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PRIVATE APPEAL

Floor-to-ceiling glazing paired with thoughtful landscaping results in a Vancouver home that feels like it's miles away from the city.

by **ANICKA QUIN**
photographs by **DAVID O. MARLOW**

Place of Purpose

Light travels through the main floor of this home on the UBC Endowment lands thanks to its careful placement on the landscape. The homeowner is also an avid art collector, so the placement of each piece was built into the design of each room.

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For the average person, it would have been difficult to imagine that the resort-like, secluded home on this property in UBC's Endowment Lands could exist here. When the homeowners purchased the original property, a '50s rambler was perched near the top of the lot, and the rest of the land was overgrown, steep and inaccessible. You might spot views of Burrard Inlet—a big part of the appeal—but also of your neighbours. There wasn't a lot of privacy.

The homeowners knew they were looking to build their dream home, and discovered the firm of Garret Cord Werner Architects and Interior Designers through Garret Werner's brother, Darren, whom they'd already brought

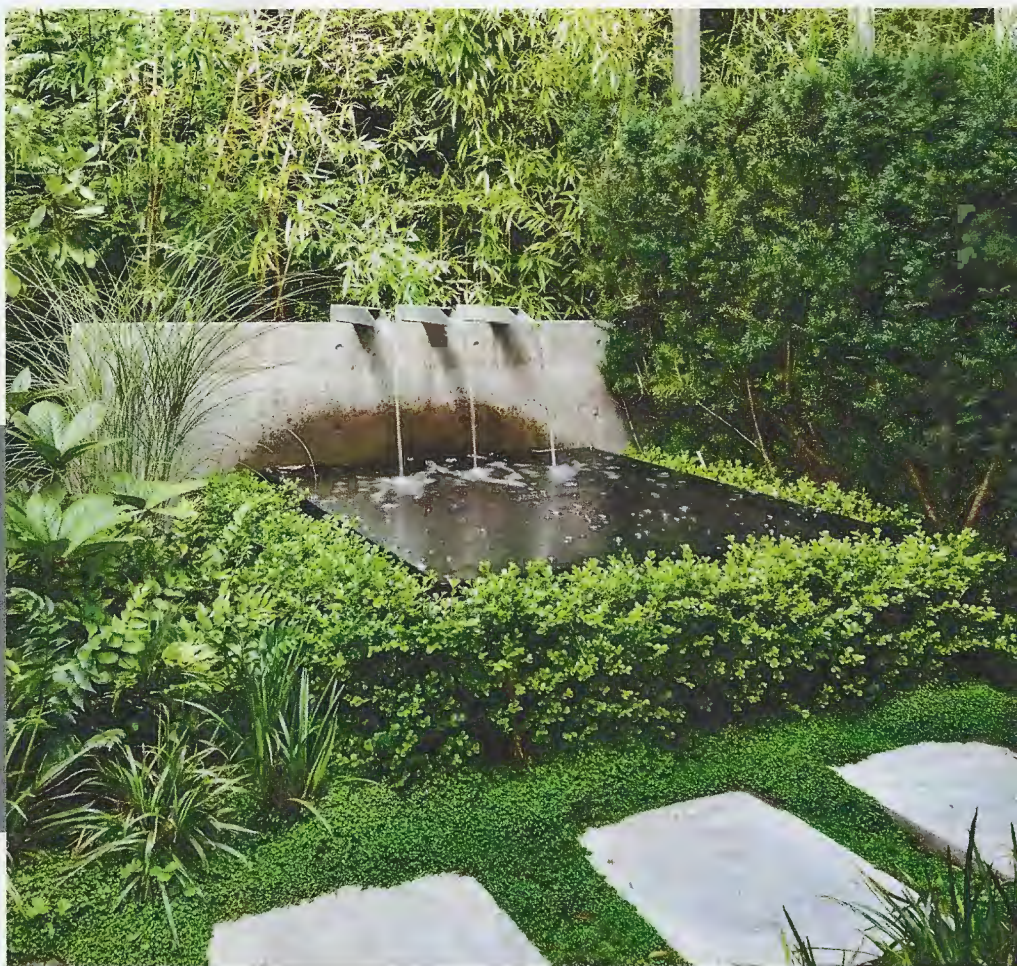
on to be their builder. Though he's now based in Seattle, Werner grew up in Vancouver and once worked with the late Robert Ledingham. (In fact, his journey south was thanks to Ledingham—Werner was charged with opening up the legendary interior designer's operations stateside.) Taming the landscape was going to be a huge part of making this property work, and Werner's design process was made for this kind of task.

