



SHIFT HOUSE

DUBBELDAM ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN

SHIFT HOUSE



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A push and pull of interior volumes manifests in an exterior form that offers the occupants a meaningful relationship to the outdoors.

In Toronto's postwar neighbourhoods, modest bungalows are being replaced by faux-historical mansions. Standing in bold contrast is Shift House designed by Dubbeldam Architecture + Design. An unapologetically modern insertion, Shift House features a stepped façade defined by projecting and retracting volumes, highlighted by contrasting cladding to emphasize the volumetric gestures. Western red cedar fills the void left by retracted volumes, providing a striking foil to the charcoal gray exterior. Meanwhile, the gently sloping roof extends from front to back, maintaining a low datum line on the street as it forms a comparatively horizontal expression.

Shift House's 300-square-meters are spread over two storeys and, through strategic spatial arrangements, responds to the family's desire for a meaningful connection with the outdoors. The layout of the house consists of an interior grid of six staggered volumes, shifted in and out to shape the exterior envelope. The resulting sculpted façade with its interplay of solids and voids creates opportunities for greater light transmission, additional views, and access to outdoor space at multiple levels through corner windows, generous roof overhangs, green roofs, and balconies on the second floor.

Permeability and openness are dominant design themes throughout the house. The porosity of the front façade is a friendly gesture to the street, and a glazed rear elevation connects the family to the surrounding environment, blurring

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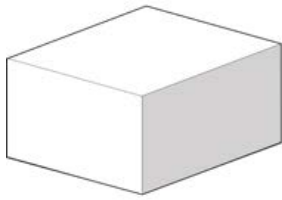
the boundary between interior and exterior space. The rear facade's protruding and extending volumes form sheltered and covered zones, delineating outdoor areas with differing character. A wide deck across the back of the house effectively doubles the living/dining area in temperate months, becoming a generous outdoor room for dining, reading and relaxation.

On the interior adjacent to the backyard, a double-height atrium with a fully-glazed wall provides an expansive view of the neighbourhood's mature trees, inviting natural light deep into the interior and magnifying the grandeur of this – in truth – modest space. Central to the atrium is a sculptural staircase defined by a solid balustrade of white oak and Baltic birch. "The stair's scissor configuration forms a compelling and dynamic three-dimensional geometric composition, animated by the procession of figures as they ascend and descend between the different levels of the house," explains principal Heather Dubbeldam. "We wanted the design of the stair to impart a sense of craftsmanship, while also evoking a feeling of movement and energy. This is achieved through a distinct wood grain on a diagonal, and the monolithic nature of the stair guard."

Overlap and the blurring of boundaries continues throughout the interior. Just as the varied planes on the exterior hint at different internal functions, the interior's volumetric shifts are emphasized by changes in ceiling height, materials, and colours at the transitions. These intentional changes create a heightened awareness of the spatial shifts within the house. In the double height space, projecting second storey bedrooms create recessed areas for the kitchen and living room below, while a wood-clad ceiling treatment extends from the staircase to the foyer, defining the edge of one of the internal volumes. Walls painted in shades of grey-blue serve as further defining elements against the white walls and oak flooring.

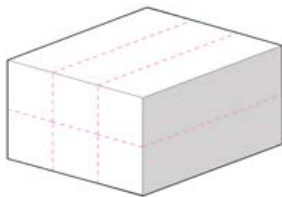
The house employs many sustainable systems. Strategically placed operable windows maximize passive cooling and natural ventilation, while a small pump powers the radiant in-floor heating system. Photovoltaic panels on the roof provide an additional source of electricity while LED light fixtures and an efficient high-velocity cooling system reduce electricity demand. Green roofs and robust landscaping minimize rainwater run-off, and triple glazing and low-E coatings reduce both heat gain and loss. Visually impactful, Shift House is also environmentally responsible.

