



HOMES

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ARCHITECT KARIOUK

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BY TONY MARTINS SEP 22, 2012 IN HOMES | 2 COMMENTS



Photograph by Angelina McCormick

With a painstaking and personal approach, Paul Kariouk has built a stellar reputation for crafting some of the city's most enduring modern homes

By Tony Martins

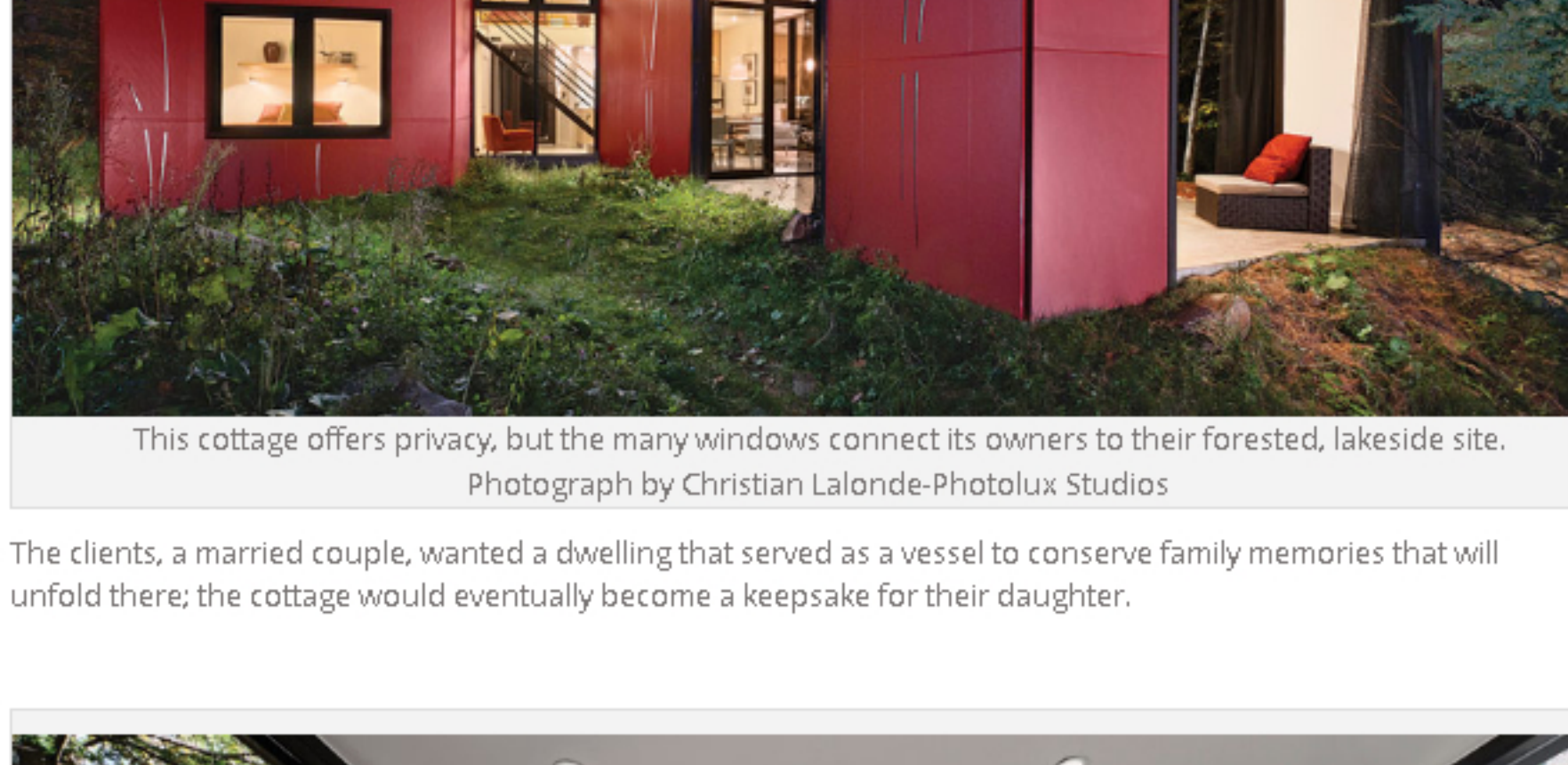
After almost a dozen years of meeting this challenge, Kariouk's reputation may seem contrary to popular ideas of a sought-after architect. This, in part, because his practice is as deliberately modest as the budgets he commands and because he is not fully licensed to practise in Ontario. He's a graduate of Columbia University, and can fully practise only in New York State.

