

DEFINING MINIMALISM

STORY **SARAH ISBISTER** | PHOTOGRAPHY **SANDY MACKAY** | STYLING **SARA MARTIN**

A pair of replica Chinese Ming dynasty chairs back onto the view from the square windows of this modern winter home. The home is filled with many such storied pieces, such as chrome E-1027 side tables by Irish modern designer Eileen Gray. Flower arrangement courtesy of Paperwhite Flowers.



ABOVE: Builder Rob Abbott of Village Builders Inc. opens the yellow door on the otherwise charcoal steel home. **OPPOSITE, TOP:** The main living space and garage are connected by the central entry. **BOTTOM:** The owners charge their electric car at a plug station in the garage.

An exercise in minimalism and sustainability, a corrugated-steel-clad 1,600 sq. ft. home for a Toronto couple stands dark against a snowy escarpment valley.

Rob Abbott oversaw the build, erected by his crew at **Village Builders Inc.** They worked in close collaboration with designers at Toronto-based Stark Architects Inc. who recommended the Creemore-based builders to the project knowing it would go up exactly to quality specification.

The home is not just aesthetically minimal, it is designed for minimal energy consumption and minimal maintenance. “The owners’ vision, down to the smallest detail, made the build process simple to execute and it shows in the finished product,” says Abbott.

The design of the house accomplishes many goals. The garage and house are two distinct, offset structures, connected by the entry foyer. End walls of both structures extend in parapets above the gabled roof – all clad in stock-coloured, factory-painted, charcoal steel, creatively installed by Village Builders. The house has an office at each end: one for each of the owners, a couple whose head offices are in the city. It provides a gallery to display their extensive collection of Canadian art. And, since the couple owns a second home nearby that can accommodate visitors, grandchildren and friends, this new primary residence could be modest in size to keep heating costs low.



The garage houses a Tesla Motors wall charger where the owners can recharge their electric car. The garage doors, sourced and installed by Peninsula Overhead Doors Inc., are service-station doors, made with polycarbonate semi-opaque panels. LED lighting is used throughout for low-energy consumption, and it was important to the owners to have minimal outdoor lighting. The front walk is lit with waist-high lights that point downward from the side of the house, and enough indoor light emits through the front windows and garage to light the way to the entrance. The owners wanted to comply with the area’s informal dark sky policy, which requests that homes cast little or no light upward in order to better observe the night sky. Robert Best of Best Contracting Ltd. completed the excavation, septic system and landscaping. The alarm and security cameras were installed by Ardco Systems Inc. from Parry Sound. *Continued on page 48*





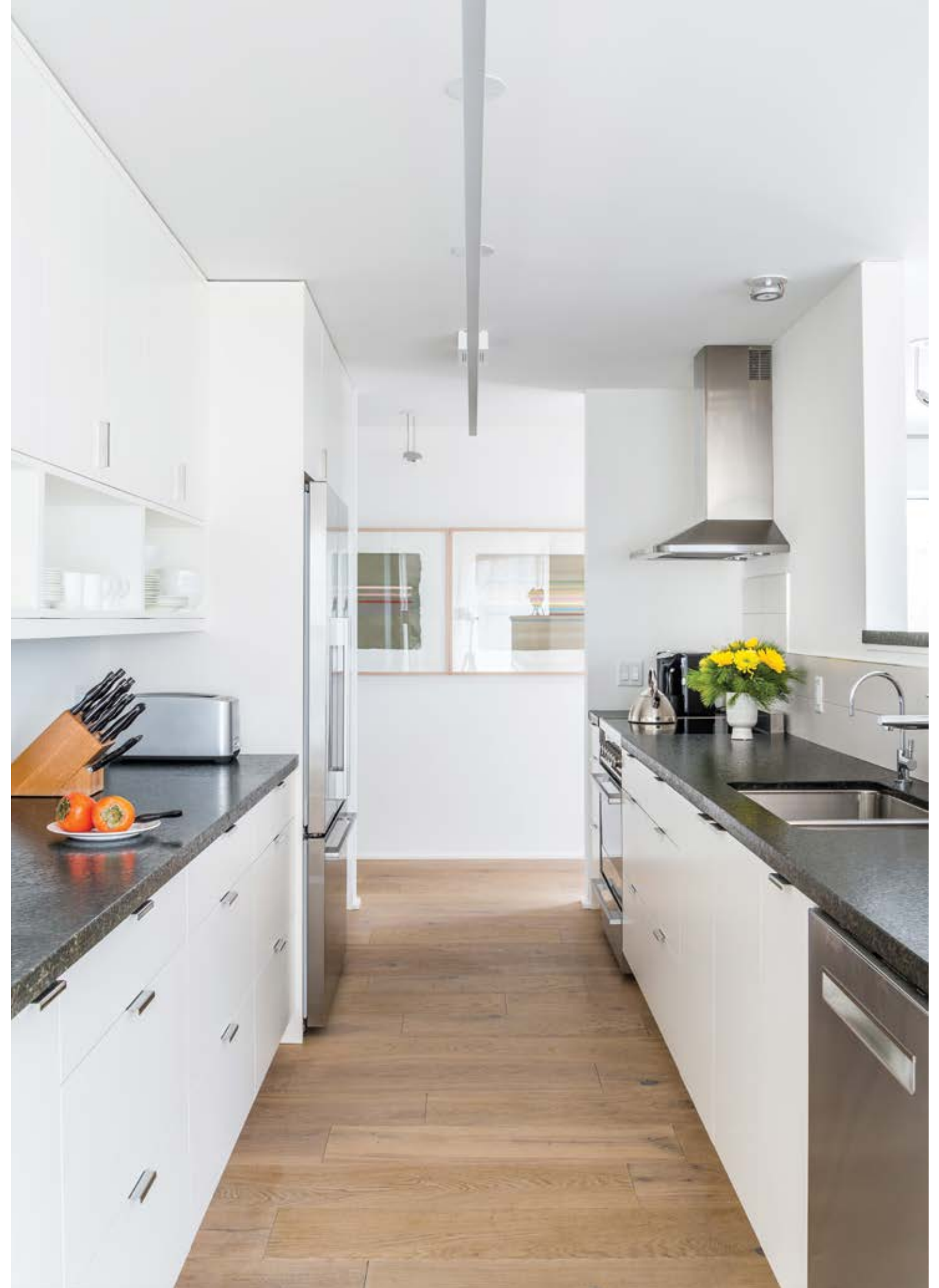
LEFT: A mix of open shelving and white lacquer cabinets blend the kitchen workspace into living room storage and a television area.
BELOW: Stainless steel appliances pair with large, white backsplash tiles for a simple look.
OPPOSITE: Leathered granite gives an easy-to-clean counter surface in the galley kitchen. Oiled oak floors throughout the home are easy to maintain. A LED light fixture, elegant in its simplicity runs the length of the kitchen.



