



A steel and glass staircase with open risers is a knock-out first impression just inside the front door. **OPPOSITE TOP:** The dining room's many magnificent features include the floor-to-ceiling windows, stone wall and deep indigo accent colour. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** Stucco, stone and wood were used on the home's façade to help blend into the surroundings.



“Steeped in tradition”

is how **David Small**, of **David Small Designs**, describes the area that is home to his latest residential project. The description is apt; 123 Balsam Dr., nestled in the heart of Olde Oakville, has a historic century farmhouse as its closest neighbour. David insists the striking 9,900 sq.ft. contemporary build “is comfortable in its neighbourhood.”

David says that he and the rest of the creative team – **James Mantella** of **Covington Estates** and **Barb Poce** of **Interiors By Barb Poce** – worked hard to design something that fit in. “We didn’t want a building that looked like it came from outer space and crashed here,” he explains. “It needed to look like it belonged.” Its façade – with horizontal lines and vast expanses of glass – is not at all like that of a typical Oakville residence, yet somehow the house is right at home. *Continued on page 26*



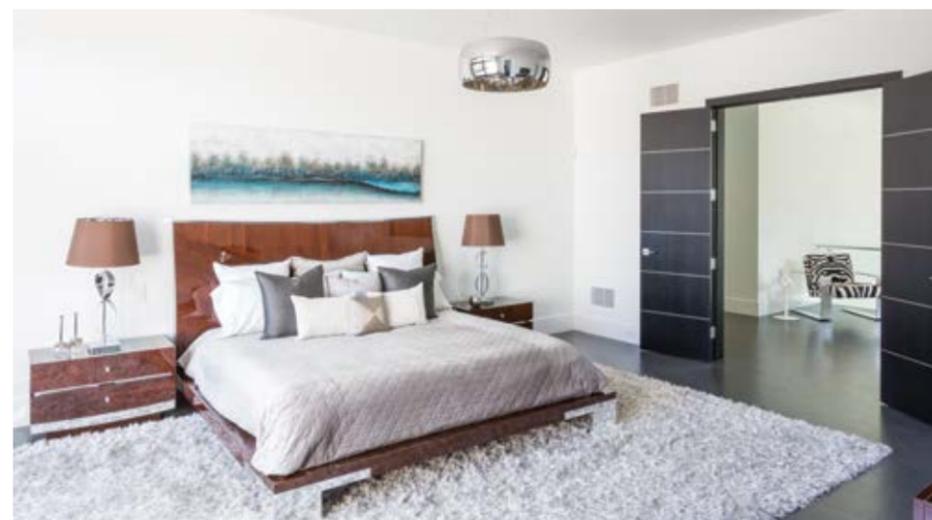
MODERN MANOR

STORY **NANCY FORNASIERO** | PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON HARTOG**





How did they achieve this feeling of belonging without the use of traditional architectural elements? David relied instead on the natural surroundings. “One thing I always insist on with my buildings is that they love the ground,” he says. For David, that means using natural materials, being mindful of scale, and an awareness of the surrounding landscape so that it can be incorporated into the design. “This is why, for example, we have planters extending outward from the home and fences that match the architecture,” he says. “This is a house that grabs the land and says ‘I’m not just a building.’” He calls this style of architecture Nature Modern, partly inspired by the Prairie school houses of Frank Lloyd Wright.



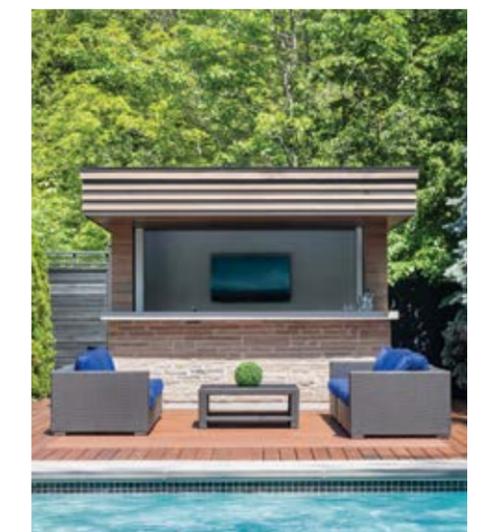
David’s favourite feature is the front façade. “It sets the table for what you’re about to see inside,” he says. “Without giving too much away, it exhibits that you’re going to get a modern experience. And it’s wide enough to showcase all the materials: stucco, stone, glass and wood.” Too often, contemporary façades feel boxy and bland, but here the window patterning, variety of materials, and numerous strategically placed protrusions work together to create powerful visual interest.

TOP LEFT: Great room highlights include: soaring cedar ceilings, a wall of windows and an imported marble fireplace surround. **LEFT:** Neutral tones in the custom kitchen help maintain the indoor-outdoor feel. **ABOVE:** A loft door rolls away to reveal the office.