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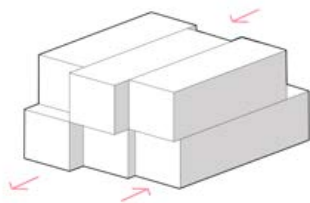
FORM

Basic building volume.



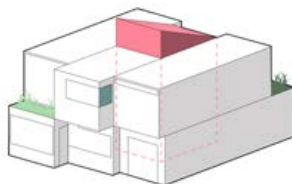
DIVIDE

The interior program is divided into a three-dimensional grid.



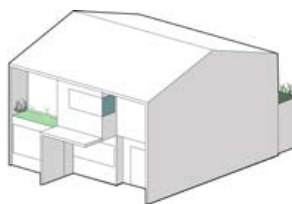
SHIFT

The volumes in the grid are shifted to create specific spatial arrangements on the exterior.



SPATIAL MOVES

A double height space and strategic spatial moves of overhangs, roof decks, and windows are introduced.



ENCLOSE

An exterior frame unifies the volumes, and an overhang creates a sheltered entry.

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The front facade of the house features a fresh approach to traditional design elements; the home's entrance is accessed on the side of the foyer volume instead of from the front. A complementary Corten steel planter defines the granite porch and serves as a designated area for displaying the house number.



A cantilevered porch overhang, clad in warm cedar that wraps down the elevation and covers the front door, creates a bold and inviting entrance. The driveway's granite pavers seamlessly transition onto the entrance porch, adding to the cohesive design.

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The design of the house emphasizes permeability and openness. The foyer, which is filled with natural light, offers a complete view of the street, yet the layout of the rooms ensures that the interior of the house remains private and concealed from view.

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Large windows connecting the interior spaces to the outdoors blur the boundaries between inside and outside. Within the living room, the use of walnut millwork and a slate fireplace surround offers a striking contrast to the light-colored white oak flooring and stair.

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A sculptural staircase defined by a solid balustrade of white oak and Baltic birch is featured in the centre of the house.

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The dining room sits within a double-height atrium with a fully-glazed rear facade that provides an expansive view of the neighbourhood's mature trees, inviting natural light deep into the interior and magnifying the grandeur of this modest space.

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The dining room features a dramatic light fixture from Propellor Design, a Vancouver-based studio. In this double height space, projecting second storey bedrooms create recessed areas for the kitchen and living room below.

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The contrasting material palette selected for the house is seen in the selection of finishes used in the kitchen, including white oak and charcoal cabinetry and dark stone counters. A long horizontal window provides framed views of the backyard, further emphasizing the connection between the interior and exterior spaces.

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The stair's scissor configuration forms a compelling and dynamic three-dimensional geometric composition, animated by the procession of figures as they ascend and descend between the different levels of the house. A wood-clad ceiling treatment extends from the staircase to the foyer, defining the edge of one of the internal volumes.

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The monolithic stair guard's diagonal wood grain imparts a sense of craftsmanship while also evoking a feeling of movement and energy. Walls painted in shades of grey-blue serve as further defining elements against the white walls and oak flooring.

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The principal bedroom leads out onto a small roof deck, connecting the owners to the outside at all levels. To maximize the view and light transmission, the deck is enclosed by a glass balustrade.

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Blue finishes within the principal bathroom echo the materiality present in other areas of the house, while the contrast against the white millwork and flooring imparts a sense of water-like tranquility to the bathing areas.

