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DESIGNING FOR PERFECTION

Like many architectural designers, John Paul Boisvert looks at his share of stunning homes and magazine photos. But when it comes time to sit down and work on his next design, he likes to draw what he hasn't seen.

PHOTOS TAKEN AT ARTEMANO

"I try to find something that is not in those pictures," says John Paul Boisvert, owner and founder of Kanata-based architectural services firm **Hierarchy Development & Design (HDD)**. "I want something unique. I try to take myself out from the crowd and make my [designs] stand out."

Obviously, it's a method that works. He won a prestigious Canadian Home Builders' Association Award in Halifax earlier this year. He converted a dark basement in Kingston into a modern, pub-style family room to win a coveted Home Renovation Award in the "Any Room" category, one that attracts the largest range of projects.

His winning design features a stone-faced fireplace and a large open bar. It makes use of existing mechanical features, which include a ceiling drop-down. "I wanted to bring a warm environment to the family while keeping the look very unique," he says.

A graduate of the Architectural Technology program at Ottawa's Algonquin College, John has 21 years of experience in the construction industry.

He established HDD, specializing in custom homes, urban infill, additions, renovations and residential and commercial design – all done with 3D renderings and models – in 2006. While John has always been happily busy, he's thrilled to have an award to back up the designs he shows to prospective clients. "I was ecstatic," he smiles when talking of his win. "The other entries were phenomenal. It was close between a couple of us. This gives us incredible motivation to pursue other projects like this."

The majority of people like to hear all his ideas before committing to a plan, he says. "I get quite a few projects where the people are open," he says. "My clients trust me incredibly."



PHOTO: EVAN ARMORER

While his winning entry was executed in Kingston, almost all of HDD's work is done in the Capital. "Ottawa is a great community to work in," says the Kirkland Lake native. "I feel like it's a big small town, people are so friendly."

While modern styles are trending right now, John's style runs the gamut from contemporary to traditional to Georgian. "I can go across the board and I think that's what sets me apart." But he always favours durable, long-lasting materials and a low-maintenance feel. "I want to design something that has staying power, something that will still look good in 20 years."

John has a hard time describing his style, possibly because each project is so different. He interviews his clients extensively to understand what they want and scrutinizes each space to bring out its best features. The finished product, he says, will embody the client's expectations. He takes pride in creating livable spaces.

"Some people design spaces to look good, but they have to be functional and livable," he says. "Function is number one. We make it look amazing after that."

Regardless of the project, the design goal is to either make a statement or to blend the addition into the existing home, but always to increase the overall value of the home and neighbourhood. John is currently busy completing a million-dollar project on Elmwood Avenue in Rockcliffe. He is also working on several custom homes and large high-end renovations in Westboro.

As for his award-winning basement design, it continues to bring in accolades. It is being considered for an Ontario Home Builders' Association 2015 Award of Distinction.

When he isn't found on site or drawing designs in his home office, he's with his young family – he has a toddler at home – and the music lover likes to spend time tinkering in his basement recording studio, working out at the gym, or on the ski hill in the winter. But since he began working at construction sites at age 12, his passion has always been architecture. "I have a drive and motivation to make things perfect," he says. "You can see it in my work, the plans that I draw and in my relationships with my clients. I'm always trying to better myself. There's always room to grow." **OH**