

MID-CENTURY GEM – 418 ROGER ROAD

- Unique architectural features.
- Marble façade on all four sides and some inside walls.
- South facing kitchen, sunroom, dining room and den.
- Extra-high ceilings on upper floors due to pagoda roof design. Eight foot ceiling in lower level.
- Light filled home from clerestory, apex, and regular windows, and on lower floor with large windows above grade.
- Corner lot, used effectively to have garage at side rather than front of house.
- Fully fenced, completely private, backyard.
- Low maintenance professional landscaping with lighting system to showcase home at night.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE HOME, BUILT 1958-1960:

About the architect: James William Strutt (1924 – 2008) was a renowned Canadian architect. Practising between 1950 and 1999 and working primarily in the Ottawa area, Strutt is noted for his role in the development of modern architecture in Canada following World War II. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Strutt)

At the University of Toronto's School of Architecture, Strutt met architects Frank Lloyd Wright and Buckminster Fuller, from whom he would take inspiration throughout his career. Strutt soon became known for his interest in non-standard geometry and alternative forms, designing Canada's first wooden hyperbolic paraboloid roof - on his own home in Gatineau- in 1956. That same year, at 32, he was appointed the youngest ever chair of the Ontario Association of Architects. He would later go on to teach at Carleton University's School of Architecture from 1969 to 1986, becoming its Director in 1977. In addition to a number of private residences, Strutt designed several innovative modernist structures in the Ottawa area, including St. Mark's Anglican Church (1954), The Uplands Airport Terminal Building (1960), the Loeb Building at Carleton University (1965-1966), the Westboro Beach Pavilions (1966), and the Canadian Nurses Association Headquarters Building (1969). (<http://www.capitalmodern.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2013/03/FINAL-Briarcliffe-HCD-Study-Plan.pdf>)

As an architectural theoretician, given the right client, James Strutt could stretch the boundaries of both domestic and ecclesiastic design.

The most opulent of James Strutt's houses is surely the Paul and Eleanor Weiner House (1958-60) at 418 Roger Road, in Faircrest Heights, Alta Vista. For its neighbours (I lived around the corner and watched it being built) the interior finishes and luxurious materials were jaw-dropping, in a neighbourhood well familiar with trophy houses. (<http://urbsite.blogspot.ca/2016/03/seven-james-strutt-houses-andchurches.html>)

The Weiners were a local entrepreneurial family which founded the real estate development company Pebb Enterprises. Their office tower stands at the corner of Riverside and Bank. (<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/sunsentinel/obituary.aspx?n=paul-weiner&pid=175758077>)

The Weiner's sold the house to Kathleen Ryan in the early 1970s. Mrs. Ryan's husband, Frank was the owner and founder of CFRA radio station in Ottawa, which at the time was a music station. She entertained lavishly, hosting luminaries of the time such as Frank Sinatra and Liberace. Mrs. Ryan's more famous sister was Charlotte Whitten, Ottawa's first female mayor. Towards the end of her life, Ms. Whitten lived in the yellow bedroom on the lower level. Mrs. Ryan's live-in housekeeper also had a room on the lower level. Mrs. Ryan lived in the house until her death in 1995. (<http://www.queensu.ca/encyclopedia/r/ryan-kathleen>)

In July 1975, Mrs. Ryan and her home were featured in the Ottawa Journal. "The Theme is Unity".



Butterfly ceilings, lofty clerestory windows, indirect lighting and an overall motif of interlocking rectangles are among the distinctive architectural features of the Roger Road home of Mrs. Frank (Kathleen) Ryan.

Built of softly glistening pink Georgian marble, the house was designed by the Ottawa architect James W. Strutt in the early 1960s for Mr. and Mrs. Paul Weiner.

Mrs. Ryan bought it two years ago – "it was the stonework that attracted me," she said. And the deftly executed stonework comes inside too, and is complemented by the large stone terrazzo floors of the spacious foyer and central dining room. Also harmonising with the marble's warm pink cast is the panelling and woodwork of California redwood.

Giving the house a different design dimension is the roofline with its effect of twin raised roofs in front – the clerestory windows are recessed under these upper roofs. Three deep "V" bay windows also add an unusual architectural accent to the façade.

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The overall design motif of interlocking rectangles is evident as soon as you reach the wide and welcoming central front door – the door is of redwood with color contrast in ivory to show off the patterns.