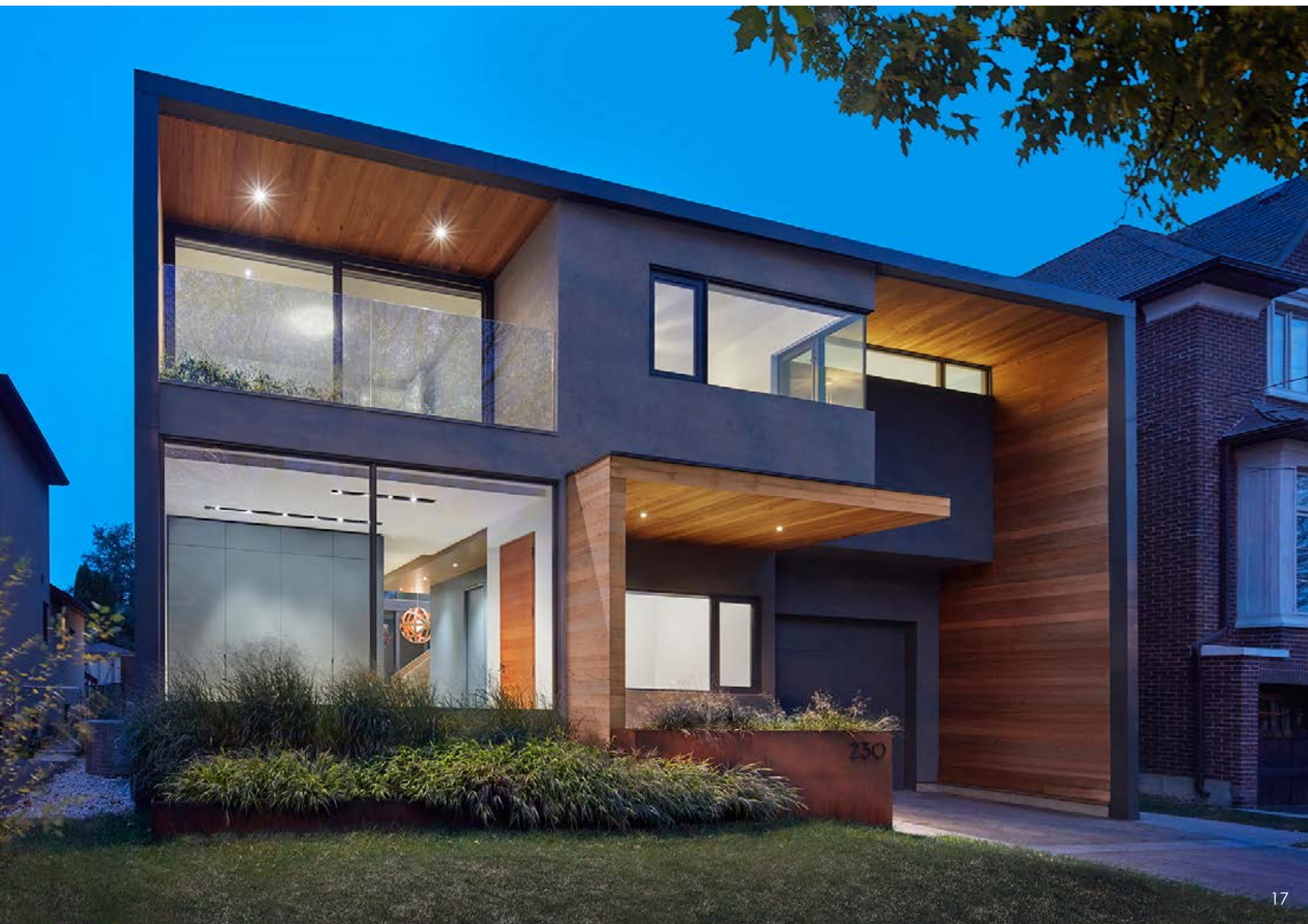
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A wide deck across the back of the house effectively doubles the living/dining area, becoming a generous outdoor room in temperate months. The rear facade's protruding and extending volumes form covered zones and roof decks, delineating outdoor areas with differing character.

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The house's stepped façade, defined by projecting and retracting volumes, is highlighted by contrasting cladding to emphasize the volumetric gestures. Western red cedar fills the void left by retracted volumes, providing a striking foil to the charcoal gray exterior.

