

# THINKING SMALL



*From empty nesters to first-time homeowners, more and more Canadians are inhabiting tighter quarters. How to live stylishly in a compact space? Alex Bozikovic profiles three seductively scaled-down residences making the most of every square foot - not to mention confounding convention. (A shower stall in the living room? Why not!)*

## RADICALLY OPEN IN OTTAWA

**The average size of a home in Canada** is about 1,600 square feet, but that's far too much for some people. In the case of Paul Kariouk, even his 1,100-square-foot apartment in Ottawa was simply "too big and empty." When he moved in with partner Frederic Carrier (and Carrier's "very large and very slobbery" dog, Charlemagne), they settled into 850 square feet in a new condo tower in the capital's downtown. Then they essentially blew it up.

In particular, Kariouk and Carrier demolished the entire two-bedroom interior and turned it into an open rectangle, with a floor of white porcelain tile and three oval-shaped pods to contain a closet, a shower stall and a toilet and sink right in the middle of the space. When the couple desires some privacy, they draw curtains to close off a bedroom in one corner and to surround the shower, which is a fully glassed-in, floor-to-ceiling enclosure that sits right next to the kitchen island.

But that's not often. "In residential design, there's this sense that you have to compartmentalize all your activities," says Kariouk, who runs his own architectural practice and teaches at Carleton University. "But that's a Victorian idea, and nobody really lives like that; I certainly don't. Even when I work, it's on my laptop, and I can be anywhere within the place."

His apartment's radical openness is made possible through carefully designed built-in cabinets, which run the entire length of a 40-foot-long wall. The builder's original wall "moved in and out; we camouflaged that with millwork that looks level all along the wall and holds everything we need from day to day." This includes a workstation, a musical keyboard that Carrier plays as a hobby, separate storage space for media and kitchen items and, in a recess at one end, a spotlessly clean urinal, which serves as Charlemagne's drinking fountain and water bowl. The urinal is an odd touch, Kariouk admits, but it serves the dog's needs perfectly. "In a place like this, the storage and infrastructure you require becomes a huge percentage of the space," Kariouk says. "The question is, how do you make it more efficient?"



When Paul Kariouk and Frederic Carrier moved into their compact Ottawa condo, they tore down all the walls to create a single large space punctuated by three floor-to-ceiling pods, including one that houses their shower (at right in top picture). The bedroom and a workstation concealed by doors are at either end of the unit (above). A bathroom and a urinal-cum-dog-fountain (below) round out the amenities. (Don't worry: That's the urinal's only purpose). PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTIAN LALONDE/PHOTOLUX STUDIOS

