

C

ontemporary homes can feel cool – and not necessarily in a good way. The tendency to strictly match everything, from wood finishes to the style of furniture, often results in a too-sleek snooze of a space. But that's not Marcus Iafate's jam. The principal designer and founder of Conik Studios likes

to shake things up. He brought personality and "a collected-over-time feel," as he describes it, to a recently built home.

Located in a leafy midtown Toronto neighbourhood, the 2,400-square-foot house – with its flat roof and black metal canopy over the door – suggests a sober sophistication. "From the exterior, it is quite contemporary," says Marcus, who was involved in the project from the ground up. "We wanted to add a bit of culture to the interior. To do that, we introduced a mix of new and vintage-sourced pieces, with a heavy nod to the midcentury, to create an eclectic and cozy space for our client." →



Light Touch

Designer Marcus Iafate wanted the dining room, which is sparsely styled with a beautiful walnut table, to be super simple in contrast with "the eclectic clutter" in the living room. "Sconces add interest to the walls without the need for large art. The focal point is the massive front window that lets in so much light," he says. Snoopie awaits happy hour by the bar cart.

Clean Lines

A combination of warm wood and white elements sets an inviting tone in the sunken foyer. The towering custom closet provides much-needed storage. Underfoot, grey tile is both durable and stylish. The play of natural light on the lines of the exposed wooden staircase creates a sculptural effect.

DESIGN, Marcus Iafate, Conik Studios. **BUILDER**, RBA Projects. **TABLE, CHAIRS**, Kiosk. **CHANDELIER, SCONCES**, Union Lighting. **RUG**, The Boho Lab. **VASES**, Snob Stuff. **BAR CART**, Finnish Design Shop. **CONSOLE**, CB2. **WALL PAINT** (throughout), Baby's Breath OC-62, Benjamin Moore.



But the homeowner's biggest wish is, in fact, invisible to the eye. "Our client was firm on wanting to use nontoxic materials during the construction and finishing of her home," says Marcus. The house is healthy from top to bottom: from the Rockwool insulation to the NAUF MDF millwork (a sustainable material that doesn't off-gas), and from nontoxic adhesives to zero-VOC paints and sealants. To limit exposure to radiation, the digs are Wi-Fi-free. Instead, TVs and computers are hardwired via hidden ethernet cables.

Whether behind the scenes or in full view, one thing is clear: this clean-lined home is a contemporary dream with built-in warmth and beauty.

In Working Order

A teak Danish wall unit brings soulful character to the second-floor office. Earthy-toned accessories and books have a nostalgic pull. Marcus (shown above) infused this modern home with layered luxury and warmth.

WALL UNIT, Vintage Home Boutique.

A Play of Woods

A chess set beside the chic glass banister makes for an idiosyncratic moment at the staircase. "The client found the chess set and we said, 'Yes, let's use it,'" enthuses Marcus. The contrast of light and dark woods is a well-orchestrated balance seen throughout the home.

CHESS VIGNETTE, MegaChess.



Hiding Places

Spot the fridge! It's hidden behind panelled doors beside the steam oven – a smart solution that helps create tranquil sightlines in the open-concept home. Similarly seamless, the metal hood vent transitions elegantly into the cabinetry. In the nearby powder room (right), Marcus used the same stunning quartzite for the vanity for visual flow.

KITCHEN, The Woodworking Co. **CABINETS**, Duxbury Gray HC-163, Benjamin Moore. **ISLAND**, custom **VANITY**, Apex Custom Fabrication. **STONE**, Ciot. **STOOLS**, Finnish Design Shop. **LIGHT FIXTURE**, Artemide. Powder room **SCONCES**, CB2. Gold **HARDWARE**, Rubinet.



“For continuity, the luxurious sink in the powder room is fashioned out of the same quartzite slab used for the kitchen island and coffee table.”





