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“While it’s an expansive, spacious house, it still feels intimate when there’s only one or two of them home ”



## Bridle Path Toronto – The Echo House

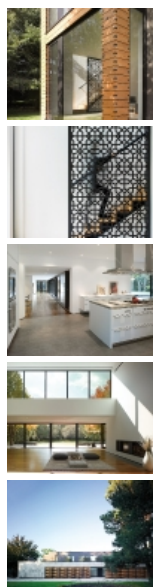
March 17, 2015 by [Amanda Storey](#) Like 32 Tweet 6 Share Print

**An Asian-inspired estate on Toronto’s Bridle Path utilizes notes of Eastern tradition and an immense respect for nature to create a space of serenity**

The Bridle Path is an architect’s fantasy playground, an intricate patchwork of estates radiating with artistry. Echo House, which arrived in the upscale neighbourhood at the dawn of 2014, is no exception to this principle, touching on an area of design that had yet to be tried in the area: Asian-infused design.

Crafted by Paul Raff of Paul Raff Studio in Toronto, Echo House was actually a renovation and addition made to an existing home. Raff worked intimately with the resident family to capture their vision for the design, which put an emphasis on their Asian heritage.

To say Raff pulled it off is an understatement. Stepping onto the property and into the home, one feels the culture existing almost as its own being, a personality present in the room. The interior is vast but cosy. Wrap-around clerestory windows reap natural light, while floor-to-ceiling and wall-to-wall glass brings the outside in, presenting uninterrupted visuals of a garden facade. Further promoting the romance between inside and out, massive glass doors completely open the entire face of the house, expanding it into the garden and terrace.



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"Harmony is the term that captures the philosophical sensibility that this family was interested in, and which I felt was important," says Raff, who has studied several strings of Asian art. "That comes through in the design of the house in the way that it has strong, easy visual and physical connections to the landscape and the nature around it."

Taking notes from traditional Asian patterns, large pivoting doors leading to the swimming pool were created from laser-cut steel filigree, and a similar screen exists in the kitchen wing, spanning from the ground floor up to the second-floor art studio. More screens line the front facade of the home, these ones made of reclaimed Douglas fir, providing privacy to the guest bedrooms they cover. The gentle rippling effect created by the criss-cross of wood in these screens makes them fittingly reminiscent of an echo.

"The word echo automatically implies listening," says Raff. "So being in this sense isn't just about what it looks like, how it functions, it's about total atmosphere, which includes sound and touch, the sense of feeling, the air flow." Echo House is intimate with nature not only in its esthetic respect to it, but also in the way it was designed to be ecologically sustainable. By renovating the existing structure to exceed contemporary high-performance standards for insulation, the home cut back more than 50 per cent of its energy consumption.

It's been more than a year after the dramatic evolution of their home, and the resident family says Raff's creation has truly resonated with them. As they are a group that entertains regularly, hosting large-scale parties throughout the year, Echo House's roomy yet comfortable ambience creates an ideal space for their friends and family to chat, relax and explore. The kitchen, which Raff says is the largest he's ever constructed in this part of the world, is a tremendous hit as well, as it fits over 20 people while cooking, "and it actually works," says Raff. "What they love about the house is that not only does it do that, but while it's an expansive, spacious house, it still feels intimate when there's only one or two of them home."

As for Raff's relationship with the project, he is as happy with the finished space as its owners. A cultured oasis immersed in nature, Echo House is an unforgettable addition to the Bridle Path community.

"What characterizes our work is that each product we consider is so unique. We're dealing with unique people in a unique place, so Echo House actually wasn't that different of an experience for me — except that it's completely different," he says with a laugh. "It's just part of the privilege and pleasure of living a creative life where I get to do original work for wonderful people that actually has a direct positive impact on their daily life."

[www.paulraffstudio.com](http://www.paulraffstudio.com)

PHOTOS BY BEN RAHN AND STEVE TSAI

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