To the delight of local clients, Kariouk's credentials and insurance do permit him, however, to take on residential projects that are less than 6,000 square feet in size — a niche in which Kariouk now thrives through painstaking attention to detail and in-depth collaboration with clients.

"When I am approached by potential clients, our initial meetings take about two-and-half hours as a minimum, as that's how long it takes me to thoroughly explain the many, many phases of both designing, developing and then building a custom home," explains Kariouk who also teaches at Carleton University.

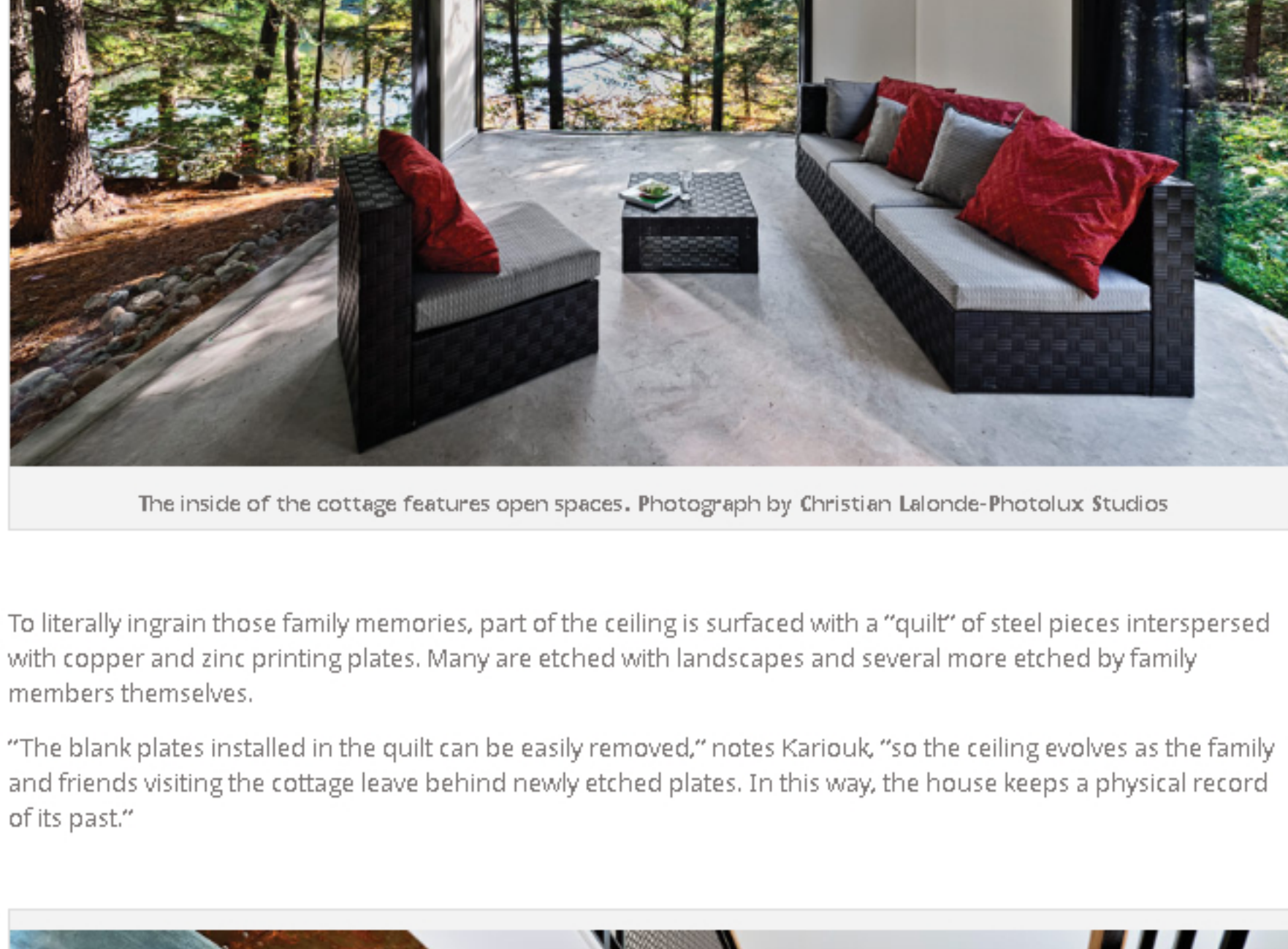
From there, the process gets even more methodical as the design evolves through numerous refinements or complete changes of direction. "How can a client make commitments involving a huge personal expense without intimately understanding every aspect of the design?" he reasons.