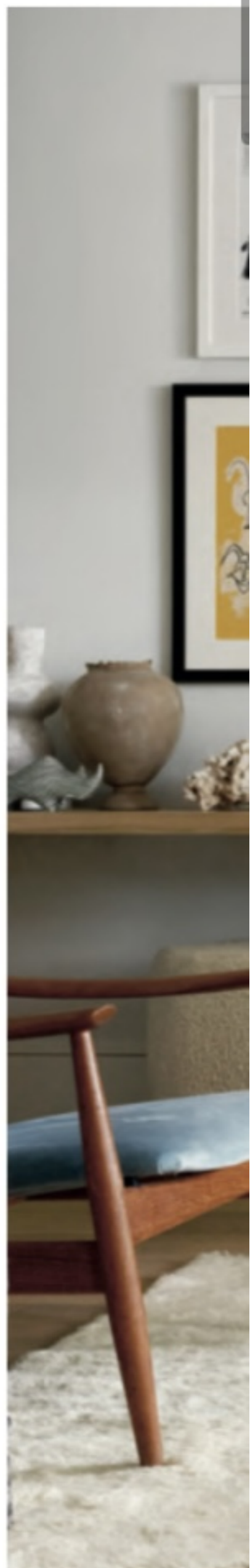
"We played with weight and airiness," says Marcus. The dining room, which is off the entrance, is deliberately sparse; this contrasts the rear living room, with its gallery wall and vintage styling, which is relaxed to the max. "Even in the artwork, there are sketches and photographs: we played with every element, not just the woods," says the designer. "This helps make the space not matchy-matchy. It creates a story."

The climax of this story is most definitely the kitchen. "The kitchen is the focal point of the house," says Marcus. Serene and elegant, there's not an excessive bell or whistle. The island, a quartzite behemoth, is like sculpture in the space. A grid of flat-panel green cabinetry neatly meets the ceiling, its fresh hue providing an unexpected upgrade to predictable white cabinets. To link to the upstairs rooms, the designer carried green to the primary bedroom's ensuite, where oceanic tile beautifully cloaks the shower. →

Custom House

Marcus designed the sturdy, low-slung coffee table out of stone to riff off of the kitchen island. Custom millwork, with an integrated vent, is a level up compared to an off-the-shelf buy. A Beni Ourain rug hits a boho note.

R. Huber Scoop **SOFA**, Finn Juhl **CHAIR**, Vintage Home Boutique. R. Huber Scoop **CHAIRS**, Guff. Custom **COFFEE TABLE**, Conik Studios (design); The Woodworking Co. and Apex Custom Fabrication (fabrication). White **SIDE TABLE**, Elte. **MILLWORK** (throughout), The Woodworking Co.





“There’s a greenbelt behind the property and a gorgeous and enormous 200-year-old weeping willow tree that you could watch sway in the breeze all day.”



Nature Nurtures

All bedrooms should have a sitting area – especially with a backdrop like this. Sublime nature spills into the restful space, where fun Sherpa chairs are cozy counterpoints to the abundance of wood. The rich tones in the four-poster bed and matching nightstand contrast the light oak floors.

Sherpa **CHAIRS, TABLE**, Elite. Helen Keller **ARTWORK**, Up In Frames.

Show & Shower

Swirls of green tile add richness and warmth to the bathroom (opposite) and connect chromatically to the kitchen downstairs. Above the vanity, the mirror features an integrated vanishing smart TV (it’s off at the moment). The homeowner can relax in her tub and watch her favourite show!



Green Peace

Taking its cues from the best hotels, the open bathroom is separated from the primary bedroom by glass walls. "The focal point is the emerald marble tile from Cercan that ties in with the green tones seen throughout the home," says Marcus. The vanity's solid-colour formed-concrete top and integrated sinks don't compete with the stone in the shower.

Light oak **VANITY**, The Woodworking Co. Oceania **TUB**, Taps Kitchen & Bath.