

RESIDENTIAL

Contrast House, Toronto

Dubbeldam Design Architects,
Toronto

The owners, relocating to Canada from southern climes and accustomed to light, sunny living conditions, wanted to brighten their dark, narrow house. Although the existing house possessed a south-facing facade, it was only 11 feet wide and the rabbit-warren room layout blocked the penetration of natural light into the 1,850-square-foot dwelling.

This asset was augmented physically and perceptually. Physically, the long, narrow house was opened up on all levels and given expanded openings on the south facade to trap the daylight. A spatial reorganization in plan and section gave continuous sightlines from the interior to large new windows at the rear.

Perceptually, in areas without direct access to natural light, the Dubbeldam Design placed contrasting elements near each other, which, the designers aver, made the spaces seem brighter. Thus, dark elements such as walnut floors, tall bookcases filled with colourful collectibles on the ground floor, and the charcoal chalkboard wall on the second floor play off against crisp white walls and ceilings. This is said to intensify the effect of the natural light spilling down from above through new openings, such as the open risers of the new staircase (with a sleek, negative-space handrail) that rises along the party wall from the basement to the third floor.

Oversized sliding patio doors bathe the third floor in natural light. This storey is also notable for the way the new ceiling accentuates the roofline, adding a note of drama to the domestic makeover.

Design team: Heather Dubbeldam, Oliver Dang, Rachel Tameirao, Jacob JeBailey and Bindya Lad

"The underside of the stair, as you go up, is one of the nicest details I've seen"—NM



Photography by Tom Arban