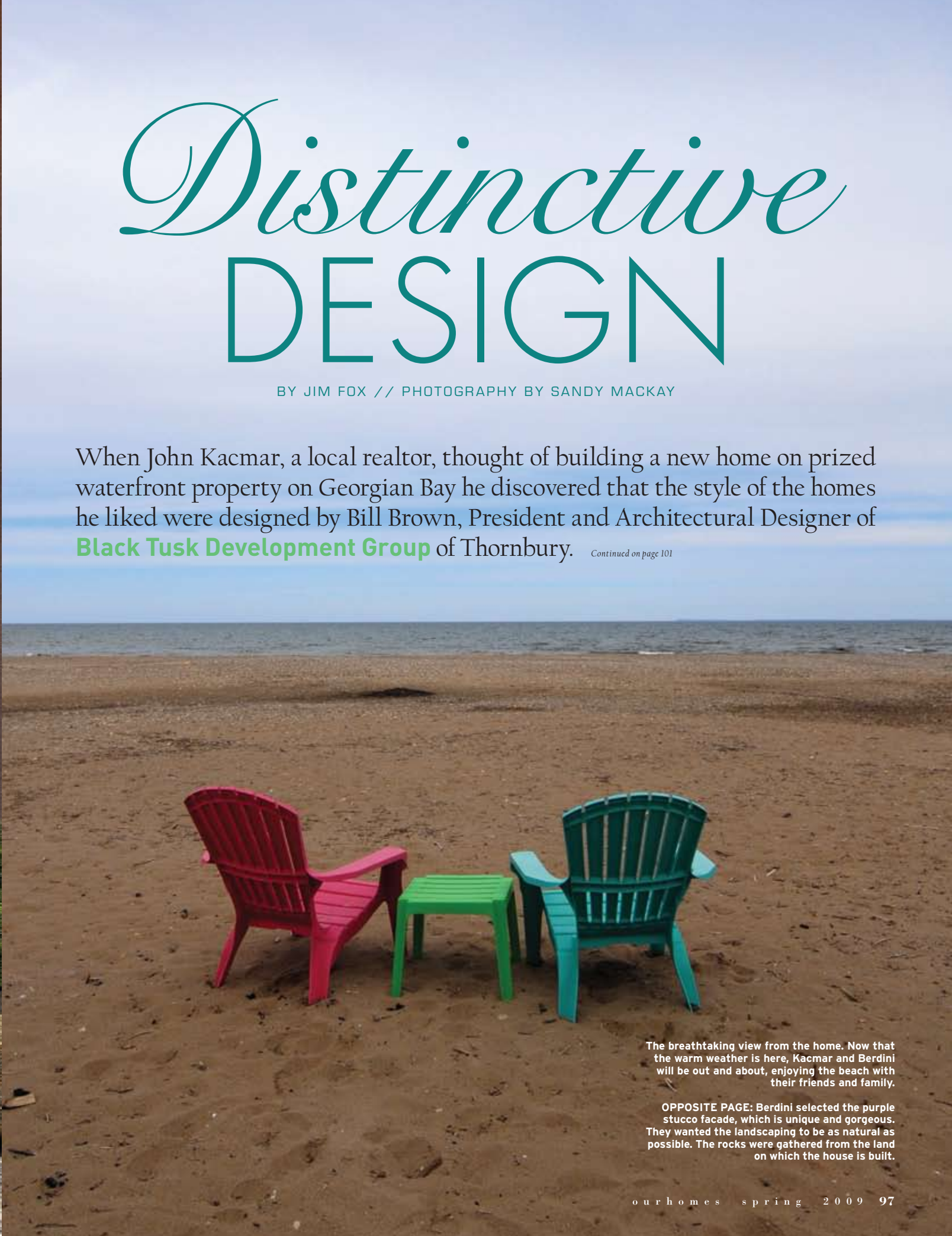




# Distinctive DESIGN

BY JIM FOX // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY

When John Kacmar, a local realtor, thought of building a new home on prized waterfront property on Georgian Bay he discovered that the style of the homes he liked were designed by Bill Brown, President and Architectural Designer of **Black Tusk Development Group** of Thornbury. *Continued on page 101*



The breathtaking view from the home. Now that the warm weather is here, Kacmar and Berdini will be out and about, enjoying the beach with their friends and family.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Berdini selected the purple stucco facade, which is unique and gorgeous. They wanted the landscaping to be as natural as possible. The rocks were gathered from the land on which the house is built.





