



Be at the centre of it all.

CHURCH X SHUTER

menkes

[register at menkes.com](http://register.at.menkes.com)



SHAI GIL

## NATURE HOUSE

EVERY LITTLE DETAIL IN THIS TORONTO HOME TAKES INTO  
CONSIDERATION THE CHANGING SEASONS OUTSIDE

PH3

“IT’S MODERN, BUT THROUGHOUT THE SPACE THE LEVEL OF DETAIL IS VERY HIGH: FOR EXAMPLE, LIGHTING SET IN RECESSES AROUND THE PERIMETER OF THE CEILINGS PULLS THEM AWAY FROM THE WALLS, SO THE CEILINGS APPEAR TO FLOAT. — ANNA SIMONE, CECCONI-SIMONE

# Through the prism of nature

THE VIEW IS EVERYTHING FOR THIS RAVINE PROPERTY

MARTHA UNIACKE BREEN

It sometimes seems that modern-day Torontonians don't fully appreciate the uniqueness of the site that fur traders first settled back in the 1600s. Blessed with a harbour that was sheltered behind a peninsula (nowadays, after being cleaved from the mainland by a mid-19th century storm, the Toronto Islands), the location was lined with deep ravines and watershed creek valleys that flowed down to the lake. Today, most of these ravines still survive in something like their natural form, which is unusual for North American cities of its size and age.

Cecconi-Simone's design for a family blessed with a property overlooking one of the great Toronto ravines makes nature the main event from virtually every room in the house. There's not a single wall, surface or detail that hasn't been considered without the context of the changing seasons outside; its quiet, open design is spare, but not plain. "The house and nature allow each other to 'breathe,'" says principal Anna Simone.

"For us, it was important that everything that was 'designed' was very minimalist," she continues, "so that no matter where you are in the home, nature is a factor — either directly through the windows or through screens, to delineate spaces without defining them. It's modern, but throughout the space the level of detail is very high: for example, lighting set in recesses around the perimeter of the ceilings pulls them away from the walls, so the ceilings appear to float. And elements like floor registers and the reveals of the baseboards are set in, so they almost disappear."

In keeping with its supporting role to the view, surfaces are purposely kept simple, mainly through the

use of white walls with black accents, and a graphic leitmotif of horizontal and vertical lines. In this low-key setting, elements that depart from the base principles of the design are brought forward: a wonderful collection of contemporary art, and of course, the scenery, providing an endlessly shifting backdrop.

That sense of nature as the main event occurs from the moment you open the front door; though it's revealed gently, past a double-height entry area and closet-lined hall, to the first of several gridded screens that guides the layout. Beyond this first screen, an expanse of floor-to-ceiling windows stretches across almost the entire back, making the edge of the house seem to almost fall away. Even the fireplace in the centre of the back window-wall is only as detailed as necessary; it vents directly through the back, so there's no chimney to block sightlines.

To the left, another screen wall leads to the dining room. Here, the screen is divided into three panels, with the centre one solid and custom-sized for a lively artwork of sweeping white whirls on a black ground.

In the dining room, another wintry abstract, all swirling russets, creams and blacks, helps to draw the landscape in to the room. Over the table, a simple hanging fixture of egg-shaped lights is striking for the spherical element it adds to the straight horizontal and verticals elsewhere.

Sliding glass doors lead out to a small seating area off both dining room and a corner of the living area. Just big enough for a pair of chairs and a small drinks table, this little perch puts you right in the view on a summer evening. It shelters a similar-sized walkout directly beneath, accessed from the lower level.

At the other side, the bespoke Bulthaup kitchen consists of an expanse of smooth,



PHOTOS: SHAI GIL

"For us, it was important that everything that was 'designed' was very minimalist," designer Anna Simone says, "so that no matter where you are in the home, nature is a factor."

warm grey cabinetry on each side of a plain white composite-topped island, broken only by the sparest of metal handles and trim. The kitchen also features its own view, though perhaps less expansive than the others, set between sections of white wall: in contrast to the "disappearing" black window trim in other rooms, in this case it has the effect of seeming to frame the view, like a portrait.

The kitchen window complements and adds natural light to an actual work of art, placed on the wall panel at ninety degrees to it. The placement of the wall panel, and the art, is another well-thought-out gesture: the panel, custom-sized as with other artwork, perfectly positions the painting for viewing from the landing of the staircase on the other side.

