

SHEER BEAUTY

A glass retreat so stylish, it just may pique the interest of diehard urbanites. *By Jack Kohane*

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There's a saying about people who live in glass houses. But in the case of the one straddling Mont Blanc in the Laurentians, stones don't break the architecture, they make it.

Built by Generation Homes, based in Vaughan, the 2,500-square-foot, three-bedroom house features a double-stacked rectangular superstructure set atop 16 cement pylons anchored into the hillside. It is bordered by a two-level, 500-sq.-ft. cedar deck dangling over a cliff with a 540-ft. drop to the valley below.

Overlooking the grandeur of this renowned range of mountains about 130 kilometres north of Montreal, the home's mid-20th century look — one blending design elements of Frank Lloyd Wright, Pierre Koenig and Ray and Charles Eames — is sheathed in glass and cultured stone. For Carlo Rinomato, president of Generation Homes, this project represents a culmination of a passion for creating properties of distinction.

"Over 60% of this house is glass, affording a 360-degree vista of the mountains and countryside," says Mr. Rinomato. "There is no room in the home that doesn't have a magnificent view of the outdoors. Whether one is in or out of the home, you're in touch with nature."

Although he's been building condos, houses and commercial and industrial properties across the greater Toronto area for more than a decade, Mr. Rinomato says with pride that few Toronto homes can compare with his glass-and-class masterpiece. "This is our 'alpha house,' a design concept we will be repeating in other properties we have on Mont Blanc," he says.

Selecting the site was the easy part, Mr. Rinomato says.

While vacationing in the Mont Tremblant region in the autumn of 2002, he visited Mont Blanc (located in the municipality of Saint-Faustin-Lac-Carré) where he came across one of the most breathtaking views he had ever seen. "I stood at the peak of Mont Blanc. All I could see was miles and miles of rolling hills, lakes and trees. I remember the

GLASS continued on PH3

More than 60% of this Mont Tremblant house is glass.

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“The mountain slope has a 40-degree pitch, so we had to truck everything in four-wheel-drive vehicles. We made many trips up that road. It was nearly impassable, and made our mission to complete the project in a year's time almost impossible — *Carlo Rinomato*, builder



The model glass house costs \$550,000 to \$750,000, depending on finishes, and the views are awesome. “No sunset will be missed,” says builder Carlo Rinomato, below.

GLASS

Continued from PH1

day vividly. The sky was crystal blue, the sun was shining and the trees had already changed colour. A rainbow of gold, red, yellow and orange was developing before my eyes.”

In that instant, he knew he had to own a piece of this natural bounty.

“And so, it started,” says Mr. Rinomato. “By the next month, I purchased the entire top of the mountain with a vision to build a dream.”

From that moment, Generation Homes focused solely on developing upscale properties in the Laurentians. Today, the builder is among the region's biggest developers, owning a 26-estate lot site, each about an acre in size, with a panoramic view of Mont Tremblant, a 10-minute drive from the development. “Our mission is to show people how they can share a slice of this paradise in a simple, sleek, yet elegant haven,” says Gilda Breda, director of operations for Generation Homes.



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Prices for the lots range from \$110,000 to \$225,000, and houses vary in size from 2,500 to 6,000 sq. ft.

The cost of the glass house itself is \$550,000 to \$750,000, depending on custom finishes and landscape panorama.

Inspired by the land's towering topography, the orientation of the glass house is aligned to the sun's path. “No sunset will be missed,” observes Mr. Rinomato. “I remember at the time of the choosing this site, climbing a tree that now stands in front of the house to ensure the view I wanted to achieve was captured. Sure enough, it was.”

Work began on the glass model in January, 2008, and was completed in December. There were major logistical obstacles during construction, Mr. Rinomato recalls, including the mid-winter transportation of building materials up Mont Blanc's rugged road. “The mountain slope has a 40-degree pitch, so we had to truck everything in four-wheel-drive vehicles. We made many trips up that road. It was nearly impassable, and made our mission to complete the project in a year's time almost impossible. But we persevered.”

Now open year-round, the improved roadway scaling Mont Blanc ends in the cul-de-sac of the glass house project.

To accommodate the bronzed glass windows, 10 feet from floor to ceiling, the flat-roofed house is built with a structural steel skeleton. Cedar and Douglas fir are used throughout, and Ur-



bina stones swathe the rustic façade. “Glazed glass means no drapes are needed for privacy as no one can see inside, and the stone was specifically selected to complement the cognac colour of the cedar finish,” notes Ms. Breda.

Its open-concept interior is deliberately minimalist. “Less clutter makes for a warmer look,” insists Mr. Rinomato. The focal point floor-to-ceiling, wood-burning fireplace is double-sided, and encased in the same Urbina stone. “It was part of trying to bring the outside, inside. There is no mantel.

and only 30 seconds were needed for them to decide — that's the amount of time it takes to make a 360-degree turn on their lots. The view sells the property,” says Mr. Rinomato, claiming that in one case, a prominent Toronto businessman purchased three lots in a single day.

The homes are also environmentally-friendly and offer a year-round healthy lifestyle, says Ms. Breda, noting Mont Blanc has the region's second-highest vertical elevation. It has 41 ski trails, mountain snowshoeing paths, and snowboarding parks. Summer activities and facilities include beaches (private and public), kayaking, mountain biking and horseback riding trails.

“Saint-Faustin-Lac-Carré offers attractions like golf, tennis, go-karting, camping, maison des arts et de la culture, as well as a ‘cabane a Sucre Millette,’ where guests are invited to visit the maple grove to see how maple sap is gathered in the traditional way,” Ms. Breda says.

The potential of our Mont Blanc development is enormous, affirms Mr. Rinomato. “Many buyers are interested in placing these homes in a rental program. Renters will be able to choose from a roster of services, among which are an in-house chef, private trainer and spa therapist,” he says. “In every sense, these glass homes are escape retreats — a relaxing getaway that also gets away from cookie-cutter-style homes.”

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It sits off-centre between the kitchen eating area and family room and can be enjoyed from both sides,” he points out.

Most finishes and furnishings are built-in, including the stove and dishwasher, as well as the king bed in the master bedroom (with a soaking tub in the centre of the room). Ceilings are made of pine planks and floors are African hardwoods.

The prime location and views helped sell out Phase I where the glass house is built (land is available, however, on the north side of Mont Tremblant). “We flew out clients,