For James, the highlight of the home is situated a full 180 degrees away in the expansive, wooded backyard. Complete with gorgeous landscaping by Strybos Barron King Landscape Architecture, a fully-appointed cabana, saltwater pool, illuminated waterfall and concrete natural-gas fire bowls, all create a veritable luxury oasis. While relaxing on the covered stone patio that flows seamlessly from the interior, it’s impossible to tell that you’re mere steps away from bustling Lakeshore Road. “There’s just a great energy to this space,” says James. “When it’s all lit up at night, I feel like I’m in Miami.”

Barb points to the great room as her favourite space. “Those wonderful windows, the height, the drama,” she says. “I love the connection to the outdoors.” A two-storey, corner-window feature with a tongue-and-groove cedar ceiling flows outside, creating a lofty indoor-outdoor feel. Barb is also proud of the care that went into the fireplace, which boasts a 21-foot high surround of book-matched Nero St. Laurent and Cristallino Bianco marble slabs, custom-ordered from Italy. The hearth is visible from all corners of this massive open area, which also includes a mod custom Scavolini kitchen and a breakfast nook. *Continued on page 28*

TOP LEFT: Clean lines in the master en suite preserve the home’s contemporary look. **MIDDLE LEFT:** Warm walnut and layers of texture in the bedding and carpet result in a warm, welcoming master bedroom. **BOTTOM LEFT:** The outdoor space includes a covered living room. **BELOW:** A lounge and bar extends the poolside area.





LEFT: A sleek bar encourages indoor entertainment. **MIDDLE LEFT:** The lower-level media area is kept open and airy. **BOTTOM LEFT:** A pop of colour and a cedar ceiling connects the lower level to the rest of the home. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Glass doors allow the wine room to be seen and enjoyed.



All interior surface materials – plus cabinets, windows, mouldings, doors, lighting fixtures and hardware were selected by Barb over the span of 18 arduous months of curating only the best of the best. **Vercon Contracting** painted the home throughout, and **Chrome Mechanical Corp.** installed the fireplace. Since nothing run-of-the-mill would do here, a great deal of time went into developing custom finishes and sourcing out-of-the-ordinary materials. Seeing the results, it's hard to believe this was Barb's first time tackling a contemporary project. "It was a real departure for me and there was a learning curve, but it was a great road," she says. "Mostly, I tried very hard to not let it be too cold or too modern." She definitely succeeded.

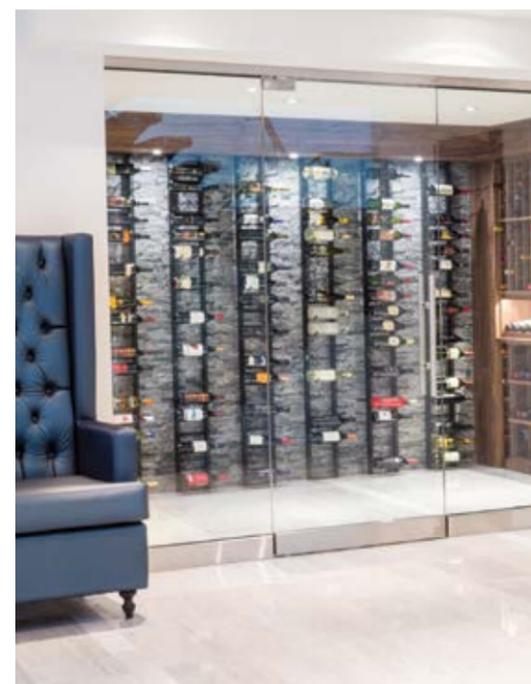
The dining room is another jaw-dropping feature with an indoor-outdoor feel. "When you're in there, it's almost like alfresco dining," says David, who was inspired by the windowed conservatories found on old Victorian homes. Like a conservatory, the room boasts windows on both sides. "It's a beautifully balanced appendage to the façade,"

David explains. The pièce de résistance here is a textured stone wall that extends to the exterior façade of the house.

The upper level is reached by a smartly decorated elevator or by a staircase that seems to float through the airy space, thanks to a sleek stainless-steel-and-glass balustrade. Each of the four bedrooms has a heated-floor en suite and generous custom closets, among other luxuries. The master suite is especially breathtaking thanks to a 14-foot wide sliding glass door that opens onto a large cedar-and-glass deck overlooking the garden below.

Not to be outdone, the lower level – with its theatre room, wet bar, recreation room, stone fireplace, gym, spa bathroom and wine-tasting room equipped for 1,032 bottles – is every bit as dazzling as the rest of the home.

123 Balsam, artfully staged by Barb and James, is move-in ready and currently for sale. No doubt the future homeowners will be captivated by the warm, organic energy that hums throughout this unique and cool contemporary space. **OH**



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