

Dubbeldam Design Architects

Toronto, Ontario

Dubbeldam Design Architects (DDA) was founded by Heather Dubbeldam as a multidisciplinary practice with a focus on contemporary design. In addition to a broad range of professional experience in architecture, the practice's portfolio includes interiors, landscape design, lighting and furniture design.

Operating in a studio setting, the firm takes a collaborative approach to projects and pursues a rigorous level of detail and craft. From the conception of each project through to construction, the architectural team maintains a high degree of involvement with consultants and contractors to ensure tight control of project quality and detail.

Advocating the use of sustainable building practices as a matter of course, DDA strives for an innovative approach to all aspects of their work, including experimentation with building materials, building form, and spatiality. Without any preconceived style or convention, each project is derived from its unique context and conditions. The result is a diverse range of projects that emphasize the specific needs and aspirations of the client, while expressing the design approach of the practice. In addition to receiving the Ontario Association of Architects Best Emerging Practice in 2008, the practice has received recognition through provincial and national design awards, and through the publication of its work.

It is DDA's objective to produce architecture of the highest quality while maintaining a life/work balance. Exposure to external ideas and influences, whether they originate locally or internationally, generates new thinking and a fresh approach to the design of the practice's projects.



Cabbagetown Residence

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The renovation and renewal of this 100-year-old home in Toronto's Cabbagetown neighbourhood presented a challenge typical of this city—the updating of a house in a heritage neighbourhood, adapting the existing urban fabric while preserving its historic character. The Victorian front façade and side walls of this narrow semi-detached house were preserved, but the interior and rear façade were completely redesigned and rebuilt to counter the containment of the original Victorian plan. A modern renovation and addition were inserted into the historic shell, providing the house with passive sustainable technologies and materials, natural light, and an improved layout that supports the owners' love for entertaining.

Although small in area, the interior feels simultaneously compact and spacious. The reworked layout has an unexpected sense of fluidity, airiness, and access to natural light, achieved by an open-riser stair and an open plan. Various spaces are connected vertically and horizontally, yet still convey subtle demarcations of function through changes in floor heights, partial walls, or built-in furniture elements. The openness facilitates the movement of air throughout the house, allowing for passive natural cooling when the new operable windows are open. A long skylight above the staircase draws natural light down into the heart of the house, and significantly reduces the need for artificial lighting.

On each floor there are connections to the outdoors, inviting fresh air and an awareness of the changing seasons to pervade the interior. The attic was enlarged to accommodate a master bedroom with an adjoining bathroom, opening onto a sheltered roof deck that recalls a tree house. The second floor library is bathed in natural light from a full wall of glass, and in the kitchen an over-sized glass door slides open to a low-maintenance deck garden, allowing guests to spill outside in the warmer months.

- 1 Section showing natural ventilation created by new operable skylights and specifically-located windows
- 2 Light-coloured materials in the kitchen help to reflect natural light into the narrow house
- 3 View of the library on the second floor
- 4 Victorian facade of house is preserved
- 5 New facade and addition on rear of house facing laneway
- 6 View of entertainment room with open riser stair
- 7 View into ensuite bathroom through to roof deck beyond

