

HOMES

Award-Winning Style

A local couple proves building green can be beautiful

STORY & PHOTOS BY
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While homeowner Axel Schreyer takes care of the building, the interior design falls to his wife Katarina's expertise. She chose white tones to give a sculptural look against the Douglas fir doors and trim for a sense of tranquility. Punctures of colour dot the spaces to bring attention and interest where needed, while basalt tile from Squamish graces the floors on the main level.



THERE IS A SENSE of luxury and comfort that surrounds you as you walk into Axel and Katarina Schreyer's new home. To be honest, you just want to sit down with a cocktail and stay awhile.

The contemporary-styled 3,500-square-foot house was a first new home build for the couple. It offered Axel and Katarina an opportunity to use their 17 years of expertise operating their own high-end construction company, Schreyer Construction. It also offered them the chance to test new green building practices from the ground up.

They have always used the best materials to build as healthy as possible and an airtight envelope to achieve energy efficiency.

"The Built Green B.C. label gave us a tool to actually measure it's 'greenness' and energy efficiency and get a certificate to prove it," Axel explains.

The couple, who originally set out to achieve a Built Green gold rating, was pleasantly surprised when they were awarded a platinum rating. Even better was being awarded the distinction of Highest Performing Built Green Home for British Columbia. To add to the accolades, the home was a finalist in the Georgies, Canada's premier housing awards, for best home and best kitchen and a finalist in the Canadian Home Builders' Association national SAM awards.

Awards aside, the couple are proud that the home offers luxury, style and comfort without costing a month's salary in utility bills. >>

Back-painted glass and cherry cabinets contrast against Caesarstone quartz counter tops in the simply-styled kitchen. Miele appliances offer cooking, cleaning and cooling options. The window backsplash connects the kitchen to the outdoors and was something Axel had imagined before the house was built.



"When you build green you have the rating and kilowatt hours, but that doesn't mean much to people. What is important is what the heating bill is at the end of the month," he explains.

The original lot was a difficult slope on a rocky bluff with big views south, west and north, backing onto a lush, mossy forest.

Wanting to embrace the views, yet connect to the outside environment, the couple enlisted Whistler Architect Brent Murdoch to turn their vision into a reality.

"Although there was an interest to have a more open modern plan, they also felt a need to reflect its alpine setting. We therefore employed a strategy to create a home having a robust mountain warmth using stone, glass and timber materials, with a more sophisticated level of detailing," Murdoch explains.

As frequent travellers to warmer climates, the couple took inspiration from Maui, Hawaii, Australia and the Dominican Republic to employ large opening patio doors that connect the indoor space to an outdoor patio and decks.

"We actually have very nice hot summers here so we installed big folding sliding patio doors to give more opportunity for outdoor living and enjoy our precious, but short summer. In the winter those big glass surfaces open the views to the beautiful winter landscape," Axel explains. >>

Clockwise from left: A calm palette is revealed in the master suite. Wool carpet with organic underlay leads into the open walk-in dressing area.

A few steps lead to the second and third bedrooms on the main level. Each room mirrors the other with their own ensuite, yet share a large deck that connects the rooms to the private mossy forest at the rear of the house.

Jerusalem limestone, revealing original fossils, adds softness and interest in the master ensuite. Rectangular his and hers basins are softened by a circular, free-standing tub, all by B.C.-owned Blu Bathworks.

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Above: Katarina loves an eclectic mix and this is seen in the entrance where modern meets Old World. A family antique chest, brass clock and liquor bottles contrast with a modern light fixture.

Right: For the Schreyers, green material also means materials that have a high life expectancy and low maintenance. Vertical stacked stone and clear cedar siding clad the exterior facade to protect the home from the elements.



KIRSTEN MCCOUGHEY

The effect is a push and pull between the outside and inside. In summer, breezes and late sunshine push through the home, blurring the differences between being inside and out.

In winter, the effect is reversed as your attention is pulled to the weather outside the floor-to-ceiling windows and doors.

"We feel like we are in Tofino, except we don't have the ocean below," Katarina explains of the family's new favorite activity — storm watching. "It is a narrow part of valley so weather pushes right through here."

Here's to storm season, and rather than a cocktail, perhaps a hot toddy is in order. **W**

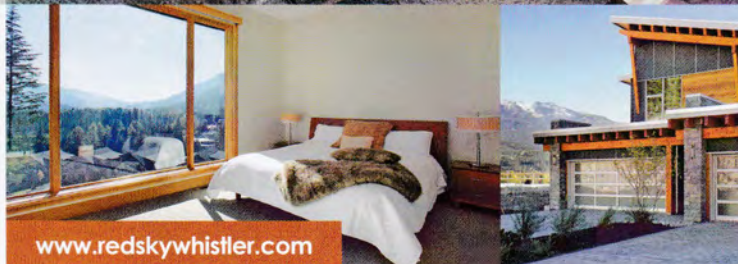
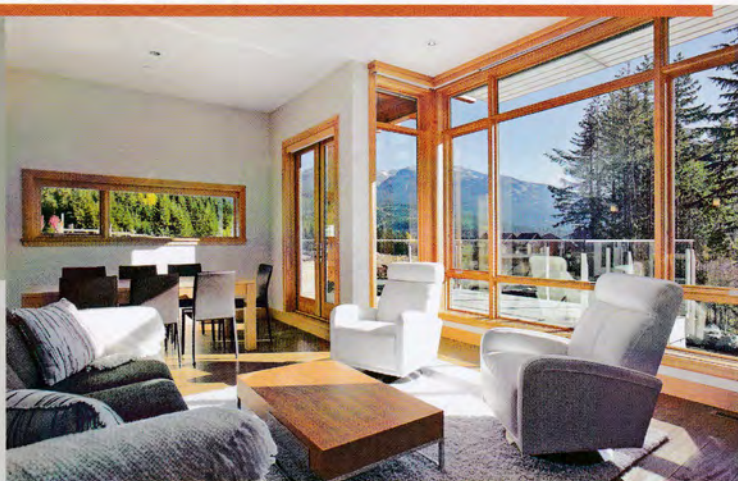
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