

# THE PERFECT *Bathing Ritual*

Old-world luxury meets new-world design esthetic

BY BRENDAN CHARTERS

**COMPLETE CLEANSE:** From steam to dry sauna, the rich finishes abound in this award-winning bathroom renovation.

In a North Toronto neighbourhood sits a home that the community refers to as "the castle." It was built in 1931 for industrialist Frederick Cowan; the architect was John Lyle who also designed Union Station and the Royal Alexandra Theatre. At one time, Steve Stavro, the late owner of the Toronto Maple Leafs and Knob Hill Farms, owned this palatial home.

Not only is the main building 15,000 square feet, a

1,000-square-foot coach house is attached to a double garage adjacent to the home. It is this single-storey structure that becomes the focus of this story.

At one time, the coach house was used as the ballroom and then it was reportedly cut in half to make way for a new swimming pool. More recently, it has housed a remodelled three-piece bathroom, a large open-panel walled billiards room, which includes a massive stone-mantled wood-burning fireplace.

## MYSTERY PURCHASERS

In 2011, an undisclosed European couple purchased the home with an eye to updating the space to make it more modern yet retain the value of the original heritage features. To accomplish this, the Design Agency was hired to design the project in its entirety, including selecting all of the finishes and bringing in the right contractor to carry out their design ideas.

The Design Agency lists the Shangri-La residences, Yorkville Plaza, and eateries such as Brasaii and Momofuko among their prestigious projects. But, in this instance, it was their international hotel work that caught the eye of this couple.

You might know the Design Agency better as HGTV's *Designer Guys*, Allen Chan, Matt Davis and Anwar Mekhayech. Eurodale Developments first partnered with the Guys when they worked together on the TV series.

As a result, a successful synergy developed. And so, Anwar, the lead on this project, was confident that Eurodale could execute their design plans for this impressive transformation.

## HOW THE DESIGN UNFOLDS

The coach house would become a fitness room. The existing bathroom would be converted into a European-styled private spa. Space was harvested from the main billiard/ballroom for a new dry sauna and steam room.

Expanding the original bathroom meant blowing out the old shower and modifying it to create a hallway to access the converted living area. Respect for existing (and expensive) finishes was paramount.

Marble tiles were painstakingly



### FIRESIDE CHAT:

When winding down from the workout and bathing ritual, catch some Futbol by the fire.



**FORMAL AFFAIR:** The ballroom converted to a fitness centre with adjacent contemporary spa forms a luxurious backdrop to a healthy lifestyle.



**TONE ON TONE:**

Glass, marble and natural wood intertwine for a soft and relaxing colour and texture infusion.



## TAKING A COOL PLUNGE

The perfect bathing ritual, so common in Europe, is a cool plunge in either the shower, outdoor shower or swimming pool, then into the steam room for a humid sweat. Lastly, one heads to the dry sauna to further purify the pores. This trifecta of pleasure is known to shock the body and alert the senses while inducing relaxation.

removed. A tile slab was purchased and cut to match the existing shade and specifications for a seamless blend. This afforded a specification change. The mosaic marble tile on the steam room walls was changed to full slabs to match the benches. It became more efficient to use full slabs and benefit from the economy of scale in the purchase. It also made for a stunning esthetic.

The power supply was insufficient for the dry sauna and Kohler steam pumps. To execute the renovation, new power feeds were fed in through secret tunnels located about the grounds. Once everything was powered up and ready to operate, the luxurious finishes were installed.

Interior finishes included clear cedar on all walls of the dry sauna, the ceilings and floor. Across the hall from the sauna is the steam room, complete with barrel-vaulted ceiling, LED lights and full-marble slab benches and walls.

On the wall exterior of the floating cabinet panels, which were constructed by Eurodale's cabinet maker, there exists a contemporary juxtaposition against the more traditional panelling around it. Special hand-cut scarf joinery allowed the old panels to tie in seamlessly with the new.

### THE AWARD GOES TO

This bathroom, clearly fit for a King and Queen, received top honours by the Ontario Home Builders Association (OHBA). It was awarded Most Outstanding Bathroom Renovation in Ontario in 2013.

Both the Design Agency and Eurodale Developments are extremely proud of the recognition. "There are a lot of renovations in the province of Ontario in any given year," said Jim Cunningham, co-owner of Eurodale. "To stand amongst the best in the province is a humbling honour and we consider ourselves very lucky to get opportunities to build projects like these for the talented people that design them, and the clients that undertake them." ♦

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