

A PROFESSOR OF
ARCHITECTURE
TRANSFORMS HIS
1930S ART DECO
APARTMENT INTO
A FINELY TUNED
MODERN SPACE.

Text by Kelly Rade

Photographs by Stacey Bradford

A built-in bookcase that displays sculptures and other personal accessories runs along one wall of the 80'-long apartment, softening the industrial aesthetic. The master bedroom is shrouded by a red-silk-backed glass panel, and the bedroom is beyond. Notches in the wooden door line up with the shelves to separate the sleeping space from the rest of the apartment.

LIGHT INDUSTRY

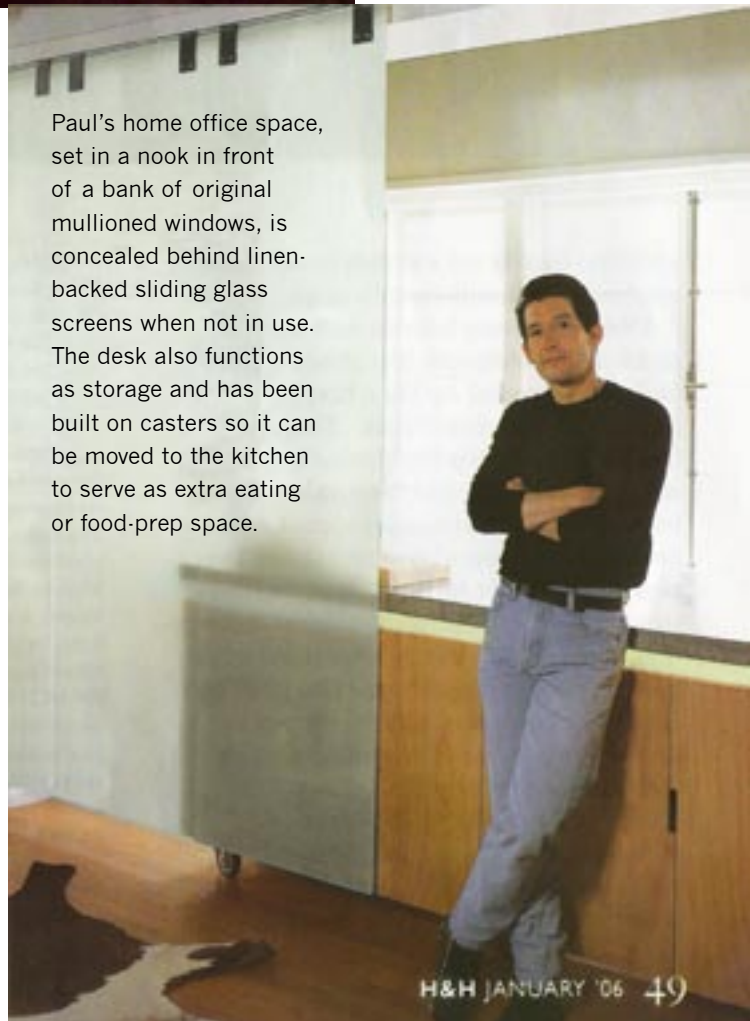


When designing their own homes, architects have the luxury of being able to create interiors that have the potential to be more like gallery installations than simply residential interiors. Often, these highly designed spaces showcase an erudite, individual taste in materials, furnishings and artwork while they maintain the “machine for living” principle espoused by famous Swiss modernist architect, Le Corbusier.