The 1,200-square-foot weekend and vacation retreat that Kariouk completed last year in Val-des-Monts makes an excellent case study in highly personal custom design.



This cottage offers privacy, but the many windows connect its owners to their forested, lakeside site. Photograph by Christian Lalonde-Photolux Studios

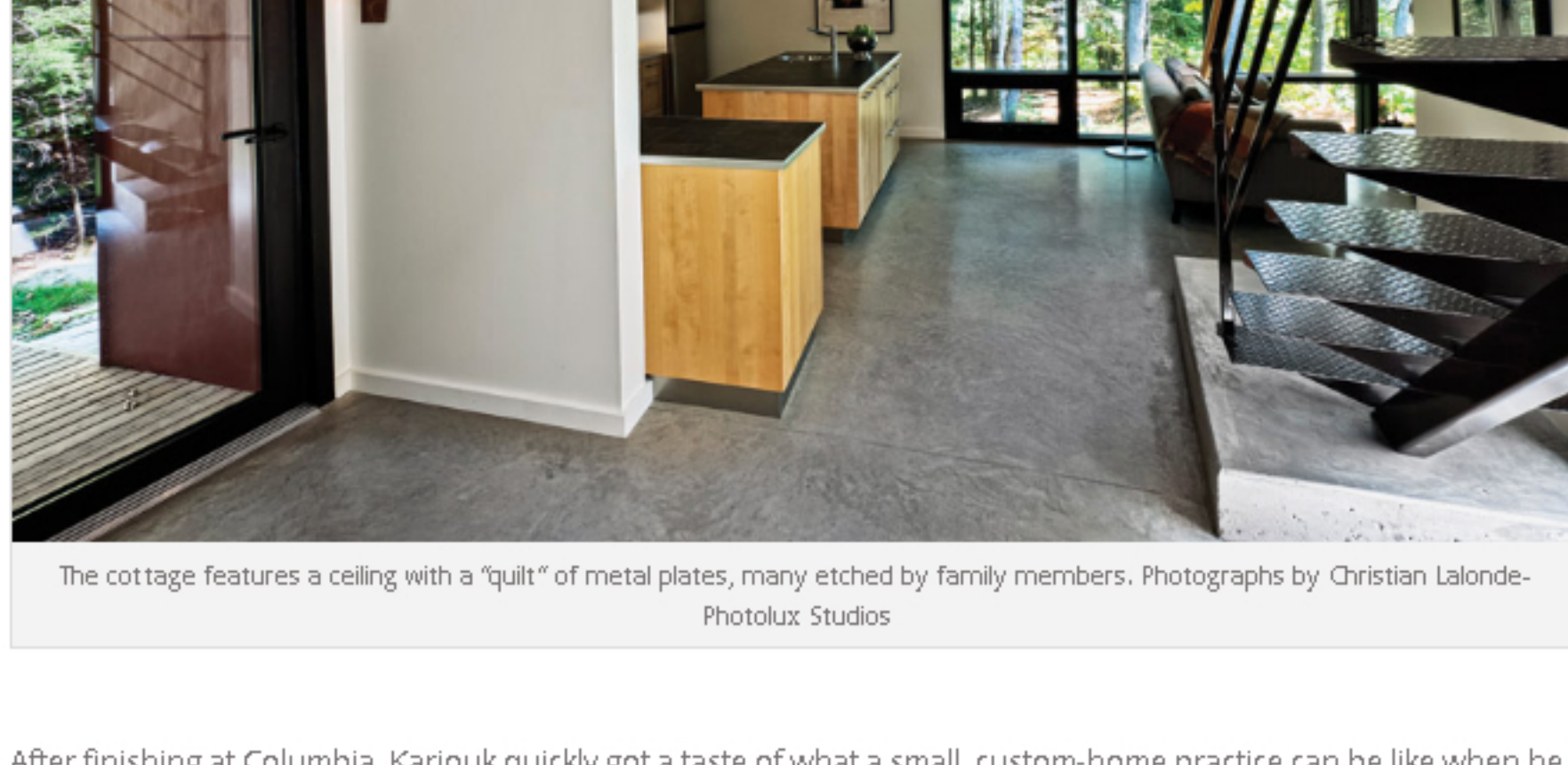
The clients, a married couple, wanted a dwelling that served as a vessel to conserve family memories that will unfold there; the cottage would eventually become a keepsake for their daughter.



