

Returning to the Rituals of Home

Examining individual moments within the home where office work has no place.

Like woodland creatures emerging from a winter's hibernation, it feels like we are tentatively stepping into a post-pandemic world where the focus on not just our physical but also mental health has become more important than ever. While our initial reactions were to bring as much of the workplace home as possible, the pandemic has left many people craving the warmth and comfort of traditional rituals in their homes such as bathing, sleeping and eating, and are looking to integrate products and design trends that promote such health.

In the four exceptional home spaces that follow, we asked the designers behind them to explain — in their own words — the motivations and ensuing solutions for rooms embedded with extremely personal needs.

For a drool-worthy ensuite bathroom designed using the architectural principles of a traditional Turkish hammam, Trevor Wallace of Reflect Architecture discusses how their clients “were clear that they wanted something different and unique, something that when they spent time in the space it would be a memorable and relaxing part of their day.”

By Peter Sobchak

Kelly Cray of U31 Design discusses how he brought a refined masculine aesthetic to a luxurious penthouse condominium for a single man in his mid-thirties, with particular attention paid to the master bedroom; and Ryan Tyrrell of Tyrrell Projects describes the details behind a galley-style kitchen in a tight condo footprint that places functionality, ergonomics and innovation at the forefront.

And finally, Joanne Lam of Picnic Design addresses how because of escalating house prices, “many current homeowners are electing to stay in the condo or house they currently own after giving up on the idea of upsizing to offer larger spaces for their kids. As such we are seeing the push to modify existing kids’ accommodations become increasingly common in our client’s project objectives and goals of late.” The result is a wish-I-had-it-as-a-kid room that provides individual privacy while carving out play space in inventive ways.

As we acknowledge the growing data that outlines the correlation between Canadians’ ability to disconnect after work hours and their mental health, rooms like these show us why a conscious effort should be made to ensure a laptop is not seemingly ubiquitous throughout our homes.



Ritual Ensuite, Toronto

Design by Reflect Architecture

Text by Trevor Wallace
Photography by Riley Snelling



This spread **Based on the architectural principles of a traditional hammam, the ensuite features a large central platform with a sequence of functional elements — a walk-in shower, a hers and shared vanity, a toilet and cabinets— placed inside niches, keeping the different steps intimate and private. Arched gables frame each unit and add to the temple-like character of the space, and plaster-based wall covering, stone, rugged wood, and brass all felt honest and respectful to the original inspiration.**

— Reflect Architecture begins every project by taking the time to understand what is unique to the client’s identity and what is significant to them. We use this early exploration to ensure that each design is progressive and a true reflection of our clients’ character.

In our Ritual Ensuite project, we quickly discovered the clients’ passion for travel to culturally rich destinations. An especially memorable and inspiring journey of theirs was to Istanbul, Turkey, which is home to many incredible hammams; so, this was an exciting place to start when thinking about bathing rituals. In particular, we explored a restored 16th century hammam called Kılıç Ali Paşa, which became an inspiration for this project. Common to many hammams, it has a central element for gathering that is surrounded by individual coves in which bathers are treated, cleaned, and “restored.” This structure became the organizing principal that drove the ensuite design, the challenge was how to accomplish this on the

third floor of a house where the space was awkward and tight, and had a few sloped roof aspects to contend with. The oculus-like light, inspired by the glass in Kılıç Ali Paşa’s dome, holds the space of the navel stone and the four coves are then arranged symmetrically around it. The feelings of calm and serenity that the space evokes come from its formal order, the use of light, and its simple, honest materials. These materials were specifically chosen to feel like they came from the earth — another ode to the origin of the design inspiration — and allowing them their own masses in the space gives each a sense of reverence, place, and intention.

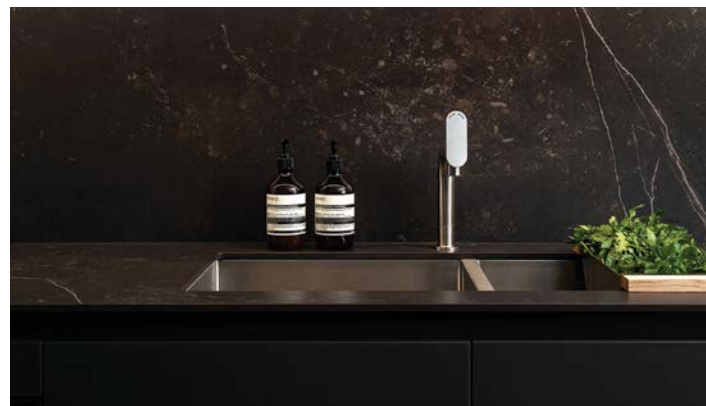
Leading a client-centered design exploration allowed the architecture to become a ritual-driven space for our clients that each day reminds them of some of their fondest travel memories.