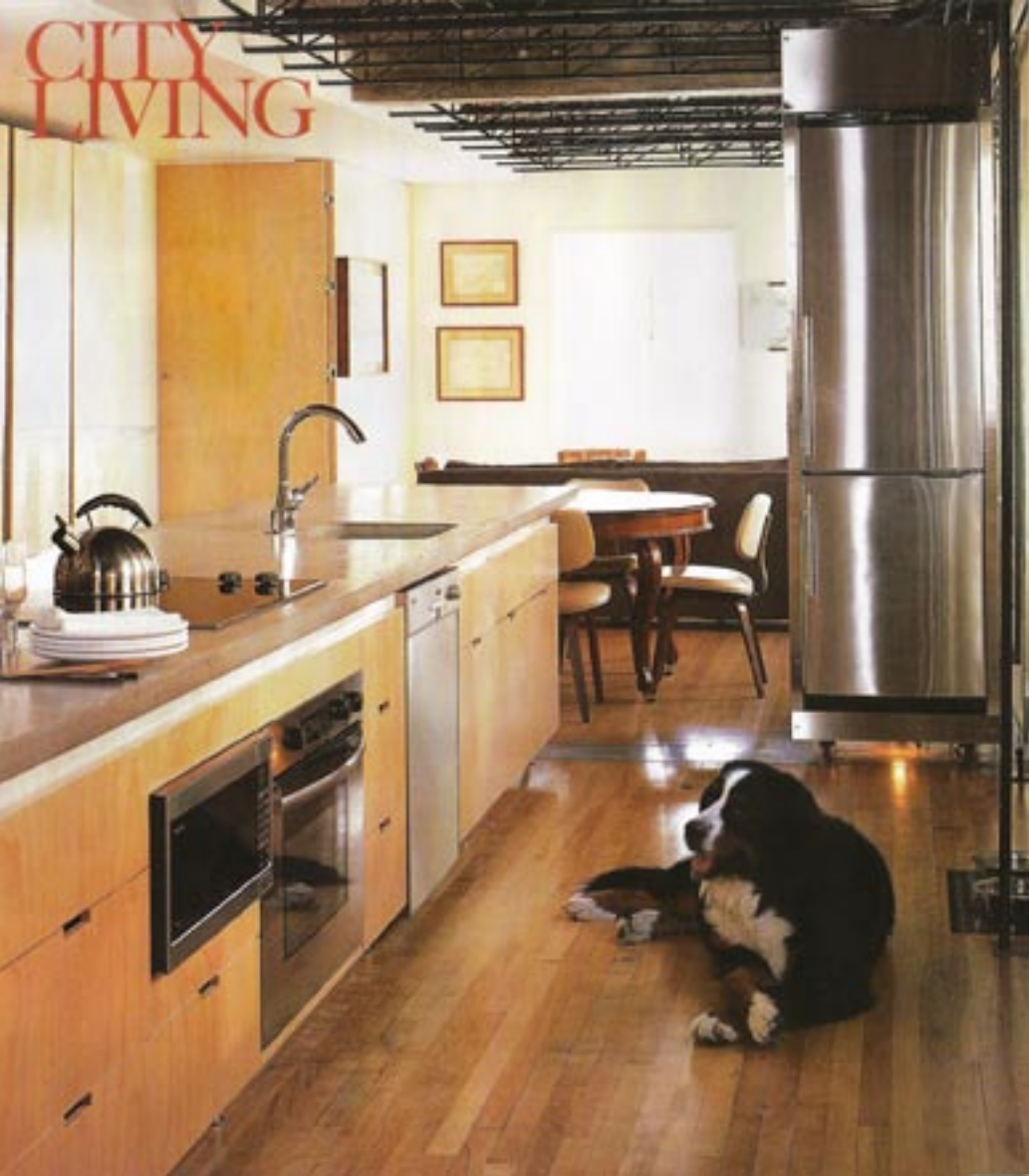
So it is with the highly utilitarian, poetically pragmatic Ottawa live-work space of Paul duBellet Kariouk, a New York architect who moved to the nation’s capital five years ago to take up a teaching position at Carleton University and launch his own design practice, Kariouk Architecture. After purchasing a two-bedroom, two-bath condominium on the fourth floor of a landmark 1930s building, Paul lived there for a year, before renovating, to best learn what the final design could and should be. The result: an elegant, modest interior that is so fresh in its individual expression of function

ABOVE: The sitting area at one end of the apartment doubles as a guest bedroom when vertical storage units by the front door (not shown) are rolled into place to provide privacy. It’s casually furnished with Danish mid-century modern teak chairs upholstered in the same textile found on the duvet cover in the bedroom for continuity.

ABOVE RIGHT: The Art Deco 1930s landmark building in Ottawa is an unexpected place to find this industrial modern space. Architect and homeowner Paul duBellet Kariouk (right) purchased and renovated a two-bedroom, two-bath condominium into a highly utilitarian live-work environment.



Paul’s home office space, set in a nook in front of a bank of original mullioned windows, is concealed behind linen-backed sliding glass screens when not in use. The desk also functions as storage and has been built on casters so it can be moved to the kitchen to serve as extra eating or food-prep space.



ABOVE:The storage towers next to the front door have linen-backed glass panels that display soft silhouettes of the contents for an artful effect. The shower wand for hosing down dirty

footwear hangs from its mount on a rich rust-coloured plaster wall, which appears as pliable and warm as leather. On the floor, concrete fills in gaps where walls once stood.

and form that it's not a stretch to call this apartment and installation. It's name: 4-D.