The inside of the cottage features open spaces. Photograph by Christian Lalonde-Photolux Studios

To literally ingrain those family memories, part of the ceiling is surfaced with a "quilt" of steel pieces interspersed with copper and zinc printing plates. Many are etched with landscapes and several more etched by family members themselves.

"The blank plates in the quilt can be easily removed," notes Kariouk, "so the ceiling evolves as the family and friends visiting the cottage leave behind newly etched plates. In this way, the house keeps a physical record of its past."



The cottage features a ceiling with a "quilt" of metal plates, many etched by family members. Photographs by Christian Lalonde-Photolux Studios

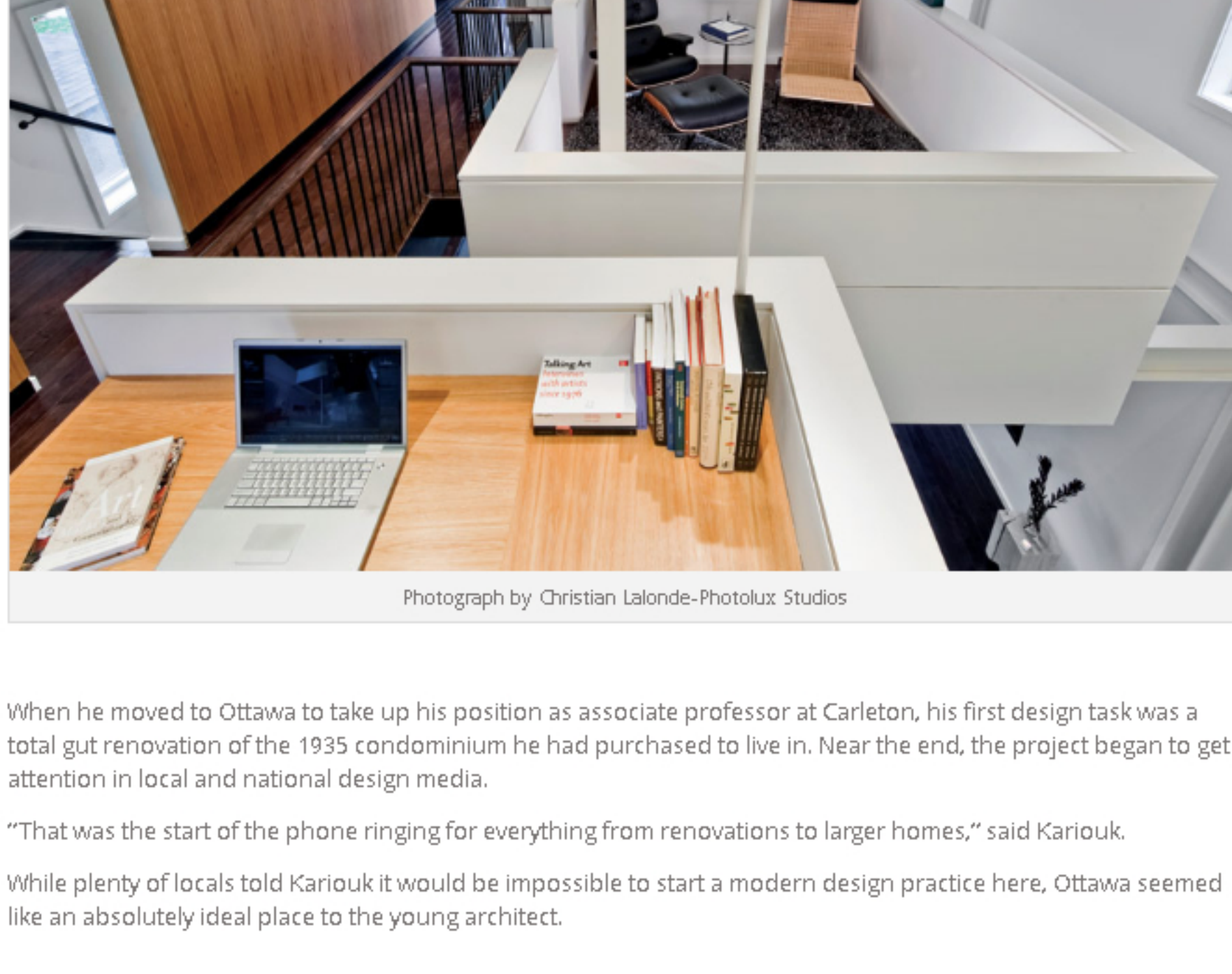
After finishing at Columbia, Kariouk quickly got a taste of what a small, custom-home practice can be like when he started work as the sole employee at a small firm run by two partners.

"We did mostly residential projects and entirely in Manhattan," said Kariouk. "It was absolutely fantastic. Like here in Ottawa, our clients were not generally wealthy, but rather very smart, middle-class, with considerable design knowledge and interest."

That early experience also gave Kariouk a comprehensive introduction to practising architecture.

"Given that I was the sole employee, I was required to be involved in every single aspect of professional work, from meeting clients to design work — to emptying the waste bins and making coffee."

The architect has taken a grounded approach ever since.