Kacmar and Berdini love to cook and their kitchen is bright, open and expertly designed. The shaker-style cabinetry, elegant in its simplicity, was built by jti design. The honed slate countertops are from City Stone.





**TOP LEFT:** The large table and bench are treasures. They came from a restaurant Kacmar once owned. The space was designed for the table to fit just right. The banquette provides storage below and a comfortable seating area for many.

**TOP RIGHT:** The built-ins and the engineered hardwood floors flow seamlessly into the living room. The couple love the floor-to-ceiling contemporary fireplace surround.

**BOTTOM LEFT:** The long hallway leads to the office at the street-side of the home and to the open landing, which takes you downstairs to the completely finished lower level.

A phone call to Brown began a process that pleased both parties and resulted in the creation of an elegant home, custom built to the specifications of Kacmar and his wife, Diana Berdini. "It was a wonderful experience," says Kacmar. "We knew what we wanted. We just couldn't express it in the practical terms that building requires. That's where Bill came in. We wanted the crisp, linear lines of Frank Lloyd Wright and we wanted a home that was both comfortable and functional."

Berdini agrees. "I wanted a house that didn't look like a house. What I mean is, I wanted a house that was respectful of the property, a house that wouldn't overcome the landscape." Keeping these requirements in mind, Brown designed a house that harmonized well with the home's natural setting on a deep, narrow lot with wonderful water frontage next to Indian Brook and bordered by the cedar forest of the Peasmarsh Nature Preserve.

Brown, who has designed more than 80 homes in the area, sees each new project as "an adventure in architecture."

"The trend is to smaller, better-built houses," Brown says. "We focus on the design of the home first so there's optimum use of space and

everything flows seamlessly. In design, continuity is paramount. With no wasted square footage and quality interior finishing we can meet all of our clients' expectations."

Brown says he is also concerned with the legacy issues of homes he builds. "I want them to be around 100 years down the road so extra care and effort is put into building a quality structure," he says. "We do everything we can to lend longevity to the structure."

Berdini acknowledges Brown's commitment to quality. "Bill did a superb job customizing the home to suit our lifestyle," she says. "I wanted a floor plan that people couldn't duplicate – a space that reflected our priorities and allowed for our furniture pieces from other locations."

Brown elaborates: "As a design/build operation, the most important thing is to bring in the right people to do the job," he says. "That includes everyone from the interior designer, in this case, Cindy Bleeks, to the local trades who work on the project. Because each project involves different clients, it's essential to meet the individual client's needs. The biggest challenge is managing expectations and to look for ways to involve clients positively in the process." *Continued on page 102*





Kacmar and Berdini's experience was a positive one. Their background in real estate gives them a surprising insight.

"We learned from real estate that you cannot do the job yourself," Berdini says. "I have a good eye, but I needed help in translating that to the finished product."

Her husband agrees. "We knew what we wanted alright, but, in the long run, having someone like Bill take over the reins is the least expensive thing you can do," he says. "That way, there are no surprises and, most importantly, no mistakes. The experience was enjoyable for both of us and we never had to say, 'Oops!' We had a sense of adventure but we didn't have to correct any big mistakes."

Brown is pleased that the couple's experience was a positive one. "That's how it should be," he says. "Clients should feel free to leave the logistical problems to me."

With Brown taking care of the practicalities of the building process his clients were free to realize their dream. *Continued on page 104*



TOP LEFT: A pocket door opens to the walk-in closet and the master en suite.

BOTTOM LEFT: Berdini decorated the master bedroom in her favourite colour, purple.

The master ensuite has cabinetry made of B.C. fir and Coby Ebony honed slate countertops.





**LEFT:** From left: Owners Diana Berdini and John Kacmar look over the home's plans with Barb Patton and her husband Bill Brown, of Black Tusk Development Group.