The home is planned around the ultra-large central foyer with the reception rooms to the right of the entrance, the dining room in the middle, and the kitchen and main-level sleeping area on the left.

In the foyer a multitude of skylights are not only a source for daytime lighting but also provide nighttime illumination – electric lights are cleverly recessed in the skylights.

As a touch of super elegance there's a black and gold powder room boasting a marble topped vanity and opulent gilt "swan" faucets.

Three steps lead down to the spacious sunken living room. ... Adjoining the living room is a cozy, contemporary study separated by Japanese style sliding screens of wood and fibreglass – and again the design motif is interlocking rectangles. ... For summer dining and entertaining there's a house-wide patio with a built-in barbecue for on the spot cooking. The step-saving turquoise and cream kitchen is designed with twin L-shaped work and cooking peninsulas.

The main-level sleeping area contains three bedrooms and two bathrooms and has an overall rose-pink color scheme. Deep rose-pinks predominate in the master bedroom with its adjacent dressing room and bathroom.

The staircase down to the lower level has a floor to ceiling wooden balustrade in the interlocking rectangular design. Downstairs there's a playroom with built-in bar, large games room, two bedrooms and a bathroom. Byline: Helen Turcotte.

Anyone touring the home today would immediately recognize most of the features described in the Journal article.

The third family to live in the house includes published author Sheena Pennie, who wrote the novel *A Sheltered Life* in 2011. Her love for the home is evidenced in a section where she describes the protagonist's feelings as follows:



Connor loved to bring new friends home. He liked to see the expression on their faces when they first drove into the circular drive. Their house was truly a one-of-a-kind, based on the famous American architect Frank Lloyd Wright's pagoda design. He'd heard his Mum tell the story many times as she took guests on the mandatory guided tour. The house was constructed in the early 1960s by a local Ottawa commercial real estate developer. Built entirely, inside and out, from white marble imported from Georgia and accented with western red cedar and mahogany, the story was that the contractor went bankrupt building the house because of all the design changes and rejected materials by the developer's wife.

The result, though, was an architectural marvel. True to Frank Lloyd Wright style, elements of the outside of the house flowed naturally to the inside, like the marble walls, the terrazzo steps and landings as well as the western red cedar. Lloyd's use of expansive, apex-shaped windows at the front and back of the house flooded it with light throughout the year. Even in the dead of winter, the ambient light in the house betrayed the darkest days outside.

A repeating motif – another architectural feature typically found in a Frank Lloyd Wright design – was incorporated into every part of the house, from the fence enclosing the back of the property, to the front and garage doors, to the floor-to-ceiling lattice work in the front hall, to the shoji-screen doors between the den and the sunken living room, to the door handles of the hall closets. It was even applied onto the front of the basement wet-bar and etched into the glass door of the shower in the master bedroom.

Connor particularly liked viewing the house from the outside at night, with the inside recessed lights on, because it glowed like a delicate Japanese lantern. The roof appeared to rest precariously on clerestory windows that ringed its perimeter. The walls in the living room were covered with turquoise and gold silk and those in the "Liberace" bathroom – so called because of its lavishness and because Liberace had actually visited the house – were dressed with gold and black velvet wall paper.

The best thing that Connor loved about his house was that it was a party palace. The basement went on forever and could accommodate loud music, video games, air hockey tournaments, darts, pool and multi-person sleep-overs.

The current owners have loved every minute of living in this home and describe the experience as being immersed in a work of art. Even after ten years, the wow factor has not worn off. Every day a slightly different scene plays out as the sun rises and sets up and down the interior walls, bringing out the golden highlights in the silk paper in the living room and causing the marble interior walls to sparkle.

Much of the house reflects the original architectural details and workmanship and has stood the test of time due to the high quality materials selected by Mr. Strutt and the Weiners. Subsequent owners have worked hard to ensure that the integrity of the original design is maintained and all renovations and modifications have stayed true to the original. Major renovations include a complete new kitchen, master ensuite and closet, transformation of the covered patio into a four season sunroom, hardwood flooring, the addition of a purpose-built wine cellar, and professional landscaping. In keeping with the theme of unity, and continuity of design, the ensuite shower door and the wine cellar floor feature the home motif of interlocking rectangles.

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