

Former Maple Leaf didn't spend much time in NYC penthouse, so he's selling it

Hockey pro Eric Lindros, 34, is asking US\$6-million for his penthouse in New York's West Village, says the *Wall Street Journal*. Records show the former New York Ranger bought the condominium for nearly US\$2.5-million while it was being built about three years ago. The unit has three bedrooms, three and

CELEBRITY HOMES

a half baths and a planted rooftop terrace with Hudson River views. The athlete lived in the roughly 2,200-square-foot unit only briefly: Lindros rented it out in 2005 when he moved to

Toronto to play for the Maple Leafs and continued to rent it last season when he played for the Dallas Stars, the listing agent says. Lindros still owns property in Ontario and Quebec. *National Post*



FAMILIES GROW UP AND OUT

ADDITIONS

Old homes' large lots allow for expansion

BY DENISE DEVEAU

Growing families need their space — and harried adults need their sanctuary. For some, finding both in an extremely hectic world is a matter of working with what you have and making it more than the sum of its parts.

The Nashes found their dream location on a quiet, wooded street in the Yonge and Lawrence area. While the site was everything they had hoped for, the house was far from an ideal fit for a family of three children and two professionals who work from home. In their minds, it was simply a matter of adding the space they wanted in a style that would speak to their individual tastes.

"With each child, we had given up an office in our old home," says radiologist Stephen Nash. "We had simply outgrown it. When this other house came up, we bought it sight unseen with the intention of renovating."

The newly purchased house was a typical North Toronto three-bedroom home with one bathroom, limited space for kids and a small kitchen. The major appeal was the unusually large, deep wooded lot, which offered endless potential — and space — for an addition worthy of the family's dreams.

Today, the house boasts an impressive 1,600-square-foot, two-storey addition that provides a magnificent view of a sylvan backyard scene. Architect Richard Librach provided the inspiration for the project, which combines lofty spaces with a country setting, look and feel. "We wanted to create a warm, friendly home that provided a welcoming atmosphere for friends and family," explains Mr. Librach.

The deep property offered the opportunity to create an expansive façade for watching children play and absorbing the secluded surroundings. Natural materials such as cedar shingles are repeated on the front and back exterior walls, and express the personality of the interior, where granite, marble and maple finishes are used throughout — from the kitchen to the spa-themed bathroom.

The barrel-vaulted-style extension and cathedral ceilings create added space for the family's living and sleeping quarters. Custom-designed upper-floor windows are arced to mirror the curved rooflines. "We can lie in bed and see the tops of trees," says Mr. Nash. "It's like country living in the city."

A playful porthole window theme is repeated throughout the house, including on doors and the custom-designed staircase. On each side of the bedroom are symmetrical spaces for the bathroom and an art studio for Ms. Nash. For added inspiration, ceilings were designed to slope upward from the front to a soaring 15 feet at the back.

The large bow window on the main floor accommodates a spacious eat-in kitchen, which overlooks a separate family room. Glass pocket doors close off the latter without really disrupting the open concept. For the parents, this room with a view gives a clear sightline to their kids' goings-on without the distractions of noisy television and games. Finding the signature style that suits the individual family is about "trying to redirect people away from appropriating other solutions and focusing on the issues that relate to their living patterns, personal collections and rituals," says Mr. Librach. "Sometimes it doesn't happen early in the process, and it's not always predictable."

A quintessential example was an addition project for the Nudlers in North Toronto, where the "introduction was written at the end," as Mr. Librach puts it. That turned out to be a front-entrance tower built from Tyndal stone — a limestone used in municipal buildings in Winnipeg, Marla Nudler's hometown. "Nothing felt right until we came across that stone," says Mr. Librach. "That's



The Mason family renovated their Mount Pleasant home to add a social centre that incorporates kitchen, family room and formal dining area.

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what made the connection."

Connecting with their personal expression was not a problem for Francis and Gwen Mason, who recently expanded their 1920s Georgian-style house in the Yonge and Mount Pleasant neighbourhood. According to Ms. Mason, with two young kids and limited kitchen space, it was all getting a little too cozy. "The eat-in space was quite small. We had maybe three feet of clearance around the counter. And the tongue-and-groove flooring was becoming a major food accumulator."

The Masons debated at length over whether to add a family room, kitchen or formal dining area. The ultimate choice was to incorporate all three into one open, brightly lit room that would become a social centre for family and guests.

"We wanted a bigger kitchen and family room, as well as a space where we could entertain guests or simply sit down and have a glass of wine in front of a fireplace," says Mr. Mason. "We certainly didn't want a typical TV/family room."