Along with every interior wall, several architectural elements, like crown moulding and an ornamental Art Deco fireplace, were removed during demolition. "These details had their beauty, but they weren't in great shape. When I removed them, other original features that I found equally appealing were revealed. It became a bit of a trade-off," he says. For example, he discovered that the structural mesh holding the original concrete floor above had, as the concrete dried when poured decades ago, drooped into a soft and fluid sculptural wave pattern. He was so taken by this visual adventure he resolved then that the plaster ceiling must go.

Paul celebrated the 18-by-80-foot dimensions with a series of gestures from a vocabulary normally reserved for the conversion of industrial spaces to lofts.

ABOVE: Hannibal, Paul's Bernese mountain dog, sits in the kitchen area. The mass of exposed open-web steel ceiling joists is a sculptural element and delineates public spaces. (The private spaces have white plaster ceilings.) The fridge, housed in a steel-framed box with linen-backed glass (not visible), is on caster so it can be easily moved to reconfigure the space.

RIGHT: The guest bathroom adjacent to the sitting area is concealed in an elegantly scaled birch veneer box (in background of above photograph) with a hinged door that opens to form an expanded wall.





A clear glass wall divides the master bedroom and bathroom. It's outfitted with horizontal wood-slat Venetian blinds for privacy between the two rooms. The condo's warm palette was inspired by the tone of the concrete in the apartment when Paul bought it. It had an orange patina created by the ceilings rusting wire mesh.

BOTTOM LEFT: Crosses and icons, family heirlooms from Paul's French and Russian relatives, are displayed in the sitting area. When tucked behind the sliding linen-backed glass panels that Paul uses as window coverings, they take on an interesting enigmatic look. An antique Victorian balloon-backed chair is another unexpected element.



ABOVE: The guest bathroom, with rust-coloured plaster walls and green-stained white-oak slats over the floor to mask the shower drain, features a custom-made acrylic sink and stainless steel accents

BELOW: In the master bath, a poured-in-place concrete washbasin and bathtub are united by an overflow function for filling the tub, which has a removable wood-slatted seat.



Beside the front door, an exposed shower hose and requisite floor drain, beneath a graphic slatted-oak panel, are an elegant expression of the function behind today's popular industrial aesthetic of plumbing. Upon entering 4-D, soiled footwear gets a quick rinse, as does Hannibal, Paul's Bernese mountain dog, when returning from his routine outings.

Directly beyond the shower station stands a sentinel of six vertical boxes that do triple duty as storage, space dividers and ambient lighting. With steel frames and birch veneer fronts, these rectangular totems have three sides made of linen-laminated glass panels.

"Lit from within, the glass panels act like a projection screen that captures the soft silhouettes of the objects inside," says Paul. Built on casters, they're free



to roam when Paul senses a need for privacy or lighting around the apartment. (Electrical outlets have been installed in various locations on the ceiling.) To further manage light within the space, he incorporated window treatments made of more sheets of linen-backed glass mounted on a sliding track.

Contrasting the animation of these movable vertical elements, the two primary horizontal gestures are both static. A bookshelf runs the 80-foot length of one wall, and a large concrete-topped kitchen island takes pride of place in the centre of the apartment. Another horizontal element, this one on casters, mostly acts as Paul's home-office desk, but it too is pressed into service elsewhere, most often rolled up to the kitchen island for additional prep or eating space.

Blurring the lines between private and public spaces—implied by the red silk-backed glass sheet that functions as an exotic semi-private screen between the master bath and the rest of the apartment—is a pivotal issue in Paul's work. "I want people to question, 'Why do we always seem to aim only for cosiness in our homes but suppress opportunities for other kinds of spatial decisions?'" he says.

Although decoration has been kept to a minimum, Paul is not averse to the need for personal effects. In the sitting area, demurely displayed on one wall, is a small assemblage of crosses and icons, family heirlooms from his French and Russian forebears. Also, a visual travelogue of maps relating to a sea-kayaking trip he took to Alaska is casually mounted with little adherence to the formal rules of proportional negative space in art and artifact display. Furnishings are simple: in the dining area, mid-century modern Thonet chairs surround a 19th-century English walnut dining table. When not functioning as a semi-private guest room, the sitting area is furnished with Danish teak chairs. "Because I work from home and was going to spend so much time here, 4-D needed to be livable and flexible, warm and also playful, artful and extremely practical," says Paul. "These might sound like contradictions, but they're not. They're the characteristics of anyone's life."