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Roger Quirion's
loft home was
once a farrier's
store.



LIFE WITHOUT WALLS

The modern and traditional are married in a spectacular open loft

BY PJ RICHARDSON PHOTOGRAPHY SHAUNE THOMPSON

FRIENDS VISITING ROGER QUIRION for the first time have been known to call from outside his Old Montreal address, thinking they are at a spa or hotel.

In fact, the venerable building in which he lives, on one of the city's oldest streets, contains a loft of stunning proportions, a hybrid of the traditional and modern.

The building was home to a fur business in the 1870s and, more than a century later, the residence of Montreal Canadiens captain Vincent Damphousse.

Roger, a real-estate agent specializing in properties in Old Montreal, acquired the loft in 2003. "I wanted a place in the city where I could walk everywhere and experience the best restaurants, museums, shopping, theatres and festivals," he says.

Renowned interior designer Stéphane Fréchette, of NordSouth Interiors, had converted the property in 1995. "I was thrilled to own something with Fréchette's stamp; he is such a talent," Roger says.

Although Fréchette was responsible for the physical transformation, Roger had his own designs for the 2,200-square-foot loft. "One of the main elements that attracted me to the place was the size of the main room, with its 14-foot-high ceilings and 11-foot high windows," he says. He also adored the patchwork patina of the brick and stone walls and the dark-stained wood floors.

He created a visually stunning home using a series of cleverly configured spaces. It has a gallery-like quality with the open plan, minimalist decor and Roger's art collection. He integrated a home office but the sole demarcation in the loft is between the living area and the bedroom/bathroom suite, identified by an intricately patterned doorframe, of leviathan size, imported from Thailand.

Subtle divisions are created by furniture and artistic installations. Hanging bookshelves that give the impression of floating in air delineate the media space. An eye-catching glass screen in the foyer, by artist Guy Loyer, provides privacy and reflects light. Another piece by Loyer, a glass vessel filled with water and petals, sits by one of two fireplaces. It is flanked by Roger's grand piano, homage to his years



(ABOVE) The dining area, beyond which is the living room. A painting from the movie Highlander 3, filmed in Montreal, dominates the stone wall above the sofa. (LEFT) Roger's home is also a workplace. His desk is positioned beside a large window, which allows him to watch the activity on St. Paul St.



The entryway to Roger's bedroom and master bathroom boasts an ornately carved frame from Thailand.



A translucent glass screen by artist Guy Loyer creates a visual barrier from the front entrance. Sculpture by Serge Gouin.

at Toronto's Royal Conservatory of Music.

In spite of the loft's expanse, Roger has achieved a sense of intimacy, each area drawing you in with soft furnishings and comfortable seating. Built-ins are minimal, except in the media room. Instead he uses heavy antique armoires.

He works almost exclusively from home at a massive banker-style desk, behind which is a Carl Camiré painting – "A tranquil piece that hopefully relaxes an anxious client," he says.

He takes great pride in the 12-foot long dining table, a combination of ceramic and mosaics that was made on site by Columbian artist George Martinez. "It will probably never leave the place, given

that it weighs a ton," he says "We brought in all the materials, including the heavy metal pedestals." It is inlaid with his mother's family's coat of arms, dating from the late 1600s.

The two most important areas in a condo or loft are the bathroom and kitchen, he says, and from a design perspective the bathroom is one of his favourite places. "I love it," he says. "Even though it was designed 15 years ago, it is timeless and will still look fabulous 10 years from now," he says. He calls it château style; very masculine with lots of African slate tiles, stone, a sunken tub and a modern shower that converts to a Turkish bath and steam room. He added a dazzling chandelier with teardrops and silk curtains to soften the »



Roger's kitchen (just beyond the den area) has a curved counter and, says the homeowner, is a great place for entertaining.

hardscape of the stone. One wall is entirely glass-blocked and Roger says some nights the moonlight diffused through the blocks has an ethereal bluish tint.

His kitchen has a sensuous, curvy, wrap-around counter. It is functional and spacious with all the essentials accessible but hidden. Rich mahogany toned fittings, by Armoires St. Augustin, raise the warmth factor. Matching wood treatment was used in the dining area, on the multi-purpose sideboard that conceals an ancient heating system.

Roger has a penchant for the Empire style that includes symbols, ornaments, heavy wood and Egyptian motifs. A table in the living area has griffon pedestals and animal skins and hides are incorporated as

accent pieces, perhaps an unconscious nod to the building's previous incarnation.

With subdued lighting punctuated by colourful artwork, Roger's home reflects the name at the front door – La Villa Tranquilla. Only the clip-clop of a calèche horse on the narrow street could disturb the harmony. ♠

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