



↑ The back of the home reveals its hipped-roof design and upper walkout. Build by Mazenga; landscaping by Fox Whyte; Tribù furniture from Avenue Road.

New Horizons

How Atelier Kastelic Buffey crafted a boundary-pushing abode in the humdrums of North Toronto

By Matthew Hague

A HOUSE BUILT WITH JOHN PAWSON-ESQUE MINIMALISM – rift-cut white oak floors, walls washed in light – and Peter Zumthor-style craftsmanship – an exterior clad in handmade clay brick tiles, each uniquely mottled – might seem impossibly unlivable for a busy family. For architecture firm Atelier Kastelic Buffey, such contradictions, though, are a catalyst for creativity, and an opportunity to prove how their quiet yet bold approach works even in the most unexpected of circumstances. →

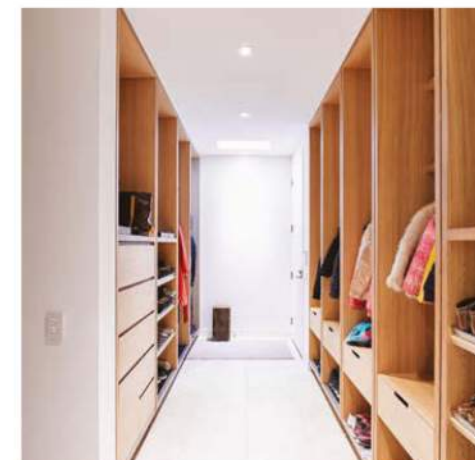
On a leafy street in North Toronto, the studio recently completed a 925-square-metre residence (their largest to date) that is both a comfortable home for two parents and their four kids, and a museum-worthy backdrop for contemporary art, of which there's plenty. It's where spare grandeur – floor-to-ceiling arctic white doors – meets smart practicality; many of those panels conceal storage, powder rooms and other utilities.

"Homes are intensely personal," says architect Kelly Buffey, co-founder of AKB. "So, to develop the design, we spent a lot of time with the family, understanding exactly what they needed." As such, the ground floor is a testament to the clan's love of entertaining. The front vestibule has not only a coat closet dedicated exclusively to guests (and another specifically for the family), but a private sitting area to settle in before being shown in, perhaps to the sunken fireside living room with its Jeffrey Milstein photography and Danish-modern furniture. →



↑ A massive sliding door closes off the hustle and bustle of the kitchen (built by Erik Cabinets) from the dining room when need be. Pendants and stools from Klaus; dining table from Drechsel Studio; chairs from Torp.

← Tucked neatly behind the kitchen is a pantry with direct access to the garage, making dropping off groceries a breeze.



←← A two-sided Ortal fireplace, surrounded by hot-rolled steel, separates sunken living room and dining space. Tub chairs and coffee tables from Torp; art by Jeffrey Milstein.

← Ceiling-height "lockers" in white oak provide storage for the family of six. Millwork by Mar-Tec Woodworking.



↖↖ The second-storey landing opens up to a skylight that reaches nearly six metres above the main floor. Painting by Michael Adamson.

↖ A roof window (from Alumicor) draws light into the master den. Sofa from Kiosk; red textile art by Peter Weber.

← The wide switch-back staircase, built by Erik Cabinets using white oak, spans three storeys.



← Another roof window bathes the master bath in sunlight. Porcelain slabs from Stone Tile; soaker tub from Ginger's; stool from Italinteriors.

↙ The master bedroom walks out to a balcony overlooking the backyard. White oak flooring throughout from Capital Hardwood; chair from Torp.



The family also loves to cook and entertain, so in addition to a massive kitchen, there are four places to share a meal, including a Corian breakfast bar, a long kitchen table and an outdoor pavilion with a built-in barbecue. The most exquisite food spot, though, is the dining room, centred around an AKB-designed white oak 18-seater, and edged by tinted-glass walls that open onto the backyard pool. Cleverly, it flows into the kitchen for easy catering, but has a hidden sliding door for privacy.

Elsewhere, the circulation is equally considered. The upper level is like a centrifuge. A wide, square walkway wraps around a sculptural, skylit staircase, acting as the arrivals and departures gate for the kids' bedrooms (each with its own ensuite), a backyard-facing terrace, two dens and the master suite.

The home's spare-yet-social personality extends to the exterior as well. AKB wanted it "to be respectful of its neighbours," says Buffy. "But we also wanted it to be authentic to our time." So, the studio used a hipped roof, complementing many of the adjacent places, then offset the peak, sliced the roof with a wraparound skylight, and clad the structure in contemporary, slate-grey bricks. "From afar, the brick tiles might read as one thing," says Buffy of the hand-honed materials from Petersen Tegel. "But up close, they reveal a lot of depth, and a lot of craft." ■ AKB.CA

CROSS SECTION

- 1 Kitchen
- 2 Kid's bedroom
- 3 Stair landing
- 4 Master ensuite
- 5 Living room