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SOURCES

Exterior

Western Red Cedar Boards
Durabond Sandcoat 1.0 (DuRock)
AR25 Standing Seam Metal Roof (Agway)
HardieSoffit, Iron grey
Aluminum Windows (Bigfoot)

Wood Flooring

Classic series, white oak, white stain (Moncer)

Tile

Basaltina Naturale (Stone Tile)
Artech Mosaico Grigio (Olympia Tile)
Ageless, Pure White (Stone Tile)
Nova Architectura, Cristal Blue (Stone Tile)
Progetto Pavimenti, Nebbia Nat (Stone Tile)

Plumbing Fixtures

Supplied by Taps Bath
Starck 3 toilet (Duravit)
Fusion faucet (Cabano)
Volex shower set (Cabano)
Raven tub (Mirolin)

Millwork

Lakeland Interiors
Kobis Cabinets

Furniture

Bensen Neo300 Living Room Sofa (Kiosk)
Truss Chair (Guss Modern)
Concrete Living Room Coffee Table (Style Garage)
Duca 160 Dining Table (Calligaris)
Muuto Visu Dining Chairs (Urban Mode)
Bar Stools (Calligaris)
Serra Queen Bed in Walnut (Shelter)
Slipper Chair (Christopher Solar Design)

Lighting

Meridian 36 pendant (Propellor Design)
E27 Socket Lamp, Blue (Muuto)
Unfold Pendant, Grey, Light Grey, Blue (Urban Mode)
Eetu Floor Lamp (EQ3)
Nelson Saucer Crisscross Bubble Pendant (Quasi Modo)
Astro Polermo (Eurolite)
Liam Pendant, white (Urban Mode)

Stone

Stone Installed by CB Marble;
Corian installed by Surface1
1141, Pure White (Caesastone)
Ebony Slate, honed (Coby)
4120, Raven (Caesarstone)
Glacier white (Corian)

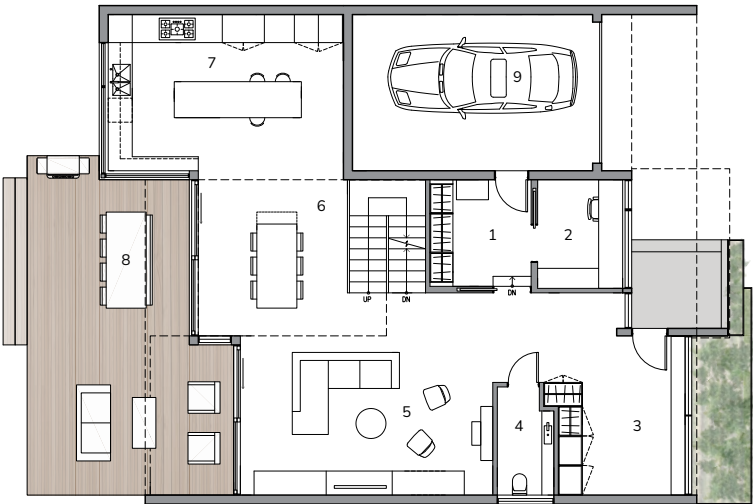
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FLOOR PLANS

