Oakville, Ont., home draws a modern feel from the deft blending of natural elements

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BOOKMARK

There was a dated bungalow on the site, but Amit Chaudhry and his wife, Nami Dhillon wanted to tear it down and start over with their dream home.

JASON HARTOG/JASON HARTOG PHOTOGRAPHY

Five years ago, dentist Amit Chaudhry and his wife, Nami Dhillon, decided to move from the Toronto suburb of Mississauga to the nearby town of Oakville. Whereas Mississauga is large, sprawling and car-centric, Oakville, and, more specifically Old Oakville, where the couple now lives, is the kind of walk-able place where neighbours say hi to one another over their white picket fences or manicured cedar hedges. As well as the tight-knit community, the town also offered close proximity to top private schools for Dr. Chaudhry and Dhillon's daughters, Diya and Samira.

Dr. Chaudhry and Ms. Dhillon bought a home while they were on vacation in Vancouver. Purchasing sight unseen wasn't a concern. They were sold by the location – around the corner from Old Oakville's main street of mom-and-pop boutiques and restaurants – as well as the wide, tree-covered lot. There was a dated bungalow on the site, but the plan was to tear down, start over with their dream home. "We were always going to build a home to our exact needs and specifications," Ms. Dhillon says.

Dr. Chaudhry, however, did have one reservation. "I like modern," he says. "Oakville is more traditional, maybe transitional, not necessarily modern."

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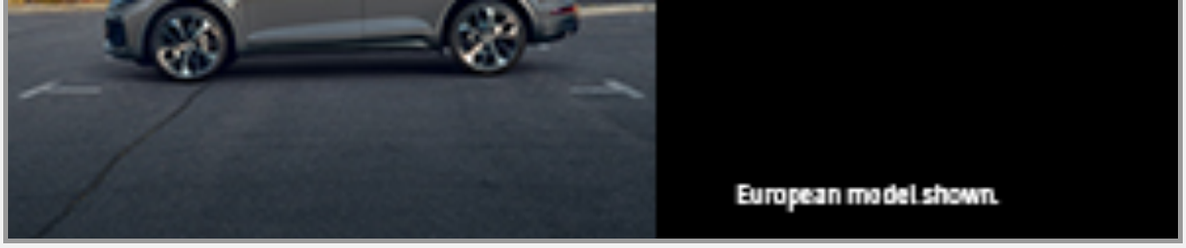


To Dr. Chaudhry's point, Old Oakville is dotted with a seemingly inordinate number of clapboard homes, with sash windows and louvered shutters and a certain, Norman Rockwell-ian vibe. A truly stark modern box have might have tested the limits of the neighbours, provoked *froidure* from behind the white picket fences. But the house they built, with local architect David Small, works hard to fit into the streetscape. There are modern clean lines and big glass windows, yet it's all clad in stately, rough-hewn stone and rustic wood panelling.

KITCHEN

Crisp volumes are lined with either white walls or panels of white oak, accented with sleek black marble slabs.

SCOTT NORSWORTHY/SCOTT NORSWORTHY

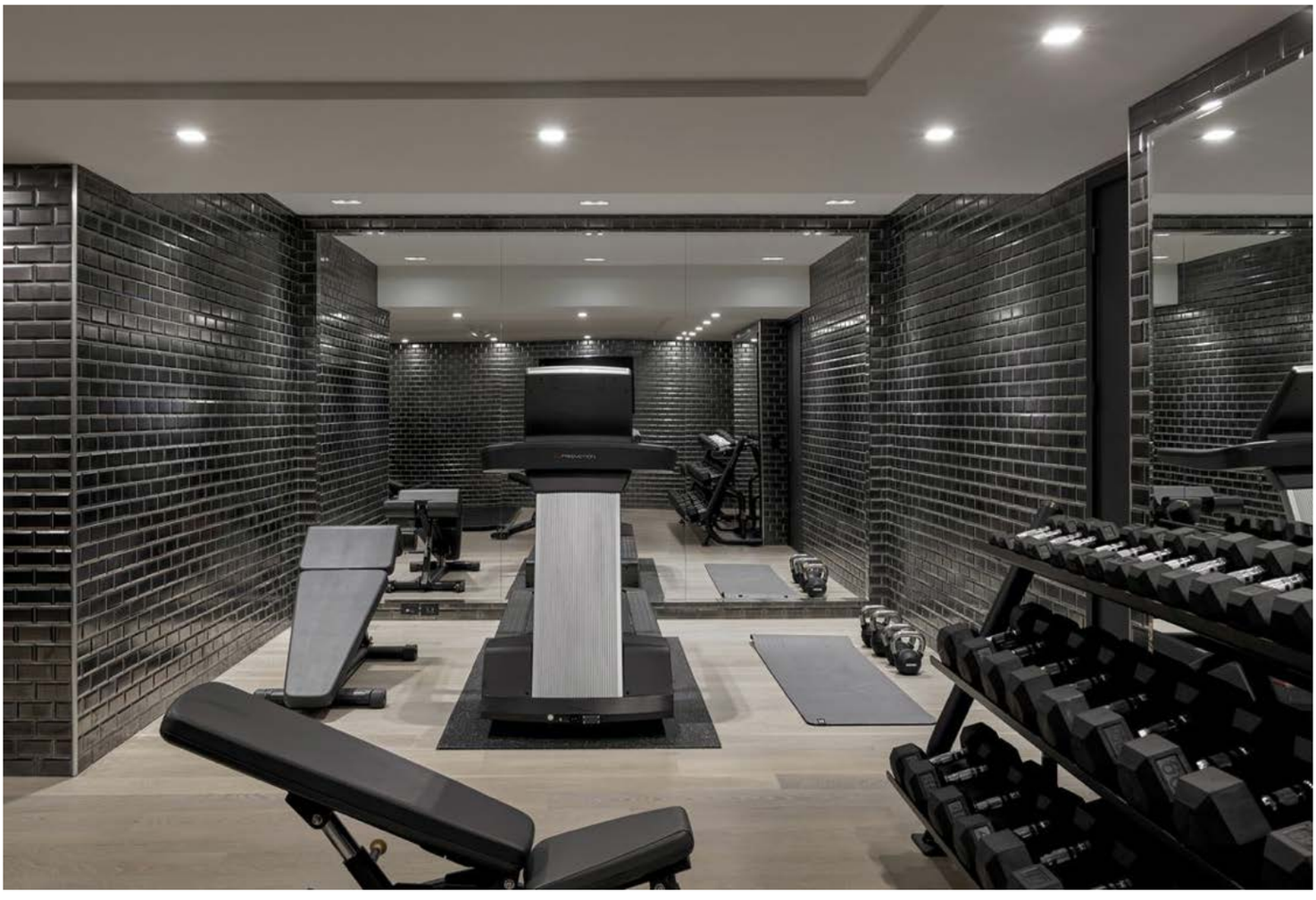
The interiors of the 6,000-square-foot abode hews more closely to Dr. Chaudhry's modern vision. Crisp volumes are lined with either white walls or panels of white oak, accented with sleek black marble slabs. With that too, though, there is an approachable, friendly warmth to the minimalism. Bold, jewel-toned furniture and brightly-hued rugs dot the rooms. Brass light fixtures hang from above.

