

**STREAMLINED STYLE:** Built-in walnut shelves that echo those installed in the kitchen keep clutter at bay, while pot lights “disappear” into the ceiling. Iconic furniture pieces, such as the Eames lounge chair, Noguchi coffee table and Warren Platner side tables pay homage to the era of the home. The landscape painting above the fireplace is by Montreal-based artist Yehouda Chaki.



A MODEST WATERFRONT H

*what* do you do when

1950s-era cottages and grand modern masterpieces alike border your '60s-style home that's ready for a reno? Richard Wadsworth knows: He melded both worlds and transformed his unassuming home into a contemporary escape at the edge of the city.

More to the point, from the bathroom hardware and wide-plank walnut flooring to the layout and landscaping, the design – and much of the labour – was all his.

Located in a sought-after waterfront neighbourhood on the outskirts of Victoria, Wadsworth's 1960s home had been renovated in the late 1980s or early '90s, bringing a decidedly cottage-y feel, paired with the pink and brass accents of the day. And, typical of its era, the layout featured a number of smaller, closed-in rooms, directly opposite to today's modern, open floor plans.

Now, after the year-long renovation, the same home is much different.

Modest by some current standards, the 2,300-square-foot home underwent upgrades from the ground up, including new plumbing and wiring. Interior walls were removed and reconfigured, carefully selected materials and colours were repeated throughout to improve the flow, and thanks to the new, energy-efficient windows and skylights, natural light floods through the now-open space.

"These little things give the feeling of space," says

# EXECUTIVE

# RETREAT

HOME IS TRANSFORMED FROM COTTAGE STYLE  
TO SLEEK AND SOPHISTICATED

TEXT **JENNIFER BLYTH** PHOTOGRAPHY **JO ANN RICHARDS**



“IT’S ABOUT RESPECTING

Wadsworth, who shares the inviting home with his partner. “Every single room in the house has a door to the outside.”

The pair weren’t new to renovating, but this was the first time Wadsworth had undertaken the challenge as his own general contractor. He

was, however, confident in his vision and knew exactly what he wanted in terms of design.

But being your own general contractor – successfully – also means knowing when to ask for help. For Wadsworth that was in the technical details: plant choices for the

landscape design, all-important measurements, both inside and out, and professional drawings to submit for building permits.

“I like to use professionals when I realize there are things I can’t do,” he says.

With the existing home on paper, Wadsworth approached it with a fresh eye, and with pencil and Liquid Paper in hand, began remaking his house into the elegant space it now is. “I wanted a little executive retreat – sleek and sophisticated,” he says.

The mid-century style is complemented by the careful choice of materials and furnishings to create an authentic update to a

**FROM GALLEY TO GORGEOUS (above): A cool cube wall opens the kitchen up to the living room. Walnut cabinets are complemented with stainless steel appliances, bold hardware and the stunning glass tile backsplash. INSIDE-OUT (opposite): Richard Wadsworth relaxes while enjoying the view. The painting of boys on the beach is by celebrated Vancouver artist Tiko Kerr.**





THE ORIGINAL STYLE OF THE HOUSE."

— Richard Wadsworth



50-year-old home. "It's all about respecting the original style of the house. It's a 1960s bungalow, but it's [about] updating it and making it more modern," says Wadsworth.

Continuing the clean lines of the Eames chairs and custom sofas, built-in shelving flanking the fireplace is hidden behind walnut doors echoing those in the kitchen opposite. Instead of suspended lighting and lamps, Wadsworth installed recessed pot lighting throughout, offering easily controlled illumination without the visual clutter.

And even on the greyest day, the living room is warm and cosy, thanks to the

open gas fireplace framed in a rough-hewn slate surround, a combination echoed in the master bedroom and downstairs family room.

"It's the little things that truly make it," Wadsworth says, pointing to the specially made metal handrail leading downstairs. He even turned a creative eye to the steps themselves, which, had they been wood like the rest, would have been too slippery. Straight carpeting, though, might have seemed heavy. The answer? The treads are in a luxurious-on-the-feet textured carpeting, while the risers are in the same engineered hardwood.

In the living room, looking out to the slate patio, through the glass deck fence to the ocean beyond, Wadsworth says, "I like the inside-out feel of the house. When you sit here, you feel like you're almost on the water because nothing stops your eye."

"It's all about the view."

The same is true of the master suite, a comfortable, relaxed setting with slate fireplace, an immensely functional walk-in closet and luxurious ensuite. Here, the perspective is appropriately more private: French doors open to the small slate patio and private, hedged front garden.

# IMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES



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**SUITE LUXURY:** The master bedroom is a study in comfort with a fireplace, luxe bathroom, and French doors that lead to a secluded patio. **ON THE WATERFRONT (below):** “It all flows to the water,” says Wadsworth, where summer days are spent gazing at the sea.

Refusing to allow the ensuite to get the star treatment at the expense of the other baths, Wadsworth treated each with the same elegant materials, including beautiful 24-inch by 12-inch rectangular polished stone floor tile, walnut cabinetry and Silestone countertops. In the ensuite, the tile extends up the surround of the soaker tub and the back of the stand-alone shower for a seamless look, complemented by a frameless glass door and rain shower head.

The kitchen, formerly a galley-style space, is now open to the dining and living areas. While normally not a fan of stainless steel appliances – in his previous home they were hidden behind panelling – Wadsworth incorporated them to break up the expanse of cabinetry that might have otherwise overwhelmed the relatively small kitchen. And flouting the current trend toward large, double sinks, he elected a single extra-deep square sink instead.

Additional relief from walls of wood is found in the brushed-metal hardware, cream and brown half-inch glass tile backsplash, warm white Silestone counters and in the open cube wall – a ‘60s-inspired Wadsworth design that serves both to open the kitchen to the living room and set the tone for the repeated cube motif throughout.

Outside, the newly landscaped, quarter-acre property features a cool grassy area bordered by perennial beds and trees in the front. A rock and aggregate path leads to an easy-care rear yard, with a series of smaller patios, which, like the home, are focused on the breathtaking water view.



“It all flows to the water,” Wadsworth reflects. “In the summer, we’re always on the patio right on the ocean.”

At the house, a walkout patio from the downstairs family room is covered by the upper balcony, allowing for outdoor entertaining regardless of the weather. Specially sealed pot lights and a ceiling



lined in vinyl decking material allows it to be hosed down as needed to wash away the corrosive salt water.

"It's a constant battle with the salt, being on the water; it's like living on a boat," says Wadsworth.

During demolition, he tried to salvage materials for re-use, a goal that's close to his heart, though it likely cost more, he says. "I wanted to avoid as much as possible things going to the landfill." In retrospect, a more straightforward demolition after finding appropriate recycling facilities might have offered a cost-effective answer for his "green" ambition.

The lesson learned? "Do as much as you can to recycle your demolition materials, but demo it all right away."

Already feeling the itch to pursue his next project, Wadsworth looks ahead to an opportunity to build a house from the ground up, though this time he'll likely leave much of the general contracting work this time to a professional.

"I probably wouldn't be as involved in the day-to-day [work] as I was," he reflects.

"I probably spent more than if I hired a contractor, but I learned tonnes."

But pass the paper and pencil, because the design will likely be all his.

"The fun is the project part. I love the ripping up and the designing," he says with a smile. "I don't like the maintaining." ■

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