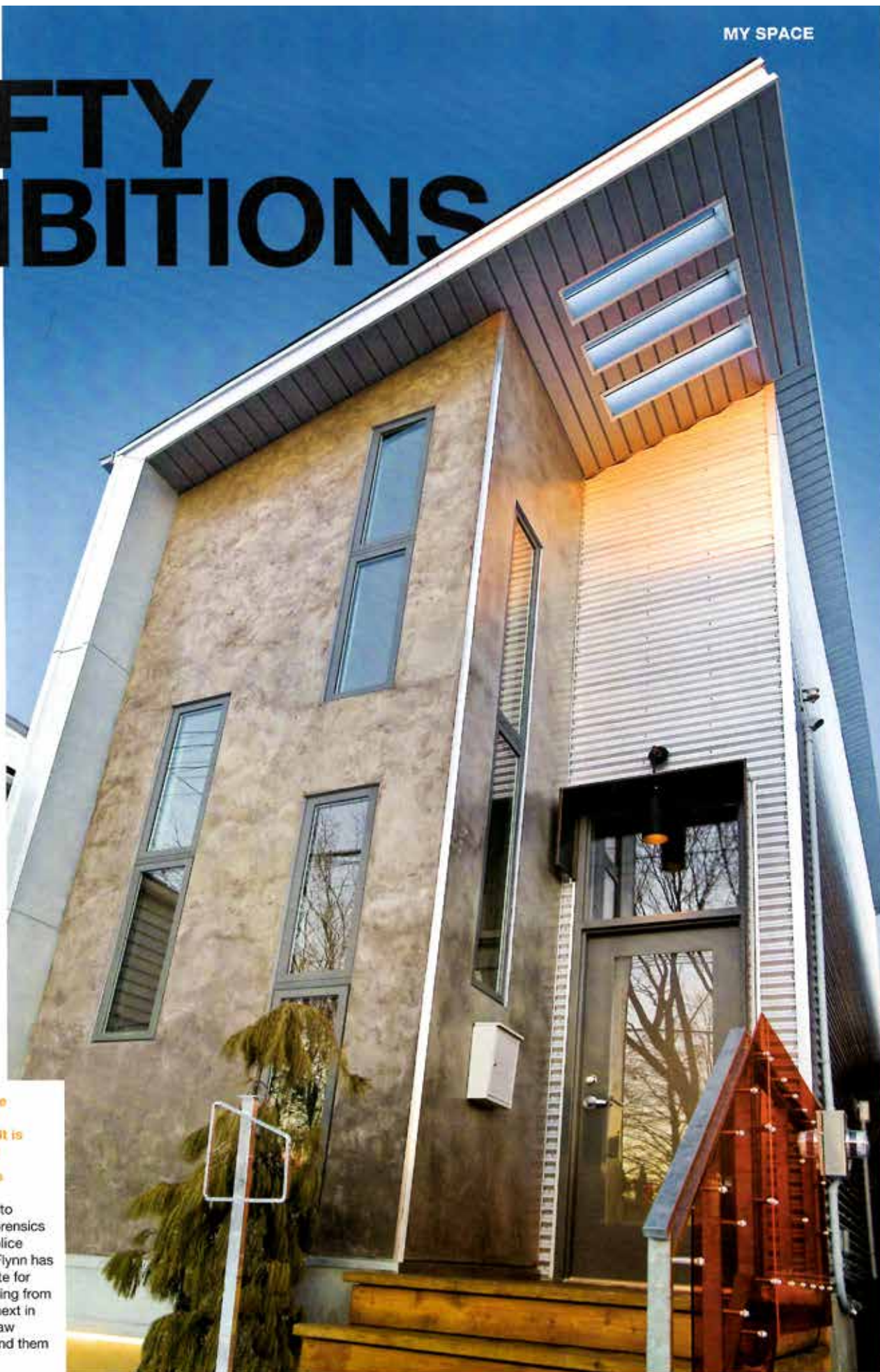


LOFTY AMBITIONS

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.





