



Pearl House, a home  
with well-balanced spaces

## Description

# A unique design for an innovative and protective structure that houses a treasure: a family

Via **v2com**

The Pearl House, inspired by the modern movement of the 1960s, is the new home of a South Korean family with two young children. Arriving in Quebec in 2008, Min and Yuong have been living for the past 10 years in a small condo on top of a large residential building in Montreal. Since settling here, the couple has had two children. The toddlers spend a lot of time playing indoors, and the family is starting to feel cramped.

For Min and Yuong, the desire to move into a home with well-balanced living spaces and to offer their daughter and son the opportunity to play outside freely has become a priority. La Pearl House est née d'un concept fort et simple : penser la maison comme un élément de design afin d'exprimer l'idée d'un sanctuaire.

The Pearl House was born from a strong and simple concept: to think of the house as a design element expressing the idea of a sanctuary.

After some research, the couple fell in love with a bungalow erected on a large lot around the corner, surrounded by mature trees, in the borough of Saint-Laurent, north of Montreal. Although the interior decor needs a thorough overhaul, the house, inspired by the modern movement of the 1960s, has clean lines and interesting architectural elements. Here is an ideal scenario to orchestrate a project full of family appeal.



Even before he moved in, Min, a design enthusiast, had several ideas to modernize his future home. He wanted to open up the interior spaces to reunite his family in a large open room, enlarge the house to add a master bedroom and arrange the backyard as an exterior extension of the living spaces.

With these intentions, it is obvious that the original shape of the house would evolve a lot. However, it was important to the clients that the new architectural language of the house express the figure of a single contemporary building, as opposed to a collection of distinct architectural volumes.



After meeting several architectural firms, Min decided to work with Maxime Moreau, the architect and founder of the Montreal firm MXMA Architecture & Design. The two professionals quickly developed great complicity and set off to discover new spaces.

### **Concept and strategies developed by the architect**

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The

architect imagined the building as a large box containing the volume of the original house and the new master bedroom. He then removed a portion of this box to create a void, an inner courtyard, a protected place that highlights the large maple tree in the middle of the garden. This subtraction also allows natural light to pass through the entire floor plan of the residence, revealing surfaces with warm, contrasting textures. Thus, the backyard becomes a soothing indoor-outdoor space where the family can gather to have a meal, have fun or simply relax.

An important issue in the modernization of this house was the relationship between the different panels of the roof. The existing house was crowned with a gable roof, in addition to the flat roof of the mezzanine, whose shape was not very compatible with the architectural style of the residence.

In order to create a continuous and homogeneous figure, the architect chose to demolish the mezzanine and then stretch the existing roof surfaces to cover the new master bedroom, while respecting the existing alignments, lines and eaves. Consequently, the shape of the original house naturally developed as part of the new residence to form a harmonious whole.

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In terms of layout, the house takes the shape of an “L” and is arranged in four zones. First, to the north is an organized string of intimate spaces. The children’s bedrooms, which were fitted out in the original house, take advantage of the existing windows, which minimized the work on the facades. A new bathroom separates these rooms and enhances acoustic comfort. Following the same axis, the master bedroom is found in the new



extension. It includes a spacious bathroom and a closet room. A 20-foot wide patio door allows the couple to fully enjoy the garden from their bedroom.



The living room, kitchen and dining room have been grouped together to form a large living room in the heart of the house. With a height of 15 feet, generous floor-to-ceiling windows, plenty of built-in storage and transformable living spaces, this spacious room invites family members to spend special moments together while enjoying abundant natural light and a soothing view of the outside vegetation.

At the west end are functional spaces, including a garage and a vestibule with a laundry area. Finally, facing the backyard, a large cedar deck frames the first floor, allowing the interior spaces to continue outward while giving the impression of a more spacious home.

## Emphasis on wood



The concept of a shell that houses precious interior spaces quickly became not only an opportunity to celebrate natural light and vegetation but also to reveal the durability and liveliness of wood. In the backyard, the vertical walls and soffits that make up the new roof are clad with planks of western Canadian red cedar. In order to strengthen the relationship between the interior and exterior, the wood surfaces continue in the residence. The white oak floors, in the same tone as the walls and ceilings, give the rooms an inviting and warm character.

Special emphasis was placed on the use of certified wood and metal to create durable and environmentally friendly exterior coverings. The assembly of exterior walls with staggered posts provides superior thermal insulation that is cost-effective over the long term. In order to illuminate the living spaces and naturally recuperate heat from solar radiation, the new bays have been placed southward. High-performance windows and glazing were also used.

### **An environmentally friendly house**

In addition, all the trees on the property have been preserved. Retained in the design of the new house, the large maple tree, located in the heart of the garden, becomes an architectural element in its own right in the project. It is thus honoured for its ecological, aesthetic and social benefits. In addition, the team planted three new trees in the yard to reduce the risk of heat islanding. Finally, with its style, materials, spatial organization and different energy supply strategies, Pearl House is an eloquent expression of environmentally friendly architecture, as it contributes significantly to improving the quality of life of a family that dreamed of living in contact with nature.

## The kitchen



Drawing inspiration from specific materials, colours and textures, the Pearl House kitchen is a warm space, open to the whole family and well-integrated into the overall concept of the home. The black metal shell, which envelops the body of the house, folds inside to become a large black piece of furniture: the central element of a sophisticated kitchen. This original gesture reinforces the idea of a continuity of architectural space between inside and outside.

‘The living room, the kitchen and the dining room have been grouped to form a large living area in the heart of the house.’

The symbolism of the colour black, which represents existence and mastery in Korean culture, is echoed in the matte black finish of the cabinets and countertops. Thus, the integral style of the kitchen gives the heart of the house the image of a new beginning, a very important cultural representation for homeowners. The kitchen furniture also contrasts with the brightness of the white oak floors and the abundant light that radiates into the interior spaces. Finally, the multiple storage spaces, which meet the daily needs of the family, are hidden behind large doors and integrated into the interior architecture to create a functional space with a true minimalist aestheticism.

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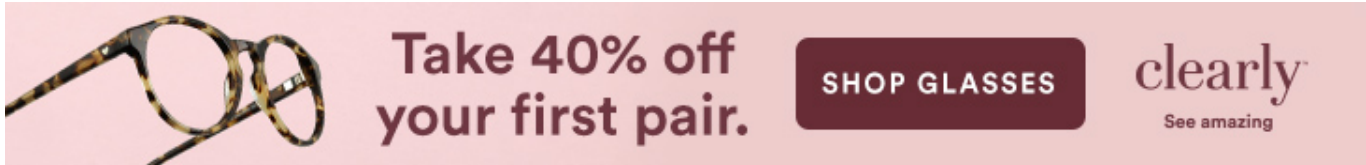
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### Date Created

February 2021