

At Home in the Modern World

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## THE FUTURE

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# THE FUTURE

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### The Future of Density

Motoshi Yabe didn't move to the city; the city came to him. He hired his American brother-in-law to create a house on the site of his childhood home that would embrace visits from his new neighbors—whose influx over the past 30 years have transformed the formerly rural Saitama Prefecture into a bustling community in the Greater Tokyo Area.

Story by Mimi Zeiger

Photos by Dean Kaufman



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### The Future of Homebuilding

While some families look to the suburbs to settle down, a couple in Toronto, Canada, instead chose a 16-foot-wide site at the west end of the city. It was too small for just any cookie-cutter quarters, so they slipped in a 12-foot-wide house with all the spaces needed to call it home.

Story by Alex Bozikovic

Photos by Dean Kaufman

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### The Future of Community

Five families in Almere, Holland, joined forces—and finances—to commission the Villa van Vijven, a bright orange building that houses five independent apartments. Working as best neighbors rather than best friends, they were able to reap together what they couldn't have sown on their own.

Story by Jane Szita

Photos by Dean Kaufman



Cover: Y House,  
Saitama Prefecture, Japan, page 76  
Photo by Dean Kaufman

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**THE FUTURE OF DENSITY**  
Saitama Prefecture, Japan

"It takes a shift in cultural understanding about how to do more with less."

—Russell Thomsen



**THE FUTURE OF HOMEBUILDING**  
Toronto, Canada

"I was surprised that these guys had picked out this property."

—Donald Chong



**THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY**  
Almere, the Netherlands

"We don't necessarily see each other every day. Often, we just say hello when leaving or coming home again."

—Paula van Dijk





Facing tight building codes and an even tighter space, Karen White and David MacNaughtan needed an architect who could turn lemons into lemonade. Donald Chong devised a refreshing solution.





# Slim fit



When most families decide to put down roots, they look for big, accommodating houses with broad stretches of yard. Stroll down Galley Avenue in Toronto's leafy Roncesvalles neighborhood and you'll see plenty of homes that fit the bill—tall walls of red brick a century old.

Then there's the exception: a narrow modernist composition of glass panes and purple brick that slips like a bookmark between two older buildings. This is where Karen White and David MacNaughtan made a new home for themselves and their two boys—a bright three-story abode on a lot narrower than most suburban driveways.

"I was surprised that these guys had picked out this property," says the house's designer, Donald Chong. When he first saw it, it held a ramshackle 800-square-foot cottage, the oldest and shakiest building on the street. And the lot was tiny: "Squint and you'd miss it."

But for White and MacNaughtan it represented opportunity. They'd been living in the area off and on for more than a decade, enjoying its mix of deep-rooted Eastern European families and a growing creative class. When they found the site, they were living in a nearby loft with their first child and thinking about the future with a very specific life-style in mind. "We wanted to have a contemporary environment and have room for a family," White says. Not only that, but they wanted "to support contemporary architecture and create a community of people that we could build a project with," she adds.

Chong—a friend of a friend—was the first link, a young local designer who was just launching his own architecture practice. White, an interior designer and professor of design history, and MacNaughtan, who works in finance, bonded with Chong on the history of modernism and on hockey. "Karen knew all about Peter Behrens," says Chong. "On top of that, Dave is a goalie, and so am I."

With Chong signed on, the couple purchased the Galley Avenue property and faced the test of fitting in a family home. It was just 16 feet wide, with ▶

Karen White, David MacNaughtan, and their sons, Griffin and Finlay, hang out on the front deck (opposite), which lines up next to the neighbors' porch. Just through the front door is the living room (left) where built-ins by Chong share space with a three-legged Wegner chair and photographs by Arnaud Maggs. From the second level of the house, Griffin climbs the stairs his own way (below). At the top, the view from the roof deck (above) reveals a patchwork of garages and yards surprisingly free of neighbors.



Story by Alex Bozickovic  
Photos by Dean Kaufman

Project: Galley House  
Designer: Donald Chong  
Location: Toronto, Canada



requirements for a three-foot setback on one side; the building code also ruled out windows on the sides of the house. "You couldn't use an old vernacular style because you wouldn't be able to bring in enough light," MacNaughtan says. "We didn't want to have a dark old Victorian. But we also didn't want to have a contemporary bowling alley."

Chong was ready for the challenge. As a new practitioner he appreciated the relative risk the homeowners were taking on him. "This was my first everything," he says. "They had guts." But he had a strong pedigree at firms, including local favorites Shim-Sutcliffe Architects, and he'd coedited a book about the possibilities of building homes on Toronto's patchwork of underused back lanes. "Some of that thinking—a very Jane Jacobs idea of compact living and infill—helped in terms of the scale," he says.

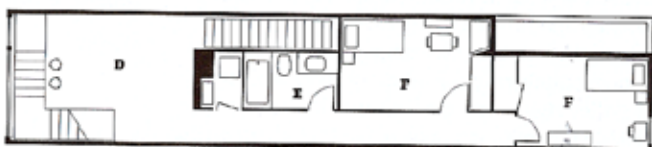
For the Galley House, Chong conceived a 2,100-square-foot house that takes advantage of the lot's shape: a volume that's 32 feet high and 62 feet long, with a series of double-height rooms, with glass on the front, back, and top. Working closely with White