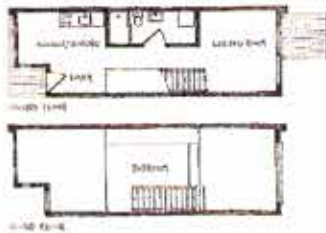
IN BRIEF:
LINEBOX STUDIO

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.
 →→ Solar chairs from Studio Pazo sit on the patio.



PHOTO OF KITCHEN BY LARRY ARNAL



The person: Patrick Flynn, a 63-year-old fingerprint examiner for the Toronto Police.

The place: A 566-square-foot infill house near Gerrard and Coxwell, built in 2010.

Patrick Flynn is the ultimate minimalist. Two years ago he decided to build his dream home, and he wanted it to be modern and low-maintenance. He bought a lot that was just 14 feet wide, and commissioned Andrew Reeves of LineBox Studio to design a house with the illusion of space—20-foot ceilings, white walls and long, vertical windows make for a light, pared-down vibe. The small space is all about precision: exactly the right device, appliance and furnishing for each specific role in a one-man home. But it's still in flux. Flynn isn't sure whether he needs the single orange rocking chair, which he says is really only handy when people come over. "I like art," says Flynn. "But then I get some and I think I'd rather have a bare wall." So the Douglas Coupland painting he bought a few years ago is now stored in his friend's basement.



566
SQUARE FEET



1 One of the few pieces of art in the space is this shadow sculpture. Flynn purchased it at Daniel Faria Gallery on its opening night.

2 Flynn's old desk was a stately Eames, but he "felt like a receptionist behind it." He swapped it for a drafting table from Filter in the Distillery District.

3 The Japanese-style backyard garden is deliberately low-maintenance. He also has a rock garden under the stairs inside.

4 Flynn's bed is a simple three-inch latex pad on the floor, next to his reading lamp and alarm clock.

781 Craven ● Modern Minimalist

Patrick Flynn's striking home is a city standout. Featured in *Designlines* magazine and in an episode of *Steven and Chris*, Flynn's efficient, clean aesthetic has caught the eye of many. Flynn—a hard loft aficionado—wondered if the home would bother the neighbours. On the contrary, "they like it ... This street is really quirky!"

On modern design: "I wanted something modern, efficient and industrial—[this house] is a great alternative to a downtown loft."

On curb appeal: "Today I invited a workman in who was out there, standing; I see people stopping their cars—I don't mind. When you really like something and you really want to make it, it's part of you. And I guess if your design lines are right, it's going to appeal to other people too."

On modernism: "Now there are more people that will engage in modernism ... There is traditional, too, but I'm glad we're all different."

Tips: "Japanese-inspired landscaping is a nice look; simple, peaceful," he says. "You could clean up your porch; instead of having spindles, you could update to glass. You can do great things with lighting, maybe change your overhead porch light ... [and changing] the door, if people can afford to rethink their door."



Private Address ● Tudor Chic

This home honours Tudor-style tradition while getting modern with colour, injecting pops of glossy black, crisp white and rich red. The homeowners explain: "when choosing colours and styles, we wanted to update the look without compromising the classic design." A very hands-on renovation, they carefully selected their stately door, bright plants and charming mailbox.

On curb appeal: "We take pride in how the exterior of our home looks ... Curb appeal is extremely important for resale and value added on the street."

On landscaping: For the custom gardens, "We dug out a significant amount of the grass and bordered the garden with stone that we actually found buried in the ground here."

Tips: "Simple things one could do is add flowers and plants, remove weeds and maintain the lawn, and update the paint to something fresh and inviting. And install an attractive door. A nice door always seems to catch my eye."

Why the Danforth?: "It's close to many amenities including the highway, downtown, and the beach. I work downtown, so jumping on the bus or subway is quick and easy."