

# THE HOUSE OF EDWARD BURTYNSKY

It is one of the low density residential streets in the Little Italy area, in the Canadian city of Toronto.

Very few houses look alike and most of them are built in a Victorian or Edwardian architectural style.

Here, in a former syngogue, is the Burtynsky Johnston Residence situated, home of the famous photographer Edward Burtynsky.

The design team consisting of Lynn Appleby and David Didur, transformed the house into a place for reflection and for entertaining.



production:  
OBJEKT USA-CANADA  
photos: Hans Fonk

Left: the famous photo-grapher Edward Burtynsky. (photo: Vladimir Antaki) He is sitting in front of his floor to ceiling bookcase at his personal office, designed by Appleby and Didur.

Right-hand page: the central part of the living Room: with a twenty-eight foot long 'pau-ferro' wood cabinet with recessed bronze hardware and Japanese red lacquer interiors. In the background is the entrance door.





Above: the shower garden with Venetian mosaics and a view to the sky. The concept was to create the feeling of being in an outdoor shower. Above the tub are photographs of 'Ice Huts' by Canadian photographer Richard Johnson with metallic flecks of color that glisten in resonance with the Venetian mosaics. The floors are a combination of honed and chiseled lime stones from Italy and Africa. Beside that: the master bedroom. Above the bed, Burtynsky's image 'Pivot Irrigation #7 High Plains', Texas.

Below: the design team: Lynn Appleby and David Didur. (Photo: Lisa Cancellato, Operations Director Think2Thing)



The area got its name when Italians arrived in Toronto in large numbers during the early 20th century. The affordable Edwardian and Victorian homes that lined the streets bordered with trees, were bought by Italian immigrants, many of them worked on the railways and in road construction. Little Italy is known for its Italian Canadian restaurants, coffee shops and businesses. It was in one of those streets that a former synagogue was split into two townhouses, one of them now belonging to the famous photographer Edward Burtynsky.

The three-storey house is approximately 3,000 square feet. It is only fifteen minutes away from his photography studio Image Works so that Burtynsky can ride his bicycle to work. When Burtynsky decided to create his new home, he called upon the architectural and industrial design team Lynn Appleby and David Didur to expand the house and to design all aspects of the interior and the garden.

Lynn: "The design process of the residence evolved over many glasses of wine, dinners and morning café. Burtynsky loves to cook and to entertain there so the kitchen/dining room became the center of his and his partner Julia Johnston new home."

The lay out of the ground floor with the stairs stayed more or less the same. The designers completely transformed the space. They designed a multifunctional kitchen and created a waterfall of light to connect the dark interior with the garden on the back. The extensive renovation also included the custom fireplace with an patinated steel surround, millwork, display elements and lighting.

On the second floor they took down the back wall and topped up the house with a two storey glass 'writing room' which Burtynsky used

as his headquarters for the development of his Anthropocene project. The idea was to create a room within the trees, away from the city. A place to read and think."

Burtynsky commented: "Lynn and David are creating spaces and surfaces that come from a deep aesthetic and functional ergonomics without the ego imposed. By creating this house, there was truly a chance to co-create a space that had the richness of the architect/designer's touch and the personality and value of the client equally present."

Lynn Appleby and David Didur have been collaborating with Burtynsky since early 2000. Their first project together was the design of his photography studio, as part of his photography laboratory, Toronto Image Works. Hidden behind a simple painted door along a non-descript hallway they created an 'inner sanctum'. It is a little like Alice in Wonderland: a magic world rendered visible. It is a place designed specifically for Burtynsky to think and create. It also separates him from the busy activity of the printing and allows him to focus on the details of each image.

The heart of Burtynsky's daily operations is formed by a specially designed magnetic viewing wall. Each and every image is attached to this working wall where it is analyzed under ideal lighting conditions and is carefully calibrated before being released to galleries around the world. It has become one of the 10 things that Burtynsky couldn't live without.

Burtynsky: "The magnetic wall in my studio can hold large prints under different lights. It has become a pivotal place where all the decisions about the color, the density, the contrast and the size of a print are determined."

Above: the garden with cross-cut Eramosa stone from Ontario, Canada. At the end of the garden vista, there is a light totem made of raw steel, designed to bloom with the rhododendron.

Beside that: the writing room creates a new world up in the trees and under the sky. The floors are made of stones from a riverbed in Carthage. Burtynsky turned this lofty room into his headquarters when working on his film Anthropocene. On the left, behind the custom walnut writing desk, there is a magnet wall used as a story board: dozens of images were organized in columns on the steel wall representing all the themes and locations for the project. Now that the film has been completed, the story board has been replaced by the image 'Salt Pans #4 Little Rann of Kutch' in Gujarat, India.



The kitchen and dining room with a movable island specially designed to easily attach and detach from the Corian dining room table with beveled edges and steel legs. This figuration enables the kitchen to function in a variety of ways. The five hanging lanterns are made of seventy hand crafted slender bronze tubes which suspend fifteen planes of light. The lanterns are seen from many vantage points and create a magical atmosphere at night. Display shelves in natural steel have illuminated inset glass panels. Invisible recessed lights pour a waterfall of light down onto the images hung on the walls and illuminate the art works including Burtynsky's 'Pivot Irrigation #2' High Plains in Texas and 'Saw Mills #1' Lagos, Nigeria.

