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Nestled in the quiet North Vancouver enclave of Edgemont Village, a refreshed mid-century modern retreat has gained new life. Architecture firm OLSON KUNDIG and interior designer ERICA COLPITTS are behind the sparkling transformation.

By Marouchka Franjulien — Adapted by Christopher Karchin — Photographs by Ema Peter

## An MCM Classic Reborn

Positioned on a wool rug from RH (rh.com), a linen sofa and leather armchairs from the same brand do not obstruct the view of the garden, as is the case with the Four Hands coffee table (clinteriors.ca) and the side table that Erica Colpitts created in collaboration with Iron Age Manufacturing (ironagebc.com). The warm, natural palette highlights the brick chimney, framed on one side by the Die Frauen der Antike exhibition poster by Anselm Kiefer, and on the other by a studio lamp from Design Within Reach (dwr.com).



Windswept – Bison, a large photograph on canvas by Thomas D. Mangelsen (mangelsen.com), faces the dinner table. A less imposing work, Purgatory Canto 3 by Salvador Dalí, completes the scene.

The Saucer Bubble lamp by George Nelson overlooks an antique dinner table, discovered at Scott Landon Antiques (scottlandonantiques.com). Rattan chairs from CP Interiors (cinteriors.ca) brighten the room and provide contrast to the kitchen in the background.

Hidden behind an impressive stand of cedars, maples and azaleas that practically glow in springtime, the home seems to melt into the landscape. But as you pass by, you can still see the bookcase, an intrinsic part of the house that defies time. It's hard to imagine that out back, the garden gives way to a wooded area that runs down the slope of a ravine to a small stream. But here, nature is never far away: The North Shore Mountains, whose white peaks stand against the blue sky, are just kilometres off in the distance, even though downtown Vancouver is only 20 minutes away by car. Edgemont Village is definitely not lacking in charm or natural features, especially when you've become accustomed to the frenetic pace of New York City.

That's the case of the owners—he's Canadian, she's Australian—who now live in this striking abode with their two children, a boy and girl aged 10 and 6, respectively. A few years ago, when they purchased this mid-century modern home, it was stuck in the 1950s. They needed to find an architectural firm that could preserve its history but also find a way to give it a modern touch and make the space more adapted to family life. The collaboration with Olson Kundig, from 2017 to 2020, was the answer. "One of my big agendas in design is to repurpose existing buildings rather than tearing them down," says Tom Kundig, principal owner and co-founder, with Jim Olson, of the internationally renowned architecture firm. "The clients' desire to respect that character was totally aligned with that, and I knew it would be a great project."

Meanwhile, designer Erica Colpitts had come on board. Previously, her namesake studio in Vancouver was known for restaurant makeovers, but the owners of the house—friends of friends—needed assistance to explore various materials and local shops. Her helping hand soon became a full-on collaboration. The clients were very involved throughout the process—she with the aesthetics and he on the functional side—but Colpitts was there to ensure the clients got what they wanted while sticking to the industrial vision of Olson Kundig. Inspiration came from Australian and English country homes to create a decor that was simultaneously romantic, melancholy and serene, with an eye to nature. "We made sure that nothing would be a distraction from the forest," says Colpitts. In every living area, the colour palette is subtle, the materials are natural and the furniture sits low, ensuring unobstructed views of the landscape beyond the almost entirely windowed rear of the building.

To maintain the heritage of the home, it was essential to keep the angular line of the roof, so typical of mid-century architecture, as well as the wonderful rust-red brick chimney, a central feature in the living room. And despite its sorry state, the clients insisted on keeping the bookcase that quietly separates the sitting room from the entranceway. So it was duly sanded, →







Opposite page – The small but functional kitchen features a steel range hood with integrated shelving, designed by Olson Kundig and manufactured by Drabek ([drabektechnologies.com](http://drabektechnologies.com)). In these streamlined environs, the Arteriors barstool ([cinteriors.ca](http://cinteriors.ca)) and other accents—including rustic wood flooring by Steelwood Design ([thestylewell.com](http://thestylewell.com))—stand out.

Above – As in the kitchen, the outdoor bar has a concrete countertop and backsplash by Diamond Finish Concrete Countertops ([diamondfinishconcretecountertops.com](http://diamondfinishconcretecountertops.com)). The industrial handles by Colonial Bronze ([cantabathrooms.com](http://cantabathrooms.com)) blend in with the decor, just like the black pitchers by Louise Roe ([providehome.com](http://providehome.com)), the porcelain urn by McGee & Co. ([mcgeeandco.com](http://mcgeeandco.com)) and the wooden platter from The Stylewell ([thestylewell.com](http://thestylewell.com)).



