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# VIDRO DO MAR

*A touch of Brazil  
in Crescent Beach*

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BY PHILLIPA RISPIN  
PHOTOGRAPHY: EMA PETER

DESIGN



**WHAT DID YOU DO ON YOUR VACATION?** Chances are that, unlike the owners of this home in the Crescent Beach neighbourhood, you didn't decide to tear down a house and rebuild it, find a builder, find a designer, and then go approximately 10,000 kilometres away and leave them to it.

The lead-up to this unusual vacation started in 2007 when the homeowners and their children were preparing to move to Brazil for four years. They wanted to keep their Vancouver roots while they were away.

"I happened to be in Crescent Beach and saw an old cottage in foreclosure," says one of the homeowners. "It had been squatted in and was derelict. I grew up in the area and have always liked Crescent Beach. Two days before the court hearing, I found the property. We made an offer in court and got the property. We rehabbed the inside and put it on the rental market. A year later we left for four years in Brazil."

As the time approached for the family to move back to Vancouver, they decided to tear down the cottage and build a new family home. In 2011, while on vacation here, they looked at homes in the area, met with various builders and interviewed designers, and chose builder Ron Kliwer of KBC Developments and designer Carolyn Stewart of Concept To Design. And then they returned to Brazil for their last year while the planning and design continued in Canada. 🏡

*"It had been squatted in and was derelict."*

*In its traditional neighbourhood, this home stands out with its contemporary design and materials such as longboard cladding and anodized aluminum window frames.*

*“We were influenced strongly by living in Brazil, where they keep things cool.”*

*White oak floors throughout the home are stained for a whitewash effect, as are the white oak treads on the stairs. Under the intermediate landing, a concrete boardform wall delineates the foyer from a small, open den area where there is a floating desk, also in white oak.*



“It was quite a project,” says the homeowner, “but we left being comfortable with the people we chose.” The builder and designer weren’t on their own, however; they kept in touch with the homeowners by Skype, phone, and FedEx. The homeowners gave Stewart numerous pictures of houses they liked, and they discussed their preference for a contemporary house that favoured indoor-outdoor living with both Stewart and Kliewer.

“We were influenced strongly by living in Brazil, where they keep things cool,” the homeowner says. “We wanted a lot of white, and concrete, and clean lines, and some natural elements indoors.”

The process of designing the house was dictated by aesthetics, function, and a characteristic of the land: “The site is in a flood plain, and the minimum building elevation didn’t allow for a basement, which limited

the overall square footage for this home,” says Stewart. “This meant I needed to plan the space so that I maximized the various areas within the home for efficient functioning.” Her designs for the two-storey interior pleasantly surprised the owners.

“It was a bit smaller than we had originally wanted, but Carolyn listened to us and designed a liveable, open, larger-feeling home,” the homeowner says. “Everywhere is



DESIGN




usable space; there's no dead space. It suits us fine. We wouldn't need a larger house even if we could have one. And we've lost all clutter. There are not a lot of shelves, but everything has a place. We lived like that in Brazil, too: uncluttered."

During that last year in Brazil, plans were finalized. "We explored a few conceptual designs, then sent plans back and forth three or four times," says Kliewer. "Then we developed

the working drawings with a designer."

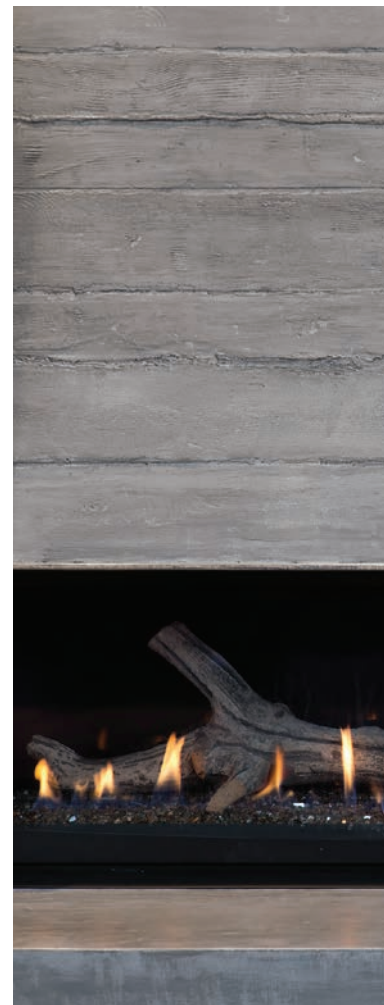
"Ron was a good guide, as we ended up with a more modern design than we had planned. We were originally looking for a more contemporary and less modern design," the homeowner says. "He gave us ideas on what to limit or keep in terms of aesthetics and interiors. He guided me through the more modern aspects of minimalist design, such as not having a coloured feature wall."

Stewart says she strives to provide optimum design while working with her clients' programs and builders' input. She also had suggestions for the exterior as well as the interior. "They were looking for a contemporary-style home that had the combination of white stucco and wood accent," she says. "I showed them that with the natural environment of the West Coast, using grey and natural tones would be better than a white stucco exterior." 



*“The excavation required having an archaeologist on site in case we turned up any artefacts.”*

*In the living room, the fireplace surround is raw concrete with a boardform finish, while the hearth is smooth concrete for a bit of contrast. (Opposite) The deck above the great room is accessible from the main upstairs hallway and offers views of the water, just a street away.*



By the time the family came back to Canada (having driven 19,000 kilometres on the Pan American Highway!), it was time to break ground and build. But then there was a further consideration. The area had once been occupied by First Nations people, and “the excavation required having an archaeologist on site in case we turned up any artefacts,” says Kliewer. “The archaeologist was present over the course of two or three weeks for any type of excavation

that occurred during the building process.”

After a slow start due to the care in the excavation, the project picked up steam. The homeowner was on site nearly every day, as was Kliewer. The result after 10 months of work was two storeys of clean lines and calm colours, uncluttered space and sleek functionality spread over 2,800 square feet.

“We’re very happy with the changes that were suggested,” the homeowner says. “The

house is unique for this neighbourhood, where you see mostly Craftsman-style homes and some beach cottages. We love it. It’s extremely liveable for a family because of exceptional design and construction by both Carolyn and Ron. We were all on the same page.”

“This is a good suburban house that’s low-maintenance and suits their lifestyle,” says Kliewer. Stewart finds the house “unique in its roof lines, building forms and mix of



True to its name of Vidro Do Mar (Sea Glass), the home's decor makes use of blue-green sea tones. Rooms on the upper floor feel open and airy thanks to the sloping ceilings. (Opposite) The games room above the garage can be a popular space in inclement weather. The family loves to entertain, and the homeowner says, "We have a lot of kids here in the summer. Our house is a neighbourhood meeting place for them. The yard is full of bikes and kids all summer long."



materials.” She adds, “I enjoyed our relationship with the clients and Ron. Everyone was open to providing feedback and problem-solving. It’s so great to work with teams that are design-savvy and flexible.”

The owners call their home Vidro Do Mar, which is Portuguese for “sea glass.” They’ve brought blue-green sea tones to the decor and revel in the brightness and airiness of life by the shore.

“We use our interior lights hardly at all,” the homeowner says. “Natural light is a constant. It’s the perfect beach house.” ☛

*The owners call their home Vidro Do Mar, which is Portuguese for “sea glass.”*