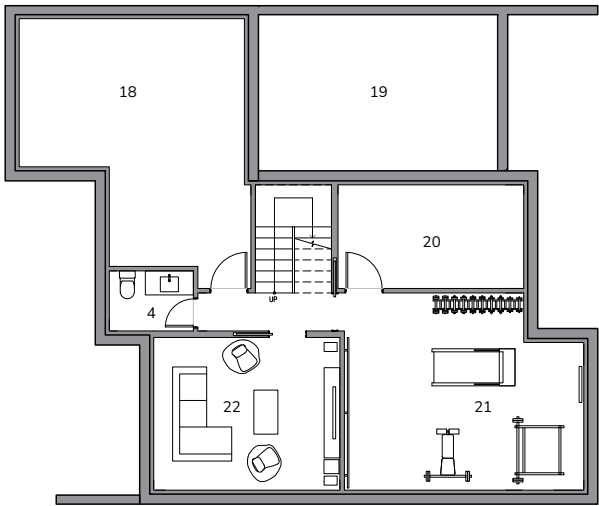
Second Floor



Ground Floor



Basement

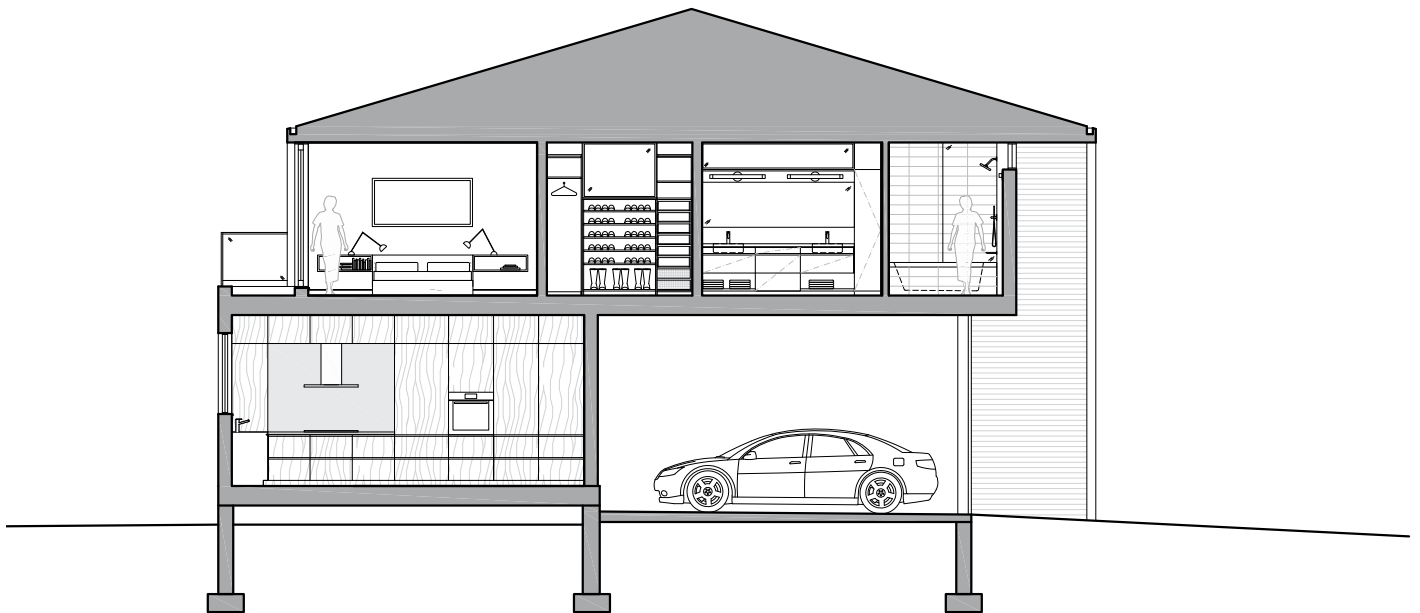
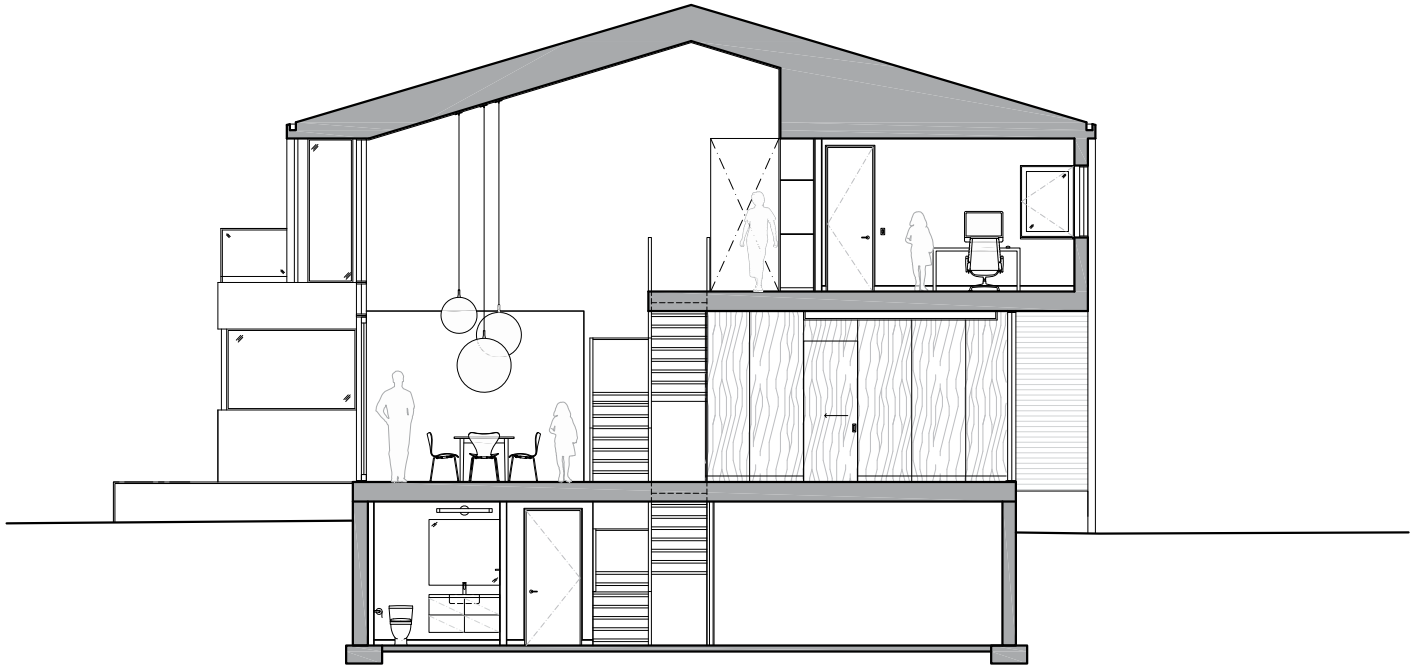