The new 30x17-ft. addition created by Gow Hastings Architects and designer Brian Gluckstein is all about light and space, featuring floor-to-ceiling windows, expansive french doors and a vaulted open-concept ceiling. The new

addition, which has been artfully rendered to match the exterior of the existing building, extends to the back of the garage to blend seamlessly with the contemporary outdoor landscaping.

The intent of the overall design was to create a contemporary look and feel while having a space that fit with the Masons' penchant for antique furnishings and comfy chairs and sofas. White marble accents in the kitchen are paired with traditional wood finishes for the cupboards to emulate a European bistro feel that exudes warmth and hospitality.

The focal point of the entire space is a simple but elegant wood-burning fireplace built of a limestone composite. That, says Mr. Mason, was their crowning achievement and well worth the extra investment. "The difference between a wood-burning versus a natural gas fireplace is huge because the chimney requirements are so different. I'd say it added \$20,000 to the cost of the fireplace, but it was a must-have for us."

He adds that light was also a very important consideration. "The way the room is situated allows for a lot of early morning light. With the windows and the vaulted ceiling, it seems to be lit up all day. We love it."

National Post

Feel more, think less

Designers should include the unconscious



KELVIN BROWNE
Right Angles

The Inner Studio: A Designer's Guide to the Resources of the Psyche is a very useful book for architects and other designers. However, if you ignore author Andrew Levitt's more overtly pedagogical views, the book offers valuable lessons for anyone interested in the built world, including his or her home.

In the introduction, Mr. Levitt says the book "invites designers to trust the wisdom and creativity of their bodies, dreams and shadows and bring these resources into the experience of design." This is advice we can all use as we consider how architecture, interiors, landscape or products can enhance our lives. Too often we're afraid of our intuitions or feelings about design and try and rationalize the process. The old adage of form following function is one way of phrasing this kind of approach. Instead of form following feeling, this apparently more logical approach is responsible for most of the banal built world we have constructed. While form following financing may be part of the reason for this, I suspect it's the lack of emotional connection to those spaces that's the prime culprit.

Mr. Levitt teaches in the design studio at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture and works as a Jungian-orientated psychotherapist in Toronto. He has lectured internationally on the role of the unconscious in architecture and design internationally. What prompted him to write the book? He says, "I felt that architecture as it is generally practised does not include the richness and complexity we see when we look at things psychologically, where mystery, uncertainty or difficult conditions can surface and become integrated. With the built world, the provisional and irrational nature of things is seldom acknowledged. I felt I needed to enter and explore this aspect of the world."

For students, his concern is that "the education of designers currently begins and ends with

the rational world. We might believe this was sufficient if we did not have the evidence of a troubling state of affairs in the built world."

To be clear, this isn't a silly New Age guru claiming that emotions are a substitute for rigour or engineering savvy. Mr. Levitt is an architect who understands that all the education in the world doesn't matter if you can't connect design to human emotions. If you're thinking, "So what's this got to do with me?"; think about the houses you've loved or aspired to own. Unless you're completely superficial and it's all about price and square footage, it's likely the places you care about are those that relate to your unconscious, as well as your more quantifiable or learned considerations.

Why does one room, an arrangement of furniture, a specific fireplace feel good to you? Why do you walk into a house and know it could be your home after rejecting 100 others? The reasons for this are unlikely that its form followed function or the house is the best value on the market. You care because of meanings your unconscious brings to what you're seeing.

"Our built world is not suffering from a lack of analysis, but a lack of feeling," Mr. Levitt says. "There is a split between what we are feeling and what we are building." He doesn't offer easier answers about how to heal his schism but, like a good psychologist, does give designers work

'THE IRRATIONAL NATURE OF THINGS IS SELDOM ACKNOWLEDGED'

(and by extension, all of us who live in the built world) that can help us become more mindful. If the book can't help you become a better designer, it can still help you make better design-related decisions.

"The key to understanding the world from the point of view of the psyche is to see and understand the built world symbolically," the author says. "While the decisions that result in the making of the built world are highly rationalized, few are the result of truly rational thinking, which is wisdom." Aimed at designers, he says, "If we include the unconscious in design, the process is not subject to corruption. With this approach, your work cannot become a brand or commodity. Creative work is always under pressure to satisfy society's appetite for branded material. When your inner life is brought into your work, authenticity replaces the brand."

The remark is equally applicable to non-designers, as consumers. When your inner life helps you decide what you build and buy, you create a more authentic life.

■ *The Inner Studio*, Riverside Architectural Press, University of Waterloo School of Architecture, 2007, ISBN 0978097815. *National Post*





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