

WALKING ON CLOUDS

Initially resistant, homeowners love the white oak floors in their Westmount Square condo

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“You’ll walk on clouds. It’ll be magical.”



THEY MOVED FROM HAMPSTEAD to walk on clouds. “That’s what got me, when [the designers] said ‘You’ll walk on clouds. It’ll be magical,’” one of the owners recounts. She’s sitting in the dining nook of her black kitchen with its white oak floor, on a 15th floor in Westmount Square, gazing out at the sweeping view of Mount Royal and Westmount.

The “clouds” are the white floors (most of them engineered oak from Finland) that her husband originally resisted. “I was quite worried, but we trusted [the designers],” he says. And now “I wouldn’t change it for anything.”

Yves Lefebvre and Martina Přibyslavská of Lefebvre & Přibyslavská Designers pushed for the white floors. “They asked for dark floors and a white kitchen, but we flipped it all around,” says Přibyslavská. And it’s to good effect. There are eleven distinct spaces in the 2,400-square-foot condo apartment: foyer, powder room, kitchen, dining room, living room, den, master bedroom with en suite dressing room and bathroom, and guest bedroom and bathroom. Despite the relatively low ceilings (8.5 feet in most areas), none of the spaces feels cramped thanks to the pale floors, walls, and ceilings, and the enormous windows. 🏡



Designers Lefebvre & Přibyslavská were mindful of the owners’ art collection in every aspect of design from day one. Many of the apartment’s walls have niches made for specific pieces, solo or grouped.



Lefebvre & Přibyslavská have used classic design strategies to good advantage. Continuity of materials and finishes unites all the rooms and has allowed surprising amounts of storage space—mostly built-in wall units—to be added unobtrusively. Symmetry in architectural details contributes to the elegant but relaxed ambience.

Nearly all the furniture is new, although some pieces were brought from the owners’ previous home and reupholstered to fit with the decorating scheme, which is mostly variations in contrast between dark and light. “I have a thing for black and white,” the wife says with a smile.

Lefebvre recalls a request for “something contemporary, clean lines,” and that the wife “wanted it to be a dream in a sense. That’s why we came up with the white floors.” It was a good call. Says the wife, “I’m in love with Yves and Martina. There was such nice chemistry, working together. I had the most fun. I’m still having fun.”

The couple moved into town because “we wanted the freedom,” the wife says. It was a lifestyle decision: here in Westmount “it’s put on a pair of walking shoes and you can walk anywhere. And there’s activity and there’s action and there are people and there are

beautiful shops and there’s an excitement! It was always my dream to live downtown; even when I was a teenager. And here I am. You’ve got the feel of a neighbourhood and the charm of a neighbourhood, and you’re within 10 minutes of the core of downtown. The whole condo makes me feel young again.”

The free-standing, open shelving between the dining and living areas (below) was custom-made for the wife’s collection of art glass. It replaces a solid unit that had significantly cut the amount of light in the space.





The apartment itself was not feeling so young when the owners first saw it. David LaRoche, project manager for the general contractors, Westgrove Construction, recalls parquet floors in a space “that was probably renovated in the early ’80s or something like that, typical of that era. The finishings weren’t of quality. We did a basic gut in there.”

The famous Westmount Square windows are what persuaded the current owners to move in. “We fell in love with the view and the potential,” the wife says. “It has such wonderful potential.... It got me.”

Getting and gutting done, the rebuilding began. LaRoche says the process was fairly standard as apartment condos go, with the usual restrictions on working hours, noise, debris, and changes to infrastructure such as plumbing. He does recall that the white floors “are lovely to look at, not particularly fun to install, but they came out really, really nice.... The colour doesn’t make it hard to install, but certainly there’s that extra layer of protection when you’re dealing with a white floor. Everything shows on a floor like this.”



“It’s contemporary. It’s also got traditional features. It’s soft. Every time I walk into the bedroom I go ‘Wow!’ ”



The whole project, from gutting to rebuilding to decorating to moving in, took only six months. Westgrove vp Allan Wiltzer says, “The process starts obviously with a great design and a great plan, and the beauty about us working with a company like Yves and Martina is they are real professionals and they provide us with really excellent plans. When it comes to installing baseboards and applying mouldings, everything is laid out ahead of time.... They work very well with clients to achieve the look and feel that they want, and they provide us, the general contractor, with really great detailed plans.”

As with many projects, the last few weeks were somewhat stressful. “The (homeowners) and I had a running gag,” says LaRoche. “They told me they would move into my house if their apartment was not ready, and, although they’re nice people, I made sure their apartment was ready. The last few weeks were a little hectic, especially with the natural stone countertops. That’s always a tricky part at the end, but this project went well.”

The concrete powder room sink (centre, bottom) presents a strong contrast to the soft furnishings of the master bedroom.



It went so well that the wife is hard-pressed to choose a favourite space, but she leans somewhat towards the master bedroom. “There’s something about the bedroom,” she says. “It’s contemporary. It’s also got traditional features. It’s soft. Every time I walk into the bedroom I go ‘Wow!’ I feel that way about everything, but when I walk into the bedroom I go ‘Wow.’”

Her husband refuses to play favourites. “I love everything, especially at night when you see the lights. There’s nothing that I’m disappointed in. There’s nothing that I would have done differently.” 🐾

“The whole condo makes me feel young again.”

One of the homeowners has a penchant for black and white, evident in décor and furnishings throughout the apartment. In the kitchen (above and far left), the designers reversed the usual dark-floor-lighter-cabinets colour scheme to stunning effect.