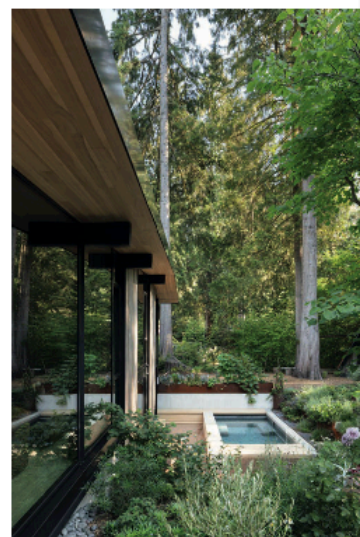


## ELLE DECO HOMES



Opposite page – Olson Kundig immediately sets the tone on the outside, using raw materials such as concrete, wood and steel, in perfect harmony with the natural surroundings.

Above – The Corten steel fireplace by Paloform ([paloform.com](http://paloform.com)) is surrounded by four extremely comfortable Harbour teak chairs ([broughaminteriors.com](http://broughaminteriors.com)).



Opposite page – An alcove provides space for a secretary found at Scott Landon Antiques ([scottlandonantiques.com](http://scottlandonantiques.com)). Its bygone style lends a pleasant contrast to the industrial aesthetic of the lamp and file cabinet from RH ([rh.com](http://rh.com)).

Above – A small but charming pool sits at the edge of the woods.



## ELLE DECO HOMES



In the bathroom, the choice of materials creates a successful dramatic effect, from the Brodware stone sink and metal faucet (brodware.com) to the limestone wall tiles from Adera Natural Stone Supply (aderastone.com) and the white-oak barn-style door by Stilewood International Door and Window (stilewood.com), accented by a handle from the Tom Kundig collection for 12th Avenue Iron (12thavenueiron.com).

repaired and beautified. As for the George Nelson light—an authentic example—it belonged to the former owners, who were the original and only residents at this address. When Colpitts first saw the iconic spherical lamp in the vestibule, she couldn't believe her eyes. Now, after having been meticulously rewired and restored, the Saucer hovers above a well-used dining table that is unafraid of stains or colouring sessions. That was a priority for the couple, generous hosts who would never want to prevent their guests or their kids from enjoying themselves.

It all required great creativity. "Space was a major challenge throughout the project," says Tom Kundig who, along with his team, tried to maximize every square centimetre without making the rooms seem cramped. The kitchen was enlarged, walls were removed and an annex was added to the back of the house, which also allowed the builders to increase the size of the main bedroom. The owners wanted a garage, but Olson Kundig proposed an open carport—a nod to mid-century modern architecture, and more visually engaging.

Colpitts has fond memories of the day when she clinked glasses of bubbly with her Australian client to celebrate the arrival of the tiles for the main bathroom. "The homeowner kept seeing a photograph on Pinterest of these beautiful hand-made tiles," says the interior designer who, after checking out multiple local options, made the difficult choice to go back to the source. That happened to be a hotel in Portugal. A phone call later, the company—which had acquired the full output of a local artisan—was ready to send her its surplus supply. Happily, there was enough for the job.

The interior designer, who put the final touches on the decor in the spring of 2021, has struck up a friendship with her clients and gets to enjoy the fruits of her labour from time to time. "More often than not, the homeowners have a fire burning, classical music playing, the fresh pot of tea has just been steeped. It just feels lovely to be there," she says. Being a good host isn't something you learn, but in that regard, the owners don't need anyone's help. — (olsonkundig.com) (ericacolpitts.ca)

**"The home is a juxtaposition of all good things: It is dramatic and serene, rustic and refined, industrial and romantic, exquisite and comfortable."**

— Erica Colpitts



In the main bedroom, the wall-covered in wood panels burnt using the Japanese technique of yakisugi—creates instant atmosphere. To maximize the space, Erica Colpitts designed the night table, manufactured by Nicholas Purcell (nicholaspurcell.com), as well as the linen headboard, built by Cloth Studio (clothstudio.ca). A few key elements complete the decor, among them a wall sconce from Crate & Barrel (crateandbarrel.com), a striped cushion from CF Interiors (cfinteriors.ca) and a ceramic pitcher by Elise Dufour (thestylewell.com).



The front door, in Corten steel, opens onto the hallway and library, which, seen through the bay window, serves as a warm welcome.



The built-in, mahogany-veneer bookcase was carefully restored by Intempo Interiors ([intempointeriors.com](http://intempointeriors.com)), under the trained eye of Erica Colpitts. Olson Kundig added details in bronze and steel, a material that was also selected to create the fixture above the staircase, which features RH lamps ([rh.com](http://rh.com)).

Opposite page – The hemlock spruce ceiling and white-oak flooring required several rounds of staining to bring out the character of the two woods, in perfect balance.