The staircase was as finely detailed and considered as any of the principal areas. A small swarm of "bocce-ball" translucent glass globes cascades from the foyer ceiling, in front of a screen panel set high in the wall that casts dappled, artistic shadows over the floor below. Even the black metal railing, with its simple right-angle brackets, adds to the composition. "Everything that shows is meant to be seen," declares Simone.

Upstairs, the master suite is one of the few areas where colour was deliberately introduced, though it's understated: the sepia tones of the draperies and linens are softer than the crisp black-and-white of the rest of the space. Overlooking the very heart of the big maple trees outside from another wide floor-to-ceiling window, it feels exactly like being tucked up in a nest — especially cozy when snow is falling outside.

"Being given the opportunity to create a man-made object that celebrates nature is really a privilege, and it's something I love to do," says Simone. "I couldn't really imagine this house without that element. The house comes alive in nature, while nature hovers all around it, and seems to protect it."

Special to National Post



The Bulthaup kitchen consists of an expanse of smooth, warm grey cabinetry on each side of a plain white composite-topped island.

Sam McDadi's  
**Prestige Homes Showcase**  
Visit our web links below for further information

<p>\$5,800,000</p> <p>mcdadi.ca/511c Huge 130647 sq ft on Credit River. Dream Kitchen, W/M, manicured lot w/ extensive landscaping and Guestbook</p>	<p>\$4,680,000</p> <p>mcdadi.ca/458m Pebble Beach. 5 bedrooms, 7 bathrooms. Walking distance to the lake. Mix of modern and traditional decor.</p>	<p>\$3,528,000</p> <p>mcdadi.ca/122h 3+1 bedrooms, 7 bathrooms, 4000 sq ft above grade with finished basement. Meticulous home w/ high quality finishes</p>
<p>\$3,488,000</p> <p>mcdadi.ca/2471j 4 beds, 5 baths. Backs the Credit River/Ravine. Gourmet Kitchen. All baths feature heated floors.</p>	<p>\$3,250,000</p> <p>mcdadi.ca/1359g Lorne Park. 4+1 bedrooms, 6 baths. Approx. 4,407 sq ft. 111 x 154 lot. Finished walk-up basement.</p>	<p>\$2,999,900</p> <p>mcdadi.ca/2076L 3+2 beds, 4 baths. Ravine lot. Marble and hardwood floors. 4 fireplaces. Gourmet kitchen. W/D to balcony.</p>
<p>\$2,938,000</p> <p>mcdadi.ca/57c 4+1 beds, 6 baths. Post Credit. Custom built. Hardwood. Heated tiled floor. Salt water pool.</p>	<p>\$2,650,000</p> <p>mcdadi.ca/1278b 5+1 beds, 4 baths. W/D to patio. Hardwood. Family room w/ fireplace. Finished walk-up basement.</p>	<p>\$2,488,000</p> <p>mcdadi.ca/1268r 3 beds, 2 baths. Toned lot with large pool. Updated kitchen with island. Finished basement with wine cellar.</p>
<p>\$2,098,000</p> <p>mcdadi.ca/167h Brand new 4 beds, 5 bath Remington home. Approx. 4,100 sq ft with a 50-ft terrace. Numerous upgrades &amp; features.</p>	<p>\$1,799,800</p> <p>mcdadi.ca/762d 4 beds, 6 baths. Hardwood. Gourmet kitchen. W/D to deck. Basement features bar, 2 fireplaces, 12th floor.</p>	<p>\$1,299,000</p> <p>mcdadi.ca/5859I 4+1 beds, 4 baths. Pre-shaped lot. Durable neighbourhood. Professionally finished basement. Gas fireplace.</p>
<p>\$1,250,000</p> <p>mcdadi.ca/1624m 4+2 beds, 4 baths. Open concept. Hardwood on main. Spacious kitchen. Self contained basement apartment.</p>	<p>\$1,198,000</p> <p>mcdadi.ca/2052a 3 beds, 3 baths. All new kitchen. Hardwood floors. Newer bathrooms. Pot lights. New roof.</p>	<p>\$998,800</p> <p>mcdadi.ca/2370r 3 beds, 2 baths. Family room w/ fireplace. W/D to private pool w/ in-ground pool. Hardwood floors.</p>

No Property Is Too Big Or Too Small For Team McDadi

**SAM MCDADI** REAL ESTATE INC. BROKER/SALE  
MCDADI.COM

DIRECT: 416.801.2400  
NORTH OFFICE: 905.502.1500  
SOUTH OFFICE: 905.823.1500  
Email: Sam@McDadi.com