

House on the Bluffs, Toronto Taylor Smyth Architects, Toronto

Nestled amid towering oaks near the edge of an escarpment along the Scarborough Bluffs, this light-filled residence encompasses dramatic views of sea and sky. The compact, 2,300-square-foot layout connects every space with the double-height living room while treading lightly on a site subject to erosion and landslides.

The existing house (it was the client's childhood home) was torn down. However, existing foundations and basement walls were re-used, saving several weeks of construction time. Algonquin stone, left over from another job site, was salvaged for feature walls and exterior walkways. Further to eke out the modest budget, floor, wall and roof components were prefabricated, then shipped to and assembled on site.

Viewed from the street, the house is a simple stucco box distinguished by a screen of vertical channel glass. The translucent cladding provides privacy and admits glare-free natural light into the stairwell and master and guest bathrooms. At night, the elevation glows like an oversized lantern.

The rear of the house dissolves into a two-storey wall of glass. This plane is penetrated by the fibre-reinforced cement clad volume of the master bedroom cantilevering out over the dining room below. The diminutive master bedroom accommodates a king-size bed and night tables. Its compact interior, with the view framed by the cedar-lined balcony, feels like a tree house. Sliding panels open up on one side to the double-height living room., allaying potential claustrophobia.

In a recurring theme of blurring the distinction between inside and outside, Ontario limestone wraps from the front wall to the recessed entrance, then reappears inside; the kitchen counter extends outside to become a barbecue counter; and an exterior planter reappears inside the living room as a planted slot in the floor.

Design team: Michael Taylor, Partner-In-Charge; Rebecca Wei, Project Architect.

RESIDENTIAL
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"This was a tough, low-budget project!"—RT

"The main element is the box that hovers within the house and cantilevers out. It acts as a ceiling to what looks like the kitchen. The wood cladding continues along the box through to the surface of the house — an interesting bridging of interior and exterior!"—MHB

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