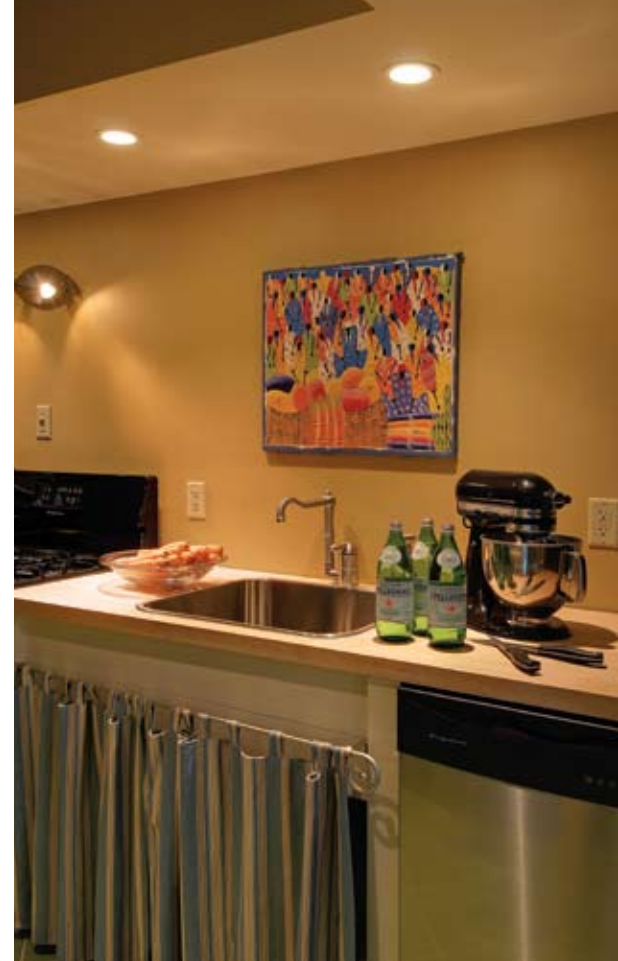
**BELOW:** Light fills the study at the back of the house, with a walkout to the deck.



**TOP RIGHT:** This quaint, lower-level kitchen is for overnight guests. It gives them the freedom to cook their own meals. The floor in the kitchen is a fun lime green.

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** The upstairs powder room has a vessel sink and a custom vanity with lots of storage.

**BELOW:** One of two guest bedrooms on the lower level.



A laundry room and mud room with built-ins and easy-to-clean slate floors is strategically placed near the kitchen. Further down the central hall, past the homeowners' prized art pieces, is the master bedroom complete with a fabulous walk-in closet and a stunning en suite glass shower, by **G.H. Lawrence Glass and Mirror**. Next to the master bedroom is a spacious office for two with its own terrace for enjoying a morning coffee. Because of its ample windows and southern exposure, the workspace is bathed in uplifting light.

A wooden staircase, by talented finishing carpenter **John Lister**, leads to a lower floor as roomy as the one above. Because the home was designed to accommodate regular visits from family members, the lower level is a self-contained living unit complete with two bedrooms, a bathroom, and an open urban kitchen and family room. Here, the planning and foresight of both Brown and the homeowners is very apparent. With ceiling heights approaching nine feet and horizontal windows twice the normal size, the feeling is far from being in a basement.

The final result is exactly as Bill Brown had hoped. A stylish, comfortable home that's easy to maintain, matches the homeowners' lifestyle, meshes with its environment, meets all the property restrictions and is a structure built to meet all modern energy-saving requirements.

A tall order, filled to perfection. **OH**



"Arriving in this space was very gratifying," Berdini explains. "I love this building and filling it up with things we enjoy. It was so good to have a designer who could see the same vision that we had. As I walk through the home, three years later, I still feel a sense of calm and well-being."

Visitors can appreciate Berdini's experience. Entering through the main entrance into the slate-tiled foyer by **City Stone**, newcomers step up to the alder plank flooring of the open dining and kitchen area. The eye is drawn to the great room on a lower level with its high, coffered ceiling. The clean lines of the central fireplace's wood panels suggest Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright's influence is seen, again, in the generous windows by **Cedarport** of Thornbury, which provide spectacular views

of the bay as well as the forested conservation area next door. Landscape design by **Jan Pratt** with installation by **Harbour View Horticulture** of Clarksburg completes the soothing, natural backdrop for this spacious gathering place.

The blend of fine design and utmost function is also seen in the matching kitchen cabinetry by **jti design** of Thornbury. The motif of muted elegance established by the rich wood of the mantel, also by **jti design**, continues into the food preparation and dining area. All this against a warm backdrop of walls, painted in a shade appropriately called "Straw Hat," by Benjamin Moore, which subtly changes hue with the natural light that floods the space. *Continued on page 105*