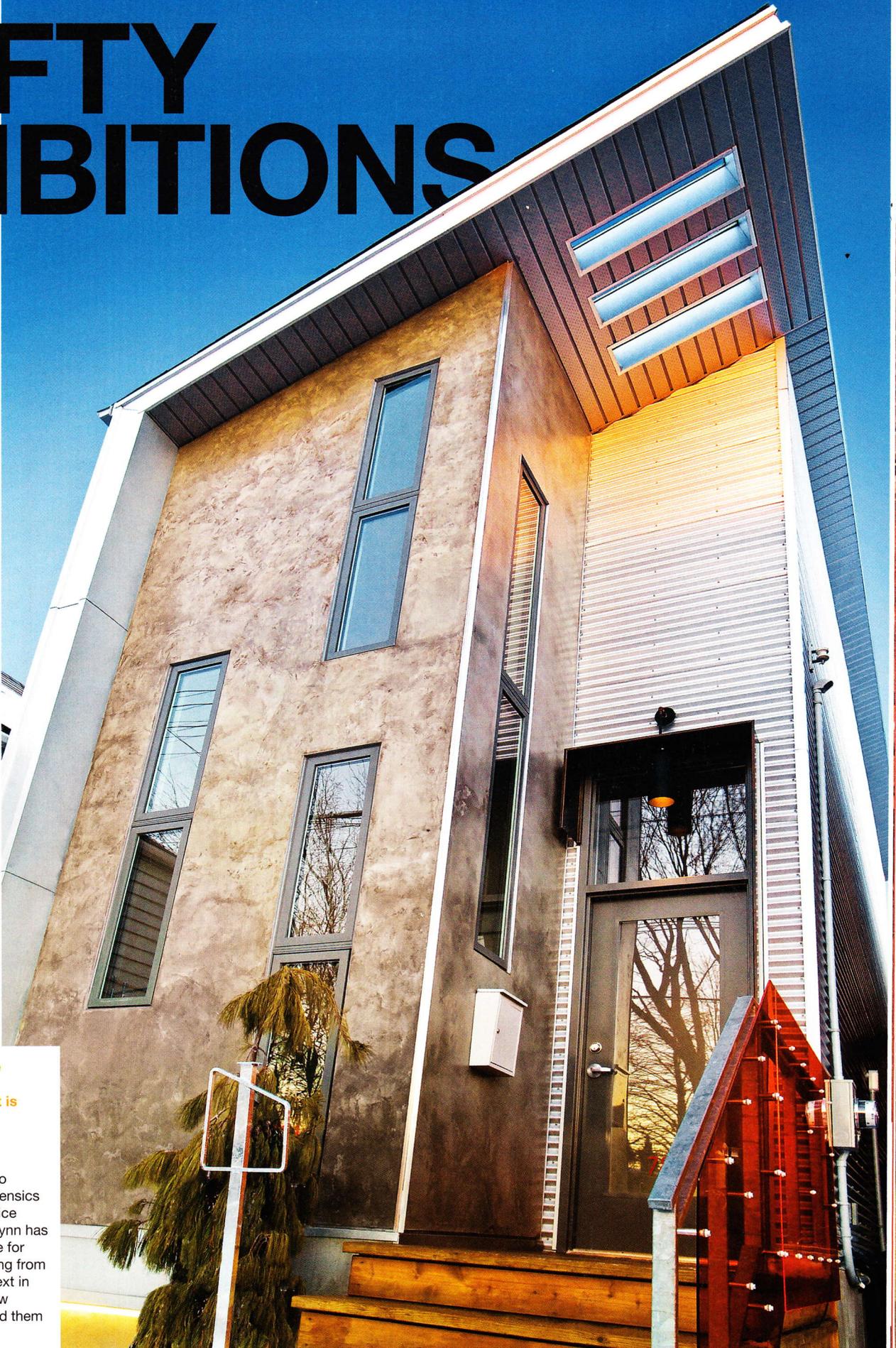


LOFTY AMBITIONS

LineBox Studio fulfills one homeowner's dream of a standalone loft. The result is as unique as a fingerprint

By Alison Garwood-Jones

Precision comes naturally to Patrick Flynn, a longtime forensics expert with the Toronto Police Service. Away from work, Flynn has spent years refining his taste for pared-down design, bouncing from one loft conversion to the next in search of flush lines and raw function. He thinks he's found them in the city's east end.





← The homeowner has kept the material palette simple – steel, polished concrete, cinder block and drywall. An indoor rock garden lit with fluorescent tubes warms up the airy space.

In 2009, Flynn came across a listing for a property near Gerrard and Coxwell. There was no open-house tour, only a small, empty lot where a condemned house once stood. The time was right to leave his downtown condo behind and realize his dream of a custom-built standalone loft in more peaceful surroundings.

Flynn called upon Andrew Reeves, principal of LineBox Studio, who has a reputation for being particularly adept at interpreting the lifestyles of his clients, taking into account how much importance they place on various activities. When he isn't working, Flynn enjoys doing yoga and playing his bass guitar (he's a member of The Spintones, a local surf band). "Patrick's simplified lifestyle led me away from designing for his 10 per cent," says Reeves. "I designed around his 90 per cent and made the space flexible enough for those other occasions." In other words, there would be no giant oven or massive dining table for the once-a-year turkey dinner in this clutter-free, 53-square-metre home. Instead, there's a folding dining table and chairs hung on hooks in a storage area.