The entrance welcomes guests into a spacious hall and immediately opens into the dining room, living room and kitchen. There are large square windows on one side looking out to the valley and on the other looking out to the pines along the driveway; the windows were supplied by Mark Campbell of **ROSS Windows & Doors**. The linen draperies in the living room are unique in their design. Custom made by Kathy Komlos of Fine Craft Upholstery, they hang on plumbing-pipe rods and needed to be sized so that, when drawn fully open, the fabric folds in such widths that the windows are unobscured. Additional blinds in the offices, bedrooms, bathroom and entrance were provided by **Shades & Shutters Inc.** and can be drawn top-down or bottom-up.

Hobbs Home Solutions painted the

interior of the house in Benjamin Moore's 2016 colour of the year: Simply White, which is a favourite of the owner. There are no corridors in the house and few doors; doors that are installed are pocket doors, aside from the powder room and laundry room. The laundry is conveniently adjacent to the master bedroom. Ceramic tile from **Desert Tile**, installed by **Paolo's Custom Flooring**, is used in the bathrooms, front entrance, laundry and one office. The rest of the flooring is hardwood, engineered reclaimed structural oak from Majestic North Floors Inc. Carpeting in the lower level guest suite is from **Dean's Carpet One Floor & Home**. Baseboards and trim are just a few centimetres in height, and windowsills are finished with a drywall return rather than casings, giving a clean look. *Continued on page 52*





Custom LED-disc lights can be angled to adjust light direction.



A bookcase doubles as a sidebar and a custom-made steel light fixture is suspended by clear-corded wiring in the dining area. The owners are active art collectors, so the the wall leading to one of the home offices was incorporated as the only space in the many-windowed home to display a series of five favourite works.



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The kitchen is separated from the living and dining room by a dual-level counter in leathered granite. The reverse side is composed of open shelves finished with white lacquer and used for displaying artefacts and books in the dining room. In the kitchen, more open shelves in the same finish are featured for glassware and other attractive pieces. The cabinets were built by Dylan Barlow of Barlow Cabinetworks and the countertop is from **Di Pietra Design**. Plumbing here and in the bathrooms was installed by Andy Mueller of Mueller Plumbing Contractors and the fixtures are Aquabross from Marks Supply Inc. Hardware everywhere was supplied by Upper Canada Specialty Hardware.

The LED dining chandelier and office fixtures were designed by Patrick Stark Design, as was the 12-foot kitchen light and hanging, LED disc lights throughout the home. The audio system was installed by ARDCO. *Continued on page 54*

RIGHT AND BELOW CENTRE: A pair of simple but efficient his-and-hers offices flank the main living space. **BELOW LEFT:** The grandfather clock keeps time by the main entrance. **BELOW RIGHT:** A narrow powder room with gold-framed mirror services guests on the main floor.



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LEFT AND BOTTOM LEFT: The master suite is separated from the main room by a simple floor-to-ceiling pocket door. **BELOW:** The en suite is practical, including a spacious walk-in shower and a large tub that sits under the window.



The mirrors were designed and fabricated to glide on barn-door-like hardware.



The lower level houses a guest suite, exercise space and storage as well as the workings of the house. The mechanicals include a top line HVAC system, on-demand water heater, air-to-air heat pump and a forced-air, propane-fired back-up, all installed by **Nottawasaga Mechanical**. The electrical system by **Bear Electric** has enough capacity to charge additional electric cars. **The Generator Guys** provided the Generac back-up system. In this minimalist design, Village Builders demonstrate what modern and efficient amenities are capable of: a low-maintenance, attractive home with a feeling of comfort and welcome. **OH**



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