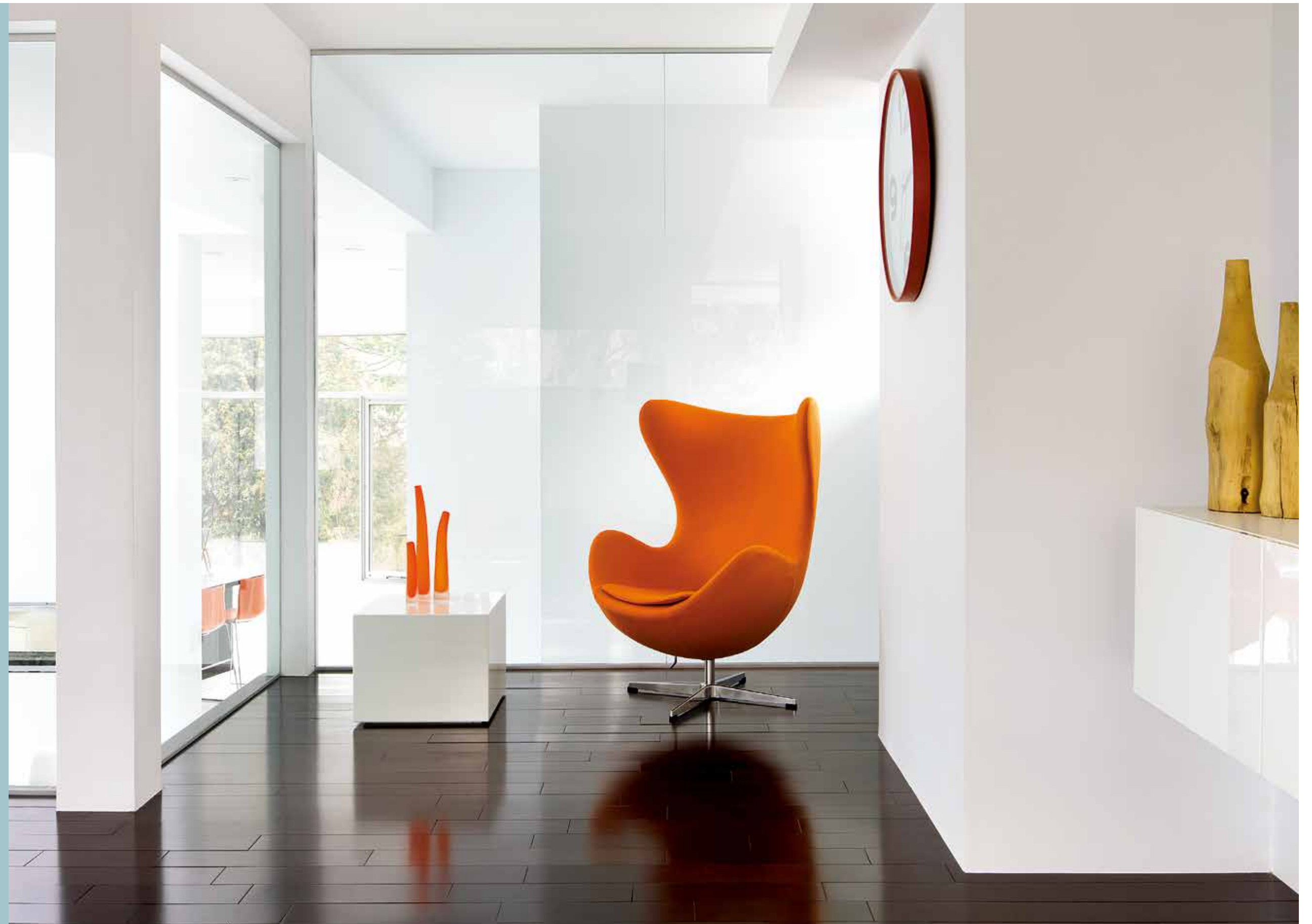


# SEE-THROUGH HOUSE

*Banks of unadorned, commercial-grade windows are central to home with no secrets*

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*Even though these glass walls face the inside of the home, light pours through them.*



*The fireplace can be seen from the kitchen and here, in the dining room. It also is one of the first things visitors see from the front door.*

**SHARON GALOR** and her husband, Evan Carmichael, didn't have to look far when they decided it was time to go house hunting. They found an empty lot, a city-owned property that was once the location of a hydro station, in the North York neighborhood where they and son Hayden lived in an attractive townhouse.

The young couple are both entrepreneurs and the lot is a short distance from the dance studio Sharon owns and Evan's office.