Trevor Wallace is principal architect at Toronto-based Reflect Architecture.



Marine Drive Residence, Vancouver
Design by Tyrrell Projects w/ Bulthaup
Vancouver

Text by Ryan Tyrrell
 Photography by Brett Ryan Studios



This spread **A cohesive statement was made throughout with large format slabs that clad the walls in the front entrance and bathrooms, along with a floor to ceiling fireplace façade. Similar slabs were placed on the kitchen and bathroom floors, abutting locally harvested and sustainable engineered oak that brightens and uplifts the space and complements darker accents found throughout.**

— A retiring couple and their new pup chose the classy confines of West Vancouver to move into condo living and wanted to bring contemporary style and function along with them. The galley-style kitchen was designed and created with functionality, ergonomics and innovation at the forefront. The existing space saw worn surfaces and failing mechanics, while the new introductions saw a visual refresh with long-term sustainability.

Demolition noise saw challenges overcome due to strata restrictions which combined with client circumstances meant a tight schedule and multiple areas of scope completed simultaneously.

The kitchen floor was clad with large format slabs with flush conditions to the living space, meaning less grout lines and easier to clean surfaces, enabling easier accessibility and maintenance as the couple ages.

The millwork came from the intention to add form and value to the home and to the lifestyle of its inhabitants while keeping in line with a timeless aesthetic using micro-beveled, durable, two-toned lami-

nated surfaces. Push access fronts meant the area was snag-free in the narrow space. Appliances were clad with the same laminate and thoughtful storage caddies were introduced, leading to a streamlined visual approach and easy access.

The existing lighting was replaced with energy efficient LED fixtures. New recessed pot lights, accent strip lighting and a unique pendant over the eating area meant that beauty could yet again be enjoyed in a sustainable manner. Counters and backsplashes were man-made, damage-free hard surfaces and integrated a flush cooktop, sink and minimalistic electrical outlets. A built-in coffee maker, wine rack and additional storage meant these counters could be kept clutter-free.

Black window shutters matching those in the living areas saw a more traditional yet sustainable approach to temperature regulation, avoiding the need to introduce air conditioning, while still allowing natural light to filter in and views to be enjoyed.

Ryan Tyrrell is principal at Vancouver-based Tyrrell Projects.



Kids Nooks, Toronto
 Design by Picnic Design
 Text by Joanne Lam
 Photography by Scott Norsworthy



This spread **As a result of escalating house prices, many homeowners are electing to stay in the home they currently own, relinquishing the idea of upsizing to offer larger spaces for their kids. With that decision has come a push to modify children's existing accommodations in a way that balances individual privacy with the desire for maintaining a sense of shared space and natural light, while optimizing storage and carving out play space in inventive ways, as seen in this project.**

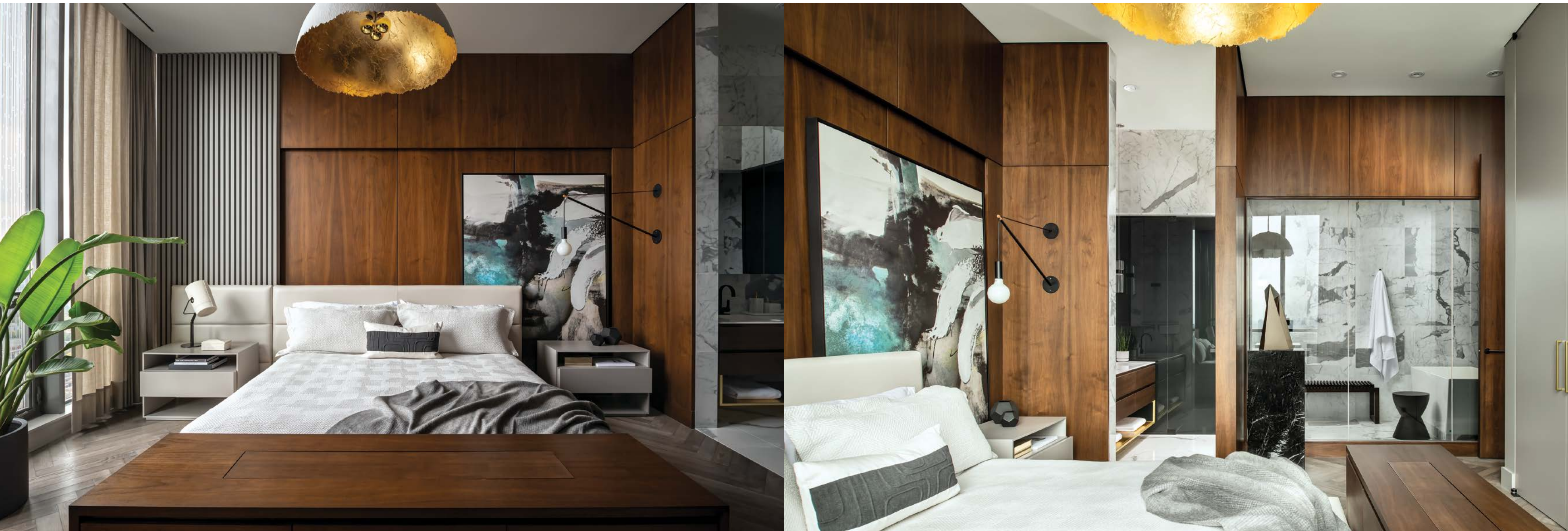
— During the pandemic, we were approached by a family of four with two siblings in their tween years who had been sharing a room since birth and have reached that point where they would like to have their own space. While in previous generations families would simply move from their starter home to a larger house, nowadays, that decision is complicated by rising housing costs, the pain of commuting, and the love for their own neighbourhood. For this family, the decision to stay put needed no debate. However, the dilemma was that there was no other room in their semi-detached Victorian, and the family was unwilling to embark on a large-scale re-think of the house.

