

HOMES

# The Treehouse

This modern marvel — call it an urban cottage — seems to float among the trees on its charming Westboro lot





PHOTOGRAPH BY ASHLEY FRASER





PHOTOGRAPH BY HOURY AVEDISSIAN

## By Janet Wilson

**H**igh above the treetops in Westboro, a house designed by Houry Avedissian is like a magical retreat right out of a fairy tale.

The aptly named "Treehouse" residence is located a few streets away from the heart of bustling Westboro. Surrounded by towering Norway and white spruce and crab apple trees, the pretty corner lot is covered in lush, leafy perennials, while several bird feeders hang from trees.

In September 2009, Avedissian, of Ha<sup>2</sup> Architecture Design, first met her client, who had lived on the property for almost 20 years in a tiny bungalow.

"The bungalow was buried under all the trees. No matter what we were going to do, we had to keep the trees as it's an exceptionally beautiful lot.

Houry Avedissian of Ha<sup>2</sup> Architecture Design is the brains behind this home design in Westboro.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ASHLEY FRASER





PHOTOGRAPHS BY HOURS AVEDESSIAN

It's a little forest in Westboro."

The treehouse concept began to take shape as Avedissian drew inspiration from the lot. Instead of being engulfed by the trees, she wanted the client to experience the feeling of being either lifted above them, or at least living among the foliage.

To enhance the treehouse effect, Avedissian used several different types of wood to build the 2,700-square-foot home. The woods create a soothing natural palette, inside and out. The arresting exterior, for example, is a marvel to the eye and is clad in select-grade western red cedar, brown metal siding and metallic grey brick. The

cedar was used in a variety of different applications, including in textured, trellis-like wood strips that were installed vertically and horizontally to boost the wow factor.

"The first floor of the home is wrapped in metal so it looks as though it is proudly propping up the top cedar volume," Avedissian says.

The main living and dining area is on the second floor to maximize the client's experience with the foliage and light throughout the year. A south-facing overhang extends the dining room to the outside environment. It serves as a shelter from the rain, which doesn't reach the balcony deck, >>

A tiny bungalow, middle left, was replaced with a wood, steel and brick home that resembles a treehouse. The master ensuite, above right, and spacious kitchen, below, feature plenty of windows with views of the treetops.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY HOURS AVEDESSIAN





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but also offers protection from the hot summer sun. The 16-foot patio doors off the dining area flood the upper floor with light and allow the client to bring the outdoors in.

A journey into the Treehouse takes visitors up a “floating” concrete-and-steel staircase built by Almonte’s Branje Metal Works, which leads to the main entrance and the deck of the sweeping, cantilevered balcony. The open-concept area features a contemporary kitchen built by Pilon Kitchens with sleek quartz countertops, high-gloss cabinets, grey cedar laminate cabinetry, a seven-foot-long breakfast bar topped with two dramatic red pendant lights, and, of course, lots of spectacular windows.

Ceilings are 10 feet high in the dining area and slope down to eight feet in the living area. Athena Gris floor tiles from Olympia Tile consist of naturally veined marble that resemble the earthy tones found in wood.

“We brought cedar all the way through the inside of the home with feature details on the wall. The floors are birch, while the kitchen bar is maple.”

The dining and living area is separated by a see-through fireplace with steel surround, which rests on a maple base. The study is tucked behind a low wall that features built-in cabinetry and sculptural shelving cubes to showcase the homeowner’s treasures.

The relaxing master ensuite features a walk-in shower with a bench and its own window that looks out at the treetops. The custom-built vanity is made of white concrete and features a sloped drain with wall-mounted faucets. A hidden compartment by the tub lifts up to reveal a laundry chute to the floor below.

Avedissian, who studied architecture at the Université de Montréal, has spent the past decade working for notable architecture firms, including

This striking open steel and wood staircase leads down to the main-level living room.



BTLA architects in Montreal, where she spearheaded the design of commercial office towers, condos, hotels and industrial buildings. She also worked in the Caribbean islands for a year before moving to Ottawa.

"I always wanted to design unique custom homes, to personalize each space to the needs of the client, while being involved in the project as a whole from beginning to end," says the 37-year-old, who was born in Australia, but moved to Montreal as a child. "I love the interaction with the clients and designing the homes as well as the interiors and built-in furniture. I enjoy maximizing the spaces and unifying the overall home even down to the furniture selection."

Another striking open steel and wood staircase leads down to the main-level living room, second bedroom and bathroom. An eight-foot-high glass wall runs under the floating staircase, making it look as though it's contained behind it.

Taking centre stage in the room is a sleek fireplace with black steel surround that rests on a 700-pound slab of concrete. Patio doors open to an expansive deck that stretches along the entire width of the home.

"I always wanted to build a treehouse as a young girl," Avedissian says. "This is the next best thing to owning one."

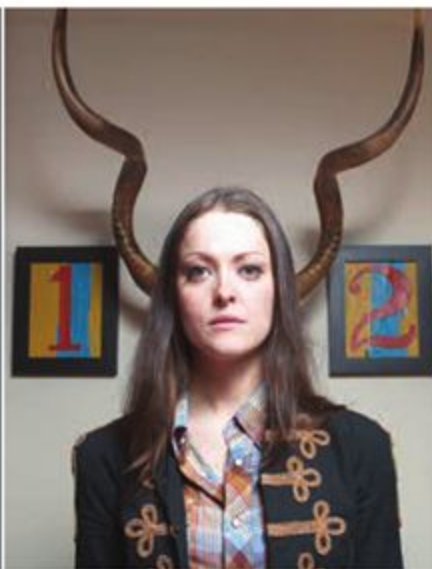
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