

# The People's Choice:

AN UNOBTRUSIVE, YET ELEGANT, HOME IN ROCKCLIFFE WOWED VISITORS AT THE FALL HOME SHOW AND WAS HONOURED AT THE DESIGN AWARDS

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Sometimes the hardest part of being a judge in design awards is finding the house.

Earlier this fall, I found myself meandering through Rockcliffe Park, over the intricate roadways that create its unique village atmosphere, searching for a new home entered by Barry J. Hobin in the 18th annual design awards hosted by the Ottawa-Carleton Home Builders' Association.

Creeping at a snail's pace to admire the glory of the many well-established homes and some of the newer additions, erupting conspicuously from the cosy community, I almost missed Mr. Hobin's custom entry.

A stately home of unassuming elegance, it was so well integrated that I drove right past, despite the well-marked address.

Comfortably set back from the street, this new home complements the historical architecture of its neighbours, while maintaining its own fresh identity.

That very identity and traditional appeal clearly won many admirers at the Ottawa Fall Home Show last month, because an overwhelming number of visitors to the show picked it as the People's Choice Award winner among all of the 110 finalists in the awards.

The award was presented last Saturday at the 2001 awards gala.

It's easy to understand why the home appealed to so many, as it was built under the leadership of Tom King, president of Kingsmere Homes, designed under the keen eye of the Hobin team and decorated with the help of Ernst Hupel and Danielle Hannah of 2H Interior Design.

The Hobin firm has achieved a successful union of the traditional and the contemporary by integrating classic features -- such as a full front veranda with an eyebrow highlighting the main entrance, wood columns and arched windows -- into the clean lines and simplistic symmetry of a solid, two-storey brick home.

The exterior brick detailing and copper fascia work neatly in combination to bridge the various rooflines.

Protected from northeasterly winds, the expansive front veranda provides a welcoming entry to the home.

The vestibule opens to a spacious, centre hall plan that extends the full length of the house.

A cut out in the ceiling above the hall creates an oval opening ringed by a wrought iron railing on the second level. The owner tastefully filled this area with a stunning crystal chandelier.

Dressed with traditional cove mouldings and custom millwork, the hall opens into a variety of grand rooms filled with warm sunlight.

A home so obviously designed for entertaining needs a functional and well-equipped kitchen. The main kitchen goes many steps further.

Soaked in dark wood hues, granite and wood beamed ceilings, it evokes a sense of old world charm that includes all of the comforts of hearth and home.

A wall of windows floods the adjoining family/eating area with sunlight and provides a wonderful view of the landscaped terrace.

There is more than enough room in the 14,000-square-foot home for family bedrooms and a private guest suite and salon for overnight guests.

The Hobin design allows for a seamless and functional delineation between living and operational spaces.

This is an important element to the overall flow and circulation within the house because the owners have incorporated a complete two-storey apartment for their parents, with a separate kitchen, bath and elevator. While these rooms remain private, they are readily accessible through a common room.

The family's recreational spaces, including a weight room and workshop for dad and playroom for daughter, are next to each other, but off the beaten track of household operations on the basement level.

Two spacious home offices have been created in less than traditional business-like style and reflect the individual personalities of the owners.

It's clearly evident after a walk through this home that the communication lines between the owners, architect, interior designers and trades must have been well nurtured and meticulously maintained.

In fact, Tom King was the team leader, linking some of Ottawa's top professionals in the housing industry and suppliers from other cities with the owners. The owners were thousands of miles away in Florida during much of the construction. That fact alone shows trust and confidence in their housing team.

When my tour was over, I left with two impressions: One of a satisfied homeowner who had clearly participated in the design process and the other of an enduring example of some of Ottawa's finest residential architecture, perfectly blended with its surroundings.

What more could one ask for the People's Choice Award?

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