

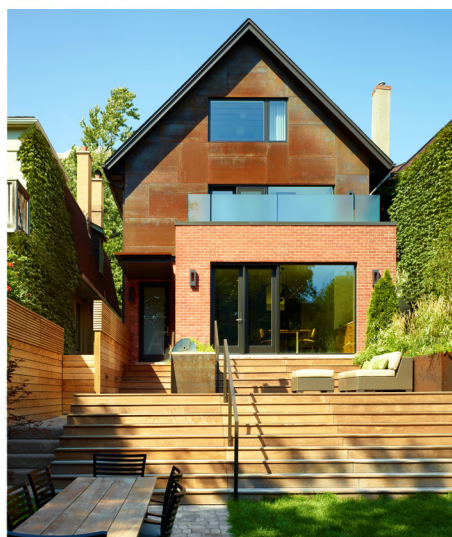
THE PROJECT A RENOVATED VICTORIAN DUPLEX

Before starting her own architectural practice, Cindy Rendely worked as a goldsmith and metal artist. Not only has she gone from crafting small design to reworking buildings, but she's had some challenging projects. Like the Victorian home she had to gut and renovate with a modern touch. Called the walnut house, the interior features much of the hardwood.

The design brief: For years a Toronto couple searched for a home to suit their changing needs. They wanted a family-oriented neighbourhood close to shops, restaurants, schools and other amenities. And they wanted a modern aesthetic. They bought a Victorian home that had been converted to a three-storey duplex. It needed some love.

The challenge: Because the house had been converted to a duplex, the multiple staircases, kitchens, washrooms and various "leftover" spaces had to be eliminated to provide an open-concept plan with generous living spaces. I had to imagine the original space as it was originally intended. As well, since everything was demolished except for the two side walls and the front elevation, the sequencing of construction was difficult for the builder. New construction would have been much simpler.

What worked well: For me, the house is successful – as at first glance it appears to be an original house on the street. Upon closer inspection, however, you see many clues of an extensive renovation and addition with a very modern sensibility. The project includes a two-storey rear addition, an extensive interior renovation (the space was gutted right back to the exterior brick, and all interior walls, rooms and



staircases were removed). Plus, a redesign of the front façade. The dilapidated front porch was replaced with a simple corten steel overhang, supported by steel columns. Low, elegant fold-



ed steel steps lead to the new front door, painted with a metallic automotive finish. The original brick was cleaned and restored and large pieces of corten steel cladding replaced most

of the original painted wood elements at the front, rear and side elevations.

Your design rule: Generally – I need to defend most "architectu-

ral moves" that I make in a project. For example, if a wall is curved for a reason that makes sense in the overall plan and design philosophy of a project, I can defend it. If the curve is gratuitous – just because I felt like doing a curve that day or it was requested by the client "just because" – then I can't and it will probably be reconsidered.

The design rule you were happy to break: Maintaining and creating a peaked/sloped roof. For this project it was the only option. Many of my projects have a flat roof.

Favourite aspect of this project: I love the corten steel work – and I particularly love the rear elevation. I love that at a quick glance, the corten panels do not jump out at the viewer as a foreign material that clash with the traditional red brick house. Rather, they blend beautifully and the colour of the corten steel is aging exquisitely – it is getting darker and redder with time. If you squint your eyes, you'd have a hard time differentiating between the red brick and the red corten steel panels.

Design pet peeve: I prefer smaller residential projects that are beautifully resolved in their design and that are perfectly executed in their construction. Bigger is not necessarily better. ... Often larger projects are ego-driven by the client and/or the architect because it is possible to do so and the budget allows. I prefer beautifully executed jewels – this idea goes back to my previous work as a goldsmith and metal artist when I worked on a much smaller scale and could aim for perfection.

Staff

This interview has been condensed and edited.