*(Opposite) Orange is the dominant accent colour in the home, "and when I get tired of it, it will be easy to change out," says Sharon.*

*"Sometimes I see people standing on the sidewalk, straining over the fence to get a closer look inside."*

The neighborhood had other positives, including schools her family would soon need. "But finding a house that has everything you want really isn't possible," she says. A custom-build was the answer.

Designing and creating a house is a commitment. "We came to the site almost every day," says Sharon, "because the placement of every single stud makes a difference and you have to be on top of it all." It's also a choice

that comes with risk, something Sharon discovered early on.

On the day of the ground-breaking, the builder, Hansam Canada Construction owned by Samy Botros, discovered the lot wasn't as empty as previously thought. "There was a house under here already," says Sharon, standing in her new dining room and pointing to the gleaming, glass-tiled floor under her socks. It wasn't an entire house they'd

unearthed, it was the foundation of a house, but let's not split hairs.

Before Sharon's dream home could go up, this historical remnant had to come out. "And that foundation went on forever," she says. Hauling away those tons of bricks and cinder block set the budget back \$40,000 and added three weeks to the timeline. "If we could have quit right then, we would have," says Sharon. ☞





*(Opposite) The wood floors and stairs are all maple, stained the same dark espresso colour as the front door and the kitchen cabinetry.*

*(This page) Unconventional window shapes, such as the ones here in the office, were designed to maximize light without sacrificing privacy.*

A year and a half later, their vision was finished and clearly worth the headache. Unadorned, commercial-grade windows are central to the design. One set runs the width of the open-concept kitchen and den, offering southern exposure and a view of the yard.

From the road, there's a clear view through the kitchen to the double-sided gas fireplace. Sharon and Evan aren't the only ones impressed. "Sometimes I see people standing on the sidewalk,

straining over the fence to get a closer look inside," Sharon says. And it's no wonder.

Passersby can see the soaring ceilings at the centre of the home and the four skylights that top them off like a chapel dome. At night, the entire canvas is lit up by recessed lights that twinkle off the white walls, glass banisters and dark, glossy stairs. It's a modern art gallery tucked into a residential enclave, and hopeful visitors are sometimes bold.

"One Saturday, around eight in the morning Evan answered the door, and there was someone asking if they could come through for a tour," Sharon recalls with a laugh. Amiable and open, the family HAS limits even though they have rented out the home to film a TV commercial and as a backdrop for fashion photo shoots. "We tell them no, no tours."

When it comes to design, Sharon's a die-hard modernist, which is evident from the



moment you drive up to the white, stucco-clad structure, a series of boxes perched on top of each other at different angles. Besides fulfilling Sharon's design inspiration ("I wanted it to be Malibu beach house, just without the beach," she says), those cubes allowed the house to be built at different elevations, so ceiling heights start at 13 feet for some intimacy in the living room and climb to 20 feet, adding drama to the dining room. "The corner lot gives us light from all directions,

too," says Sharon. Taking advantage of that sought-after commodity - natural light - meant adding as many windows as possible. Some, like the one in Hayden's room, run from floor to ceiling in a corner; many are slim horizontals starting close to the ceiling and spanning the width of almost an entire wall. These configurations offer views of tree canopies or the open sky while still preserving privacy. Keeping the interior landscape free from obstructions was equally important to Sharon. "I wanted to be

able to see through the whole house, no matter where I was standing," she says.

The front door opens into the dining room, drenched in sun from the skylights above. The living room, to the left, is sunken, so while there is no door, it feels like a separate space, clearly delineated by a few steps down. The office is a half floor up, the only room on that landing. Its interior-facing walls are glass, so while there's auditory privacy for phone calls and chitchat, anyone inside can be seen

