



# The house a party built

Spring has a way of letting the light in and that's exactly what a renovation to a kitchen area did for these Glebe residents

By Sheila Brady  
Photographs by Ashley Fraser

It was supposed to be a simple fix. Rip up some old carpeting and refinish the staircase in a Glebe townhome.

The fix got a lot more complicated after Carol Sutherland-Brown met Carleton University professor and architect Paul Kariouk at a New Year's Eve party in 2008. There was an instant attraction, based on design, light and a little bit of wine.

"We started talking and talked until 3 a.m.," remembers the senior federal public servant, who flashes her trademark megawatt smile to her partner, Ted Willis.

The retired teacher and busy artist throws back

his own smile and the two begin to tell the story of how the minor renovation turned into a major overhaul of the townhome that was built in the '70s on land by Brown's Inlet. It was a modern affair for the time, featuring an open staircase, with different levels open to each other. Yet the design had faults. The kitchen, for example, was choppy and dark.

Not any longer.

The cramped kitchen and dining room were given a modern makeover that makes the coldest day a sunny, warm affair, especially when sitting at the oversized kitchen island with a hot cup of tea.

Light now floods from the front of the house to the back and a garden that still shows remnants of snow. There is a feeling of green in this very modern townhome because Willis, a dedicated gardener, brought in several plants last fall, positioning them by the oversized living room windows.

"This is a nice place to spend the winter because of the sun and Paul's advice," says Willis.

It was a few days after the New Year's Eve party that Kariouk paid a visit. He looked at the tired carpet and soon started talking about how to give the contemporary house a polished, open image.

"It happens all the time. Often people start with one thing, because in their mind, it is a Band-Aid. I show them the big picture," says Kariouk, who teaches at Carleton and also oversees a busy architectural practice with a thoroughly modern edge.

Between that first New Year's conversation and the time the final hammer hit in March >>

Carol Sutherland-Brown, right, met architect Paul Kariouk at a party and then went about convincing her partner, Ted Willis, left, to get behind what grew into a major renovation.

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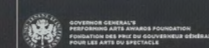
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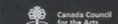
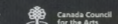
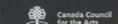
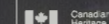
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Kariouk is known for tearing down walls and pushing up ceilings to maximize sunlight. He transformed the originally white kitchen into the stunner above.

2010, came months of meetings, drawings and scale models to perfect the modern conversion.

Kariouk says many people have difficulty visualizing floor plans, so he often uses scale models to bring the spaces alive. He also draws up two sets of plans, giving a set each to husband and wife, so they can review and make their own suggestions.

"Often in a conversation, one person is dominant. Two sets of plans allows everyone to have their say and to make suggestions."

The plans and scale models worked wonders with Sutherland-Brown, who, like many of Kariouk's customers, admits she has trouble visualizing plans and was reluctant to commit to the larger project.

"We said yes, but maybe I thought I could change my mind. Then we moved out because they gutted the house back to the studs," she says.

"We came back one day to move the plants and realized we couldn't get back to the plants >>





PHOTOGRAPH BY PHOTOLUX STUDIO / CHRISTIAN LALONDI

The before kitchen, pictured at top right, was dated and tired. Now, it's a sun-filled room and indeed home, accented with Willis's colourful abstracts, including the Matisse-inspired acrylic at right.



because of all the construction. That's when I realized we were committed." Ted Willis laughs and then gives her a soft nudge.

The old grey carpet came up at the start of the renovations and the open stairs were rebuilt, along with a new black slate floor and small bathroom in the front hall.

The veteran architect, known for taking down walls and pushing up ceilings to maximize sunlight, followed his formula in the Holmwood Avenue townhome, focusing on the kitchen and dining room. The original kitchen was white with old linoleum and a wall cutting it off from the rest of the main floor. Any sunlight would hit the wall and stop. He took down the end wall and sunlight now floods through the house.

The white laminate cabinets are gone, replaced with slim, light oak ones that stretch from floor to ceiling. The challenge was to find a spot to put the stainless steel refrigerator in a kitchen that is long and narrow. He encased the refrigerator in oak panels, adding a dramatic focal point, while leaving room on either side of the large island.

There is also a sense of unity in the home, thanks in part to the light-coloured oak flooring throughout the main level and repeating details of Ceasarstone on top of the kitchen island and repeated as a narrow wall ledge where Willis displays his colourful abstracts. The grey is repeated again on the fireplace hearth.

It was also Willis's art and Sutherland Brown's furniture collection that prompted Kariouk to put up a wall for the first time in his 25 years of design, closing off the living room from the front entrance, which is positioned half-a-floor below. There are now a pair of huge abstracts by Willis on the tall wall, while Sutherland-Brown found a home in the living room for a long bookcase that belonged to her parents.

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While there are some antiques in the home, they're set off with modern white couches and brightly coloured pillows.

This is now a sunny home filled with his colourful abstracts, her antiques and a mixture of modern white couches and chairs, with a stack of oversized art books that do double-duty as end tables.

But the collaboration between architect, artist and public servant is not quite finished. "There are still projects to take on," says Willis. The second floor bedrooms and bathroom, says Sutherland-Brown. Or the lower family room, he adds.

Nevertheless, these two are happy, even though the ambitious project far exceeded their original intentions and budget. The grey carpet is long gone and sunshine bounces off the walls and hardwood floors.

"It's a sunny space in the winter and especially in the summer," says Willis. Best of all, it's a great place for a party. "We have people over a lot more now," he says.

And to think it all started with a party.