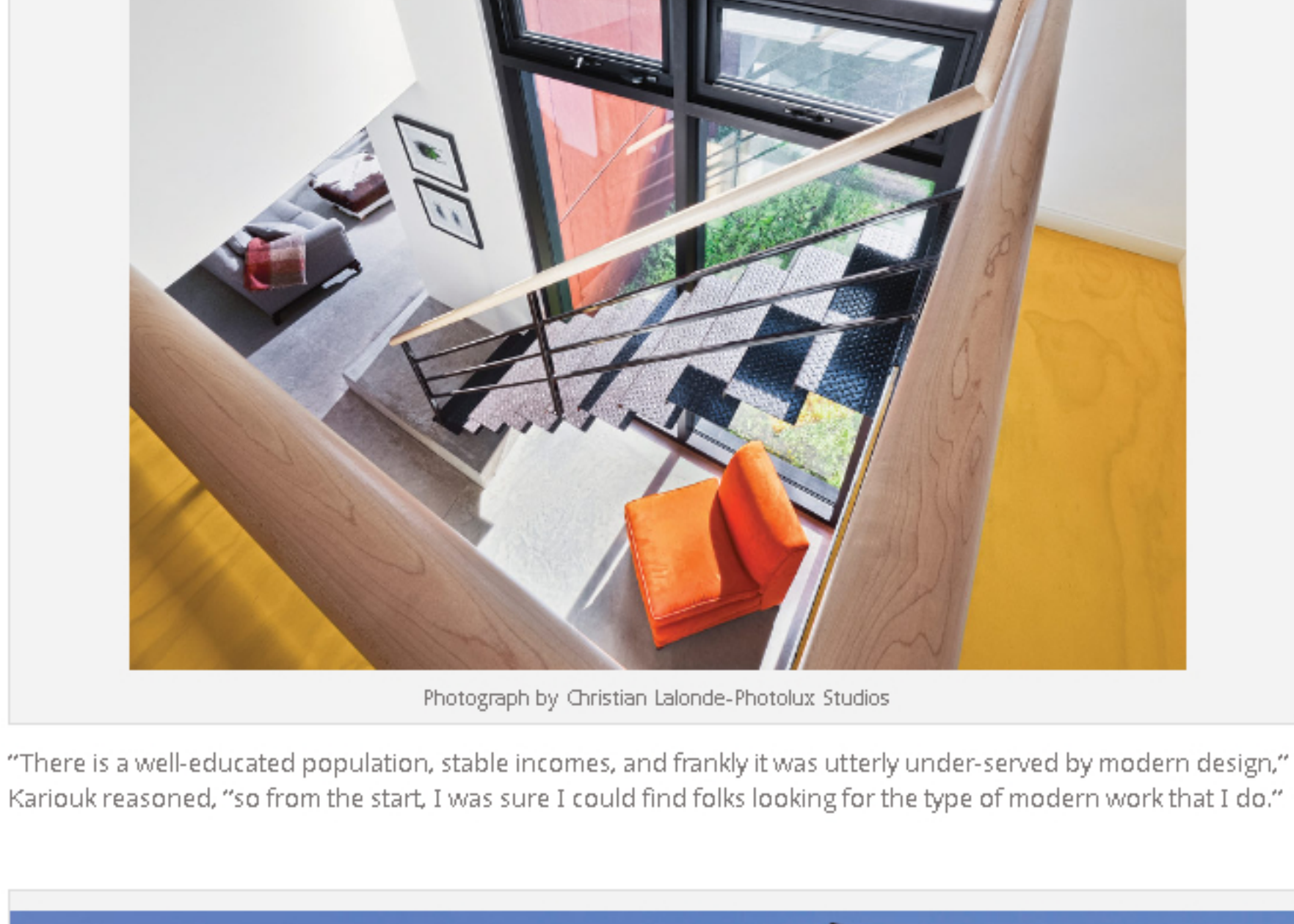


Photograph by Christian Lalonde-Photolux Studios

When he moved to Ottawa to take up his position as associate professor at Carleton, his first design task was a total gut renovation of the 1935 condominium he had purchased to live in. Near the end, the project began to get attention in local and national design media.