The warmth is no accident. For the interiors, Dr. Chaudhry and Ms. Dhillon approached young designers Kevin Chan and Samer Shaath, founders of Nivek Remas. The couple picked Nivek Remas in part because of their credentials. The designers had previously worked for Yabu Pushelberg, a celebrated Canadian studio that envisioned the interiors for one of Dr. Chaudhry's favourite modern hotels: the Four Seasons in downtown

Toronto.

“I love all the wood in the hotel,” Dr. Chaudhry says. “I love all the details. It has a quality that Kevin and Samer kept talking about – it’s modern, but it’s also warm.”

The fine detailing in the house befits a five-star hotel. Book-matched, fine-grained walnut in a bathroom over a marble vanity. Recessed curtain railings, so the drapes appear to fall across the floor-to-ceiling windows directly from the ceiling.



The home gym looks like something out of Wayne Manor.

SCOTT NORSWORTHY/SCOTT NORSWORTHY

There's also a hotel-style graciousness to the plan. As guests arrive, passing through a double-height foyer, they can either continue straight into the living room, turn left into the formal dining room or turn right and stop for cocktails in the library, where open-shelving soars up around a built-in, stocked bar. "My wife was raised in London," Dr. Chaudhry says. "Very much in a cocktails in the evening before dinner sort of way."

As with the best lobby-side bars, the library strikes the right atmosphere. Its tall, south-facing windows catch the edge of evening light through soft, diaphanous curtains. The light is not just warm, it is enchanting, and might only be outdone by the living room, where on one wall, a two-storey fireplace soars above the double-height space. The white veins of the stone look like abstract art. The hearth, open to three sides, is the heart of the home – a place no one wants to pull themselves away from, especially on a crisp autumn night. Going far might not be necessary: the living room is open to a neighbouring kitchen, the cabinets swathed in black marble that echoes the fireplace.

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The kitchen off the living room is the hotel equivalent of front of house feature, a bit like a concierge desk. There's an island where guests can sit, chat as a snack is being prepared. Nearby, there's a second kitchen that's strictly back-of-house, behind closed doors. "It's where you do your more heavy duty cooking," designer Kevin Chan says. "It's more common in Asia where they use more spices."

A bathroom has book-matched, fine-grained walnut over a marble vanity.

SCOTT NORSWORTHY/SCOTT NORSWORTHY

Dr. Chaudhry and Ms. Dhillon love to entertain and frequently have friends and family stay over. The house, which has five bedrooms, is set up for to make guests as comfortable as possible. There is a full home gym clad in sleek black tiles like something out of Wayne Manor, and both of the guest rooms have their own ensuites. “We wanted to be able to give our guests their privacy,” Dr. Chaudhry says.

There is one additional guest room that’s more roughing it than luxury resort – a wood-lined room in the basement with no ensuite, just twin stacked beds, sleeping four people like something from a Muskoka bunk house. “We don’t have a cottage,” Dr. Chaudhry says. “The bunk room is for when our daughters have their friends over, have sleepovers. It’s nice that our home has that sense of escape.”

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