



# Una Bella Casa

BY KRISTIN FITZGERALD-ZITA // PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON HARTOG

Just on the edge of Old Oakville, tucked along one of the town's most exclusive streets, is an Italian-inspired estate whose old-style façade belies the contemporary masterpiece within. The newly built residence is the dream home of Karen and Rene Monaro, a couple who spent two years painstakingly bringing their unique vision to life.

The Monaros believe that the Post family, who were among the first settlers in Halton County in the early 1800s, originally owned the land where their elegant new home now stands. Indeed, a small, two-room homestead with a rustic lake stone exterior – typical of early homes in the area – is now a dramatic feature in their backyard, exquisitely designed by **International Landscaping**.

Good friend and builder **Nick Carnicelli** of **Carriage Gate Homes** encouraged the Monaros to preserve the charming stone building for its historic appeal. They lovingly restored it by adding heating and air conditioning, new windows and doors, and a tongue-and-groove wood ceiling. It will eventually house two of Rene's prized vintage Ferraris. The quaint stone homestead is delightful, but the new house is the real treasure.

Designed by **David W. Small Designs** and custom-built by Carriage Gate Homes, the 5,800 sq. ft. home isn't what the Monaros first envisioned. It's 2,800 sq. ft. larger and has six fireplaces, a pool, a hot tub, and a second storey – none of which were on their wish list. Their intent was

to downsize to a bungalow, but they couldn't be happier with the grand-scale home that they've discovered perfectly suits their every need.

It also fulfills their dream of creating a contemporary Italian retreat. "There's a misconception that Italian design is ornate," explains Rene, who was born and raised in Italy. "No one in Italy uses ornate design because apartments and rooms there are small. Ornate occupies more space so everything went modern."

Their goal was to create an interior with clean lines and uncluttered spaces, and to dress it up in muted, earthy shades with a few tantalizing pops of colour. They didn't want traditional or transitional, they wanted their own brand of contemporary. With the help of designer **Alison Knapp** and her assistant **Sonia Harrison** from **Barnard & Speziale Design Associates**, they succeeded brilliantly.

"Both the clients and I liked the idea of a very traditional stone exterior with peaked rooflines and dormers, while the interior was a complete departure – clean and contemporary in its execution," says Knapp.

Wide-plank pecan hardwood flooring in warm chocolate runs through the large foyer, up the floating staircase and down the second floor hallway. The foyer also offers the first glimpse of the monolithic two-sided fireplace that warms the great room, providing dramatic flair to both spaces. Clad in mottled cream and grey travertine, it's a hint of the grandeur to come. *Continued on page 26*



**OPPOSITE:** The original homestead is an interesting architectural treasure in the beautifully landscaped backyard.

**TOP LEFT:** Rene's love of cars spills into the office with its racy red and lacquered accents.

**TOP RIGHT:** The Wow-factor in the great room is everywhere, including the backlit cloud panels suspended from the ceiling.

**LEFT:** Visitors are greeted with instant impact in the front entrance. Warm wood contrasts the sparkle of the sideboard and the vivid and distinctive art piece.





**LEFT:** The rich, warm wood in the stunning custom kitchen is an earthy anchor among the lighter tones and vaulted ceilings. **TOP:** A secret passageway leads to a pantry and storage space and all but disappears when the doors are closed. **ABOVE:** The design dream team included Alison Knapp (left) and Jackie Godinho-Frias (right).



# feature

**BELOW:** The soaring travertine two-sided fireplace is a focal point that can be seen from both the front entrance and the great room. **RIGHT:** Wall-to-wall doors bathe the dining room in light and lead to a backyard oasis.


The fireplace surround in the great room soars two storeys and features 19 pieces of travertine. Deep brown cabinetry echoes the tone in the pecan floor and spans the wall, drawing the eye to the beautifully arched windows that open onto the private backyard. Elegant cream drapery panels drop from clear acrylic rods to frame the windows in simple luxury.

Large variegated travertine tiles throughout the great room and adjoining kitchen subtly mimic the fireplace stone, providing both interest and visual continuity.

Both the elegant fabric chandelier over the dining table and the dramatic nickel drum shade floating above the great room offer a soft counterpoint to the sleek lines of the more modern design.

The kitchen, a gorgeous space created by **Jackie Godinho-Frias** of **Cameo Kitchens and Fine Cabinetry**, is truly a work of art. With consistency a key factor in clean design, the deep brown tones are repeated in both the cabinetry and the glass tile backsplash. Recessed hardware maintains the streamlined look. A butler's pantry provides additional storage as well as a second dishwasher and sink, and it's all hidden behind pocket doors that, when closed, blend seamlessly into the cabinets surrounding them. If you can dream it, Cameo can build it. They also created the custom cabinetry in the great room and the luxurious walk-in closet in the master bedroom. *Continued on page 28*





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**ABOVE LEFT:** Cool, muted colours in the master bedroom create an atmosphere of Zen-like, soothing tranquility. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The spa-like appeal continues in the master bath where rich dark wood mixes with crisp white elements. **RIGHT:** Dazzling pink accents and dramatic wallpaper sprinkle this bedroom with Hollywood glamour.

Just off the great room is the couple's stunning bedroom retreat, a lovely space that is Karen's favourite room in the house. Vaulted ceilings and soft blue and white walls lend a quiet serenity to the bedroom. Two sets of double French doors, by **Kolbe Gallery**, flank a marble-clad fireplace and open onto a private patio with heated floors.

The en suite, with its dramatic square tub, double vanities and wall-mounted taps is a haven. As designer Alison Knapp enthused, "The solid white stone floor, the jeweled wallpaper and the Swarovski crystal sconces – how can one not feel beautiful getting ready in this space?"

There's not a single spot in the home that hasn't been carefully thought out and exquisitely designed. That includes the basement, a sprawling

hideaway designed by Rene himself that features a home theatre, a soundproof music studio for their daughter, and a place for Rene to display his car-themed collectibles.

The home's second floor is a fully autonomous wing for the couple's three children. Each bedroom has been meticulously designed to suit the personality of its occupant. The pink room, with its elegant yet girly Hollywood-glam and sparkly accents seems to captivate all that see it.

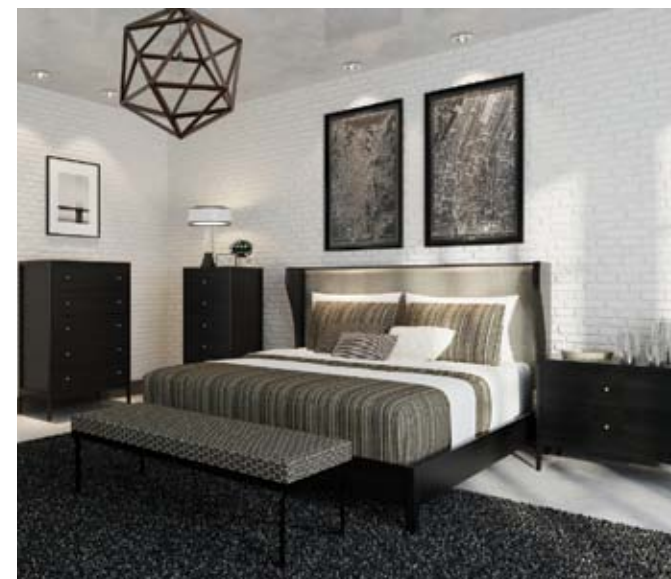
The Monaro home dispels the myth that contemporary equals cold and austere. They have achieved their vision of a warm and exquisite Italian-inspired house that instead of feeling like a museum simply feels like home. **OH**

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