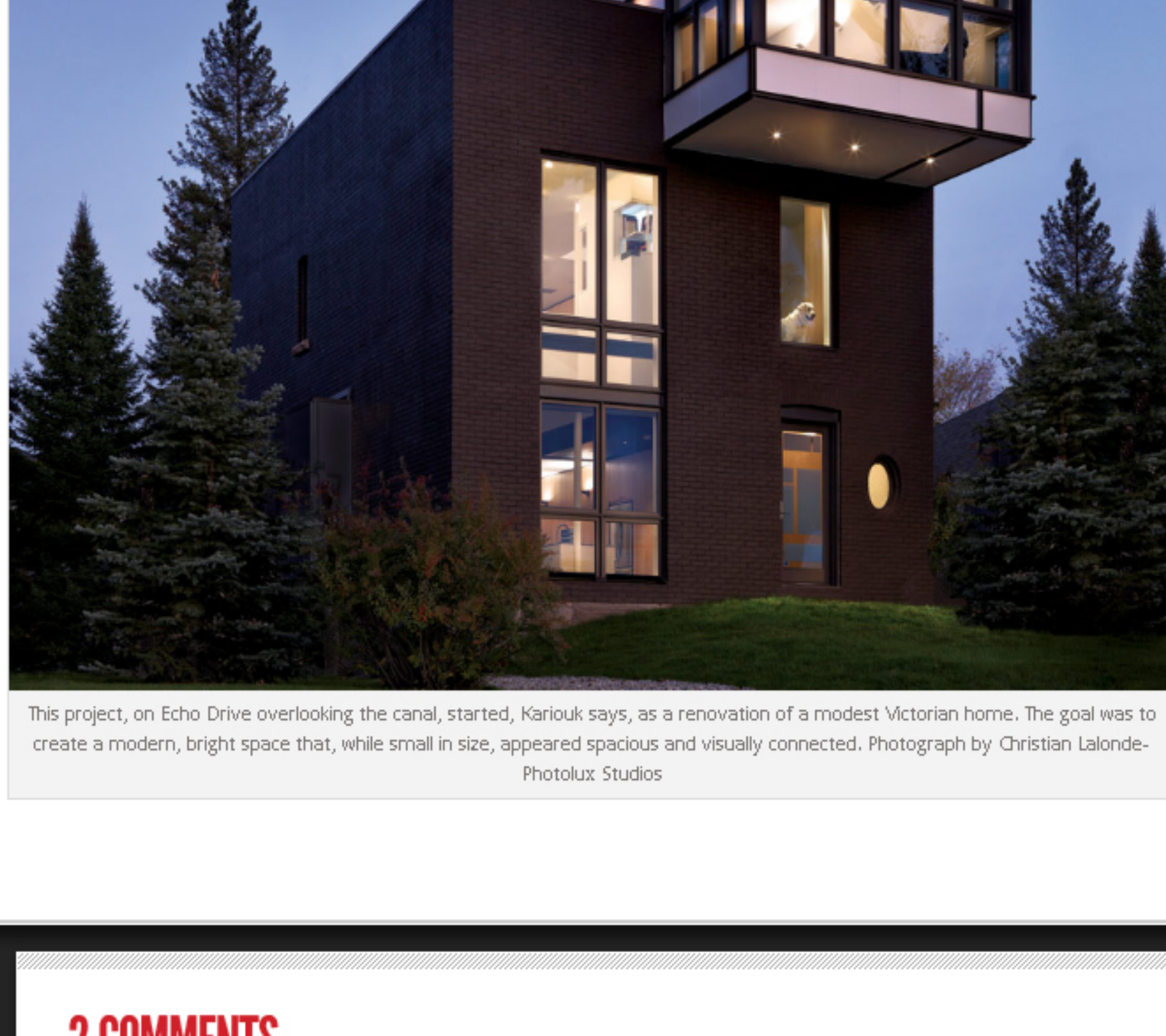
"That was the start of the phone ringing for everything from renovations to larger homes," said Kariouk.

While plenty of locals told Kariouk it would be impossible to start a modern design practice here, Ottawa seemed like an absolutely ideal place to the young architect.



Photograph by Christian Lalonde-Photolux Studios

"There is a well-educated population, stable incomes, and frankly it was utterly under-served by modern design," Kariouk reasoned, "so from the start, I was sure I could find folks looking for the type of modern work that I do."



This project, on Echo Drive overlooking the canal, started, Kariouk says, as a renovation of a modest Victorian home. The goal was to create a modern, bright space that, while small in size, appeared spacious and visually connected. Photograph by Christian Lalonde-Photolux Studios

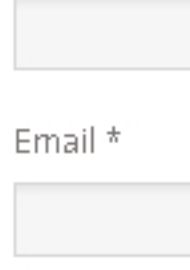
## 2 COMMENTS



MIKE M

Paul is the real deal. I live in New York and am about to build a cottage in Quebec. He has spent an inordinate amount of time trying to understand how we will use space, how our lives work and what our needs are before even beginning to draw conclusions. While we are just 1/2 through the design phase, what he has shown us so far is quite frankly amazing given our limited budget. Can't wait for the finished product!

REPLY



NK

Nice presentation. On the first shot taken from below, you look like Dustin Hoffman... you are not that old!  
Why stress that you are not fully licensed in Ottawa?  
Otherwise, it is good, you make me happy for having my son, my favorite architect, you came out OK!  
nk

REPLY

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