"My approach, the way I approach most of my projects, is to look at them in a very holistic process," says Werner. "I look at architecture, interiors and landscape as one cohesive unit. And at the very beginning is the



Float House

The home is designed as two pavilions on the main floor. Clay koi ponds are right up against the homeowner's main-floor office, giving the appearance that the room floats.



Green Getaway

The extensive landscape design was integral to the design of the home—every plant seen here was selected by the designer and landscape architect Ron Rule.

landscape—how to sculpt it and make sure the project is a part of the land.” Too often, says Werner, homes can feel as if they were dropped onto the land from space. “I wanted it to become a part of the land, for the landscape to be an integral part of the home design.”

And so while older, perimeter trees were maintained, the scrub that had overtaken the property was removed and replaced with clay koi ponds, Japanese-inspired plantings, hardscaping and an infinity pool. And, perhaps just as importantly, the team worked with landscape architect Ron Rule to create the solitude that this property was capable of through strategic plantings. “Everywhere you looked, you saw neighbours’ houses,” says Werner. “We created privacy where none existed.”

That sense of cozy seclusion is almost spa-like: Werner has created an oasis, with moments designed for contemplation and relaxation. The home itself was designed to face out onto this landscape, constructed from two pavilion-like components connected by a central dining

area, so that light and those vistas could carry through it on many sides. At the front of the home, a koi pond surrounds both the main entrance—where a floating, blackened stainless-steel staircase rises up to the bedrooms on the second floor—and across the water, the home office, where one can sit in leather Minotti chairs and watch the fish swim by. (Even in the work-focused spaces, there are intentionally integrated mindful moments.)

As the flow of the home travels to the back, the kitchen is both easily accessible to the back patio and pool, and to an adjacent outdoor kitchen, equipped with overhead glazing to make it inviting on even rainy Vancouver days. And, opposite a small courtyard, a more casual living room leads directly out to an infinity pool.

The central dining area, which brings both pavilions together, features a fused glass wall that Werner designed in conjunction with local glass artists Nathan Allan Glass. Floating over the wall is an unusual treatment, too: from a distance there appears to be a piece of drywall centred



Wining and Dining
In the kitchen (above right) a bronzed walking stick floats in an inset designed specifically for the artwork. On the lower level, chiselled grey marble lines the walls of the salon area just outside the wine cellar—home to 1,500 bottles (left).



Artistic Retreat

The dining room is at the centre of the home, and features a fused glass wall designed with Nathan Allan Glass. A piece of stretched fabric floats over the wall, providing space for artwork.

on it, though it's actually a swath of fabric stretched over a steel frame. "It's very beautiful and subtle," says Werner, "and it lets the painting float against the background."

And art is given serious thought and placement both indoors and out. Light frames each piece, with projectors recessed into the ceilings that are set to specifically capture and highlight the work. In the kitchen, a bronze walking stick floats in a niche designed for it, held with two bronze clamps and backlit so that it appears to float. In fact, the warm cedar that Werner incorporated into the building design in the rafters and structural moments was selected to work with the art collection, particularly the totem pole visible outside the windows, and the large First Nations mask that hangs in the living room.

Down on the lowest level of the home, a wine cellar hosts 1,500 bottles on blackened steel racks, while a boulder, craned in from the property, acts as a tasting table. In the nearby powder room, Werner had rock from the landscape sliced into thin sheets and lined the walls with it, creating the feeling that you are truly underground in this space. A steam room, sauna and pool change room are just steps away.

"The whole premise of this design is to feel like you're living in a resort," he explains. And with the natural landscape, the privacy of the design, the pool just outside the door and the home's integrated architecture, the house truly feels as though it's in a land that's all its own—all the while feeling like it was always meant to be there. *HL*