

TORONTO'S ULTIMATE GUIDE TO DESIGN

DESIGN LINES

SPRING
2010

IDS10 Inside:
Highlights from the
Interior Design Show
and the inaugural
Toronto International
Design Festival

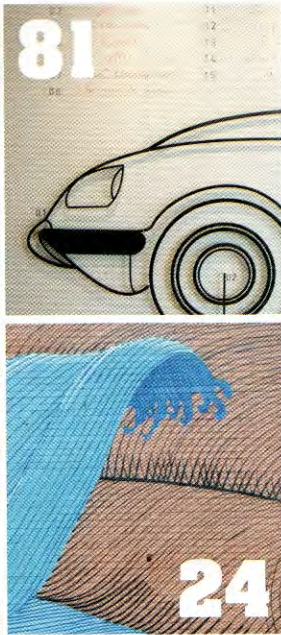


175+
SHOPS,
SHOWROOMS,
GALLERIES,
BARS &
RESTAURANTS

FREE
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DESIGN LINES



THIS CREATIVE CITY

Talent is everywhere, from architectural homes to DIYs, warehouse studios to posh shops

GREAT SPACES

35 Kohn Shnier Architects reinvent the above-the-store paradigm on Dundas West **BY ALEX BOZIKOVIC**

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DUNDAS STREET WEST
BY RICK O'BRIEN
INTERIOR BY TOM ARBAN
DEAN HUTCHINSON
OF THE MI CONCEPT,
BY NAOMI FINLAY



ABOVE THE STORE

Living large in a
fast and modern world



Dundas Street West may be hip, but it's sure not pretty. After years of slow gentrification, the cafés and boutiques are flowing in west of Bathurst Street, but the buildings are a raggedy bunch of peeling Victorian houses and angel-stone storefronts. There's one exception: a crisp box of grey brick, white steel, and polished glass by Kohn Shnier Architects

By Alex Boziovic
 Photography by Tom Arban
 Portrait by Naomi Finlay

Behind the main floor windows is R.A.D., a clothing shop furnished with one rack, a couple of Gehry chairs, and very little else. "I get anxious around too much clutter," explains the proprietor, Kia Waese. "It makes me claustrophobic." Accordingly, her shop carries a small selection of pieces by such fashion-forward labels as Rick Owens and bags by Nico Uytterhaegen, all definitely clutter-free. "It's all blacks and greys, some blues – urban colours," she says. "Contrasts and texture, but not anything decorated, nothing unnecessary." That's a good description for the store, too, with its polished concrete floors, pristine walls, and clear vignettes of the beauty salon across the street.

Indeed the design of this 208-square-metre building carefully frames views in three directions: it takes advantage of its site at the corner of a laneway to bring in light and skyline vistas from the east (toward the downtown core) as well as north and south views. Architect Martin Kohn says that that was one of the ways his firm was able to rejuvenate a classic building type, while hopefully setting an example for new buildings on Toronto's main streets. "It's a very old idea, living above a store – a medieval idea. But it's a very nice thing for people, being able to go to work in your slippers," Kohn says. "I try not to do that," Kia says wryly.



↑↑↑ Maple flooring is used throughout the house.
 ↑↑ A dining table that seats six is actually two Herman Miller office tables pushed together and surrounded by brushed-metal dining chairs from Emeco.
 ↑ A narrow window along one wall shows off the graffiti in the alleyway.



← "I get anxious around too much clutter," says Kia Waese, shown here with her husband, Jerry. Bensen living-room couch, bought at Quasi Modo.
 → White Corian countertops complement the kitchen's stained veneer oak cabinetry. Cooktop and oven are by Bosch. Overhead lighting is from Sistemalux.

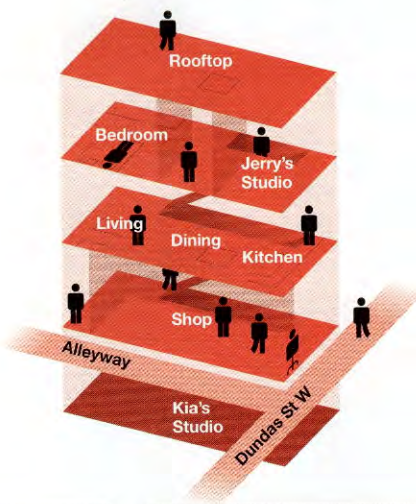
GREAT BUILDING



If she did, the slippers would no doubt be black and very thoughtfully constructed. Minimalism clearly comes naturally to Kia and her husband, Jerry; a similarly spare aesthetic defines the couple's apartment on the second and third floors. The two levels have floors of engineered Japanese maple, pristine white walls, a few Bensen sofas, and some design classics – an Eames sidechair and a set of Emeco Navy chairs.

Jerry, an artist and contractor, built the place himself, tearing apart the falling-down previous building and doing the construction over a one-year period. Touring through the apartment's second-floor living space, he points out one of his paintings (based on a camera-phone snapshot of his wife), but he notes the perfectly smooth white ceilings with equal pride: no bulkheads here. That includes the kitchen, which is finished in dark-stained oak wood and white Corian and has no overhead cabinets. Outside, a streetcar tools past, its rumbles silenced by the block-and-steel walls and thick windows. But Jerry is showing off more of what's invisible: "You gotta see this," he says, reaching for the built-in Bosch range and pressing a button. A steel panel slides up with a whirl from the countertop – a hood that vents downward and out through an invisible vent. "It took a little bit of trouble to make that happen," he says.

After heading up to the third floor, which holds the one bedroom and his painting studio, Jerry asks: "Are you ready for a climb?" In the bathroom he pulls out a utility ladder and hikes up in his Yohji Yamamoto sneakers to a rooftop garden, planted with red-hued succulents. Above the rooflines of the houses and warehouses, we look straight down over Trinity Bellwoods Park to the lake, and north over Dundas West. And from here, it all looks almost beautiful. □



← Kia's clothing store, R.A.D., is on the ground floor, with living spaces above. The rooftop is accessed via a utility ladder in the bathroom.



↖ The view from the bedroom looks south toward Trinity Bellwoods Park. Custom closet cabinetry is by Kent Angus of Builtwork Design.
← Kia's spacious studio is in the basement.

→ Dundas Street West has changed a lot over the past few years, but new buildings like this one are still rare.
↓ Jerry's painting studio on the top floor.