- 1 Mudroom
- 2 Study
- 3 Vestibule
- 4 Powder Room
- 5 Living Room
- 6 Dining Room
- 7 Kitchen
- 8 Deck
- 9 Garage
- 10 Principal Bedroom
- 11 Walk-In Closet
- 12 Ensuite Bathroom
- 13 Bathroom
- 14 Bedroom
- 15 Laundry Room
- 16 Hallway
- 17 Open to Below
- 18 Storage Room
- 19 Unexcavated
- 20 Utility Room
- 21 Gym
- 22 Media Room



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SECTIONS



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PROJECT CREDITS

Location: North York, Toronto, Ontario

Size: 3,200 s.ft. | 300 s.m.

Architecture/Interior Design/Landscape Design: Dubbeldam Architecture + Design

Project Team: Heather Dubbeldam, Marisa Maggs, Oliver Dang

Contractor: DDF Contracting Ltd.

Consultants: Blackwell Structural Engineers

Photography: Shai Gil: 1,2,3,4,5,6, 9,10,11,12,14,17,19.

Riley Snelling: 7,8,13,15,16,18.

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Photos from this press kit are available for download on

Dropbox: <https://tinyurl.com/Shift-House>

Dubbeldam Architecture + Design is a multi-disciplinary design studio committed to creating thoughtful projects that embody sustainable approaches. With a diverse portfolio incorporating a wide variety of project types, their work ranges from homes, multi-unit residential projects, workspaces, hospitality, and mixed-use buildings to landscape design and architectural installations.

Along with over 90 design awards and wide recognition in national and international publications, Dubbeldam is the recipient of the Canada Council for the Arts Professional Prix de Rome and the 2024 Architectural Practice Award from the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, two of the highest honours for architectural practices in Canada. With a commitment to design excellence and a focus on sustainability and wellness in architecture, Dubbeldam is recognized for creating innovative, unique, and environmentally responsible design solutions for live, work and play.

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