Clearly, a room for each child was not feasible, so the goal shifted to creating “a space of one’s own.” In the beginning, the two nooks were yet another element introduced into an increasingly cramped bedroom. However, in testing out various possibilities, it became obvious that they could be combined with cabinets and shelving to create private space for the kids and storage space for their belongings. Because there was such an increase in storage, there was also now space for a built-in bench on the opposite wall.

While the built-in needed to read as a unifying element, it was important to allow each nook to be distinct. They are located at different heights; one is accessed from the floor while the other uses the bunk bed ladder. Each nook is decorated according to each kid’s latest obsession, and LED lights lining the opening lets each child set the mood in their space, while inside are shelves for their treasured toys and stuffed animals. If they choose, they can even add a curtain to make it their own secret hideout.

Despite the two nooks being distinct, they are not separated. Within their nooks, we introduced a secret passage for when the children change their minds and want to connect with each other or play hide and seek. As they get older, it will simply become a window to pass objects, but for now, they are still small enough to squeeze through.

Joanne Lam is co-founder and principal at Toronto-based Picnic Design.



Urban penthouse master bedroom, Toronto

Design by U31

Text by Kelly Cray
Photography by Gillian Jackson

This spread Set in contrast to the dramatic den layered in denim blue and grey hues, the master bedroom is lighter, featuring warm wood paneling and leather upholstered headboard designed with integrated graphic art and architectural cove lighting, all meant to set a distinctive yet calming mood. A large adjacent ensuite is exposed to the bedroom by glass and enveloped in marble and stone, providing the client a spa experience.

— During my initial meeting with the client, he expressed how he had been eyeing this property for some time and was thrilled to finally own it. The 2,500-sq.-ft. penthouse suite, on the 36th floor of a boutique condominium was in a perfect location, close to restaurants and Toronto’s King Street East entertainment district.

The previous owner’s interiors were defined by a black and white, high contrast glam look which wasn’t his style. He was open to all our suggestions which made for a smooth and gratifying experience. As a medical professional and entrepreneur in his mid-thirties who likes to entertain and travel, we arrived at a “hotel room vibe” for the primary bedroom, where the overall flavour articulates an architecturally contemporary sensibility meets casual sophistication.

The design is clean and low maintenance. The bedroom doors and some of the custom closets are just over 12-ft. high which posed an issue getting it up on the residential elevator, so the contractor had to organize a suspended scaffolding “swing stage” on the side of the building to transport the millwork up 36 stories (that was a new one

for me). Similar to the bedroom, the remaining spaces continue a refined masculine aesthetic approach. We liked the idea of weaving custom walnut architectural detailing with timeless herringbone patterned wood flooring and millwork: light and calming in the primary suite while dark and dramatic in the kitchen. This scheme strikes a luxurious note when paired with rich stone elements, like the kitchen countertop and island in “leathered” Bianco Lasa Macchia Vecchia stone and a floor-to-ceiling wine cooler with backlit alabaster stone.

Dynamic contemporary artworks and teal accents introduce colour into the narrative, animating the home’s neutral backgrounds and injecting it with a playful energy. I’m always happy when our vision for a home comes to life, and in this case, the project turned out amazing and our client was super-pumped with the result.

Kelly Cray is creative principal at Toronto-based U31.