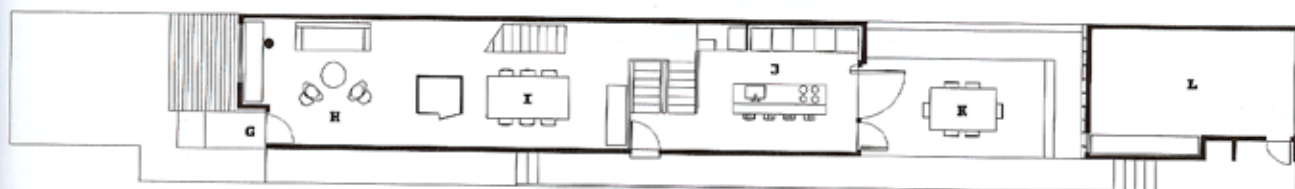
Third Floor



Second Floor

# Galley House Floor Plans

- A Master Bathroom
- B Master Bedroom
- C Deck
- D Family Room
- E Bathroom
- F Bedroom
- G Entry
- H Living Area
- I Dining Area
- J Kitchen
- K Courtyard
- L Garage



Ground Floor

The second-floor family room (opposite) is fronted by an L-shaped staircase with an opaque guardrail that provides some privacy for the front facade. Down the corridor from the boys' bedrooms (opposite, top right), the kids play in the family room just beneath the stairs (opposite, bottom right). In the back, ivy climbs across the garage's raw cedar cladding next to a gate that allows access to the laneway—but the boys prefer to climb the fence (right).

and MacNaughtan, he finessed the plan to include a number of custom features, most notably a snaking path of stairways that spiral up and down through the house.

The south-facing entry and living rooms are at street level; from there it's one step up to the dining room to the north, then five steps down and east to the kitchen, which flows into the back garden. Another stair cuts south up to the second floor, stopping at a spectacular double-height living room. "In the older houses, they all put bedrooms in the front," Chong says. "We all thought it would be a crime to steal the light for a bedroom, which would only be used later in the day. It was all about being greedy with light." That space also holds the house's unusual centerpiece: a winding staircase up to the third-level master suite, showcased behind a huge plane of glass on the front facade.

As construction got under way, the sense of community that White and MacNaughtan were looking for was building up around the project. While wandering the back lane with her young son, Griffin,






White met some new neighbors, Antje Bulthaup and Stefan Sybydlo. "They asked me who would be doing our kitchen," White says. "I thought, I'm an interior designer: I will. But I was worried I wasn't going to complete it in time. So I went home, checked out their website, and nearly fell over."

Antje Bulthaup is a scion of the Bulthaup family, who runs the German manufacturer of high-design kitchens. Staying in Toronto to open a showroom, Bulthaup and Sybydlo had decided to settle in Roncesvalles—where the company had been sending many catalogs to the homes of local designers. The Galley House became their first local project, to the delight of Chong, a huge fan of their products.

A white Bulthaup system fits cleanly into the 13-foot-long kitchen at the back of the house, designed by White with slate floors and brushed-steel accents. (The range hood, a soaring column of steel, echoes the wall sconces White had already picked out.) And it's a fine complement to the rest of the interior, which White—who currently teaches furniture history—has kitted out with oak floors ▶





A photograph of a modern kitchen and dining area. The kitchen features a long white countertop with a sink and a large window above it. A staircase with a wooden railing is visible on the left. The room is bright and minimalist, with white walls and a dark floor. The text is located in the upper right corner of the image.

In the dining room (opposite, top left), furniture by Wegner and local designers Spoke Klein blends with the white oak floors and stair. Since the room is at the windowless middle of the house, it borrows light from the kitchen, which, despite its pristine Bulthaup cabinetry and hardware, is the laid-back heart of the house. Cheng took advantage of the one-and-a-half-height ceiling to establish some well-hidden storage cabinets.



## THE FUTURE OF HOMEBUILDING

The master bedroom (right) occupies a private space on the top floor. Griffin's room (below), which is exactly the same size as his brother's, gets good light from the backyard. A rear view of the narrow house (opposite, bottom left) shows how Chong twisted the house's volumes to bring daylight into each room, still leaving enough space in the 16-foot-wide backyard for a garden and comfortable dining area (opposite, top). In the lane behind the garage (opposite, bottom right), Finlay makes use of the occasionally neglected territory. 3

and furniture by Hans Wegner, Eeos, and Toronto designer-manufacturers Speke Klein. The classic work of Wegner is a touchstone: "These are early modernist solutions for compact living," White says.

White and Chong get excited pointing out the connections between the furniture and the architecture. In the dining room, Chong's carefully detailed railings have an echo in the joinery of oak and steel in Wegner's CH322 dining table nearby. And the correspondence isn't just aesthetic. Chong says he and his clients share the ideals of modern architecture. "When modernism was hatched as an architectural language," he explains, "it was close to this: making use of tight, urban spaces, trying to pull light in, trying to work with a normative family lifestyle."

All of those ideas show up in the pale, well-lit interiors, dotted with the boys' artwork and toys. But the couple's relationship with Chong and his family also reflects an extended sense of kinship. As a housewarming gift, Chong commissioned his artist mother-in-law to make White and MacNaughtan a quilt depicting their house, the names







of everyone involved, and a message: "The heart transforms the house into a home." As White puts it, "Building projects are like building a family."

That sentiment accompanies a broader message about housing. While their home is unique, White and MacNaughtan are demographically middle-of-the-road: a married couple with two kids and a cat. For Chong, that makes their strong commitment to urban living and contemporary design all the more notable. "This is about a family that might have made a flight to the suburbs," he says. In fact, White points out that while living in a 12-foot-wide house involves some sacrifices (there's only a small backyard for the boys to run around in), it's not as tough as you might imagine. "My sister lives in the suburbs with her family," she says. "Everyone thinks we have this small city house with small rooms—but I've measured and we basically have the same room sizes." Which is a sweet payoff for White's faith in a simple idea. ■

