. The ensuite bathroom has twin sinks and a fireplace to add a relaxing ambiance for anyone enjoying the soaker tub. Amedeo’s team painted the room, then the owner hand-stencilled the walls for a rich custom feel.

The library/office has built-in shelves that were made on site. Lower closed cabinets conceal filing systems. The fresh, bright workspace has a barrel ceiling with dentil moulding and up lighting.

The owners wanted to create special bedrooms for their children. Although the children were younger when they built the house, the couple planned ahead. Their daughter’s bedroom, the second biggest bedroom, has a walk-in closet and an ensuite bathroom, features she’d appreciate more as she got older. It’s almost like a master suite and









provides the privacy teenagers crave.

Their son wanted to be on the lower level in a space set apart from the rest of the family. His more contemporary bedroom has lots of shelf space, a walk-in closet and an ensuite bathroom.

The lower level also has a theatre/games room, a wine cellar and mechanical rooms to house energy-efficient systems. The spa-like pool change area has a shower with a pebble floor.

The owner originally wanted wireless internet but Amedeo suggested hardwiring the home. "Any features that are put into the infrastructure are always good. It gives the home longevity."

When the owners had the house built, they wanted

to retain the original pool. "The pool was positioned in a good place and didn't conflict with the building of the home. We resurfaced the pool and redid the pool deck," Amedeo says.

From the curb, the house is impressive, its front façade made of cut limestone. The sides and back are stucco. Limestone stairs lead to the front door. The curved stairs, two round windows on the roof and an arched pediment serve to visually soften the angular exterior.

The wrought iron and glass canopy above the front door was inspired by the Old Marriott Hotel in Paris, he says. "The owner sent pictures and asked if we could make a canopy something like it. We modified it in a

scale suitable for the house.”

The canopy, which has earring lighting on each side, not only looks good but has a clever practical feature. The curved canopy was designed to slope down slightly toward the house, where water collects in a small trough and runs down spouts on each side. The spouts direct water into the plant pots below.

The exterior railings and grillwork were designed to match the canopy, as was the wood, glass and wrought iron front door. The wrought iron design continues inside, where it graces the staircases to the upper and lower levels. Amedeo says that to create a holistic feeling, “the outside should match the inside. It gives the home a cohesive look.”

This home is an example of how collaboration and participation of a client makes for a successful project, Amedeo says. “The best projects are those where the clients participate and where there’s mutual respect and collaboration.”

Photos by Gilbert Benamou | www.gphotography.ca



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