To maintain the open, loft-like feel, the furnishings are carefully chosen splurges: in the kitchen, a mini European-style induction stovetop and a small antique drafting table for working and eating; in the living room, a loveseat and a single chair. There's not even a bed on the platform above, just a mat on the floor. "I don't like springs," says Flynn.

For such a small footprint, the home feels positively spacious, with its seven-metre-high ceiling and pristine white walls. These are left relatively art-free to allow for the patterns of light thrown by a trio of tall, thin windows in the front, three skylights and the large sliding-glass back door. The polished concrete flooring adds to the sleek feel, while cinder-block walls, an indoor pebble garden, contractors' pencil marks on the beams, and a view of exposed pipes and utility tanks encased in Plexiglas add an industrial ruggedness.

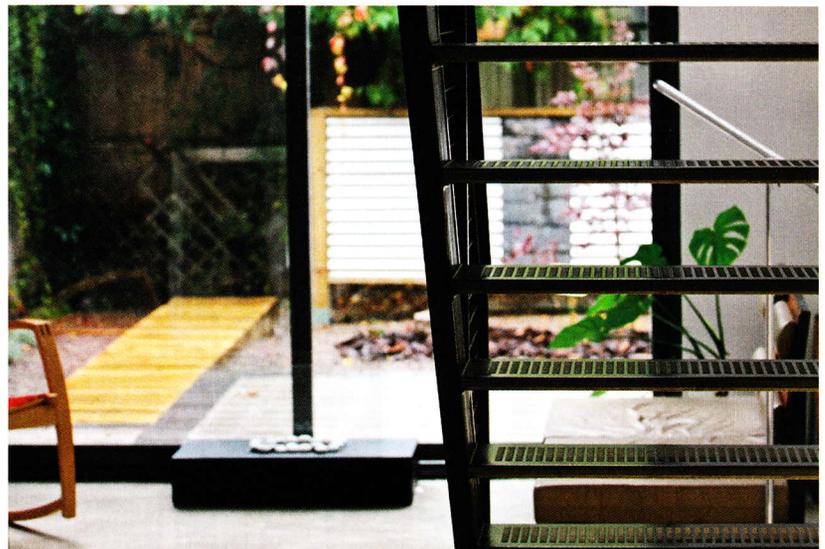
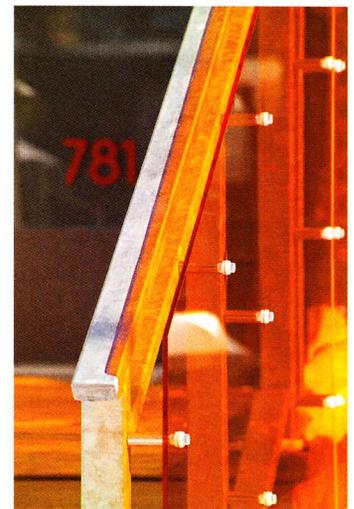
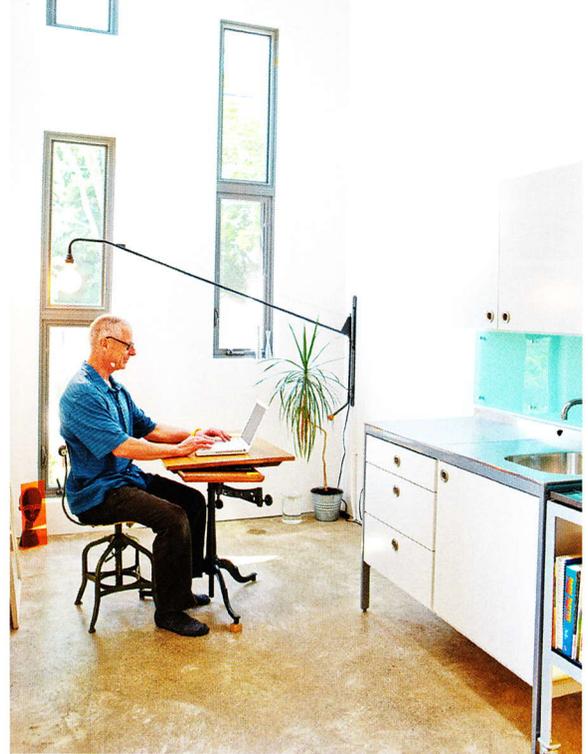
Flynn knows his home isn't for everyone; it doesn't have many of the real estate "musts" that would give it a guaranteed resale value. "I thought, I'll just build it for myself. Surely there's another one of me out there," he says with a grin. ■

→ An antique drafting table and Toledo chair (both from Queen West Antiques) double as dining table and office desk. The swinging light fixture is from Design Within Reach.

↓ Three metres above the ground floor is the bedroom platform, which is just big enough for sleeping and storing a few personal items.

↘ At the front of the house is a cedar step with an orange Plexiglas railing.

↓↓ The low-maintenance backyard of gravel stone and hardy grasses was done by Green Goddess Home and Gardens.





IN BRIEF:
LINEBOX STUDIO

While Andrew Reeves' boutique firm has worked on all sorts of projects, it is best known for its modern infills featuring soaring windows, indoor gardens and pristine, fluid spaces. Guided by the belief that great architecture reflects how people live, work and play, the progressive practice isn't daunted by the size of a lot or budget constraints. On the boards: a reno of a heritage row-house in Ottawa. LINEBOX.CA

↑ The bedroom platform overlooks the Ikea kitchen system, and the street beyond is visible through three 2.4-metre-high windows.
→ The living room is furnished with little more than Flynn's favourite rocking chair and a bio-fuel fireplace at the window.
→→ Solair chairs from Studio Pazo sit on the patio.