*"The corner lot gives us light from all directions, too."*

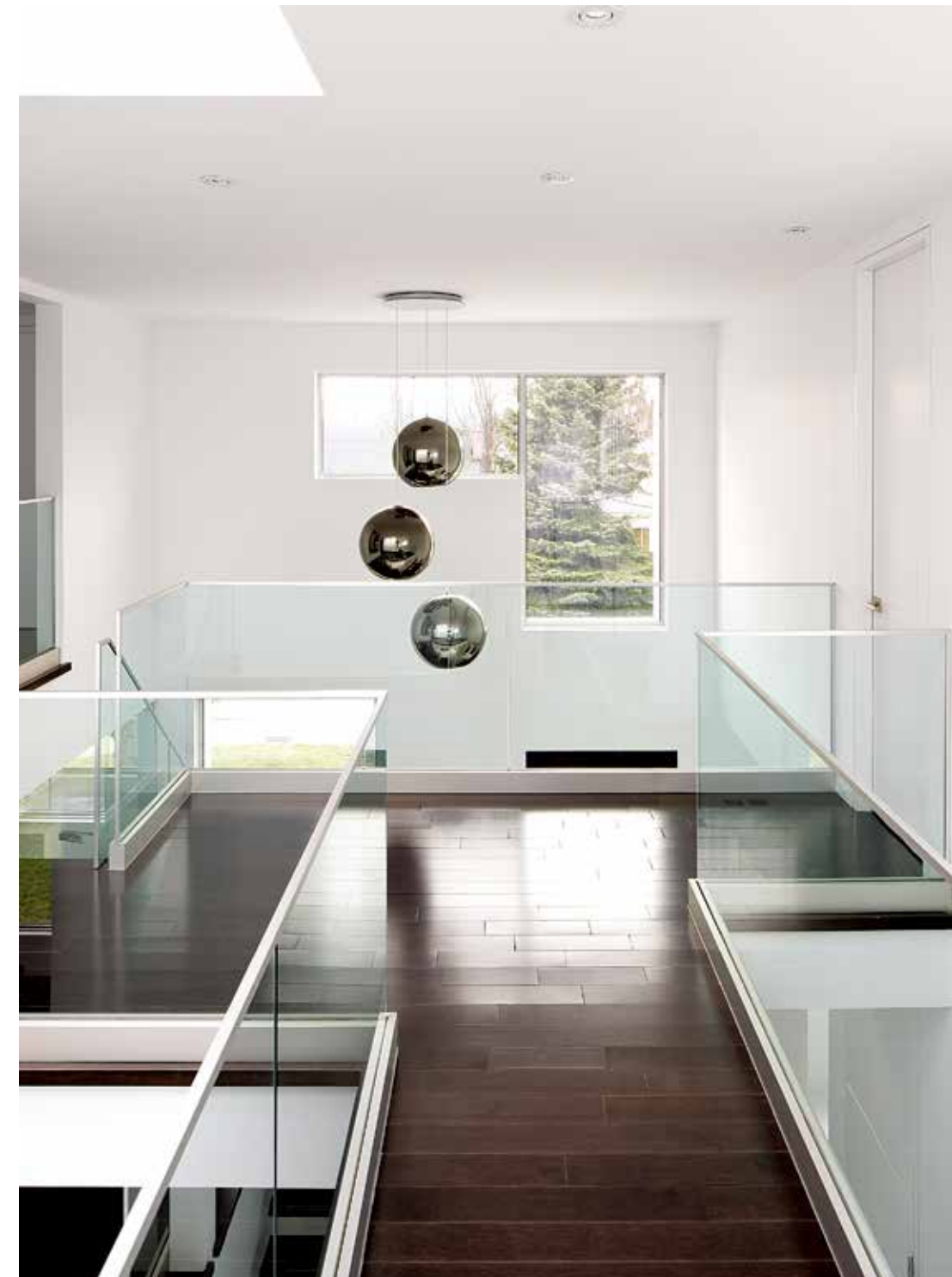


*The house has a single paint colour: Ultra White. "It has no undertones," Sharon says. "No pinks or greys or blues, nothing." The plan is for the home to eventually act as a gallery for Sharon's art, some of which hangs here, in the sunken living room.*

*"I wanted to be able to see through the whole house, no matter where I was standing."*

from the rooms below. "There are no secrets in this house," Sharon says with a smile.

Along with minimalism, continuity is an important element of modern design. "The fixtures in all five bathrooms are identical and I sourced each and every one," says Sharon. "Modern elements are hard to find; there really isn't a lot in Canada." Rather than leaving that search to her contractor, she was on the road, visiting showrooms and negotiating prices for her showerheads, door handles and other hardware. ☞



*Sharon had seen a similar version of this suspended light fixture with its three reflective spheres at a favourite store. "There are a lot of retail and commercial-inspired elements in my home," she says.*

*“We had to use commercial-grade beams here because that was the only way to get the length we needed.”*

Settling on a modern aesthetic means paying extra attention to details since the look is anchored by empty spaces, straight lines and almost no embellishment. There are no baseboards in the house, for example, “and baseboards hide a lot,” says Sharon. She had to be meticulous with the installation of the floor and the drywall cutting because the seam where the two meet is clearly visible. “It was more work, but it’s a look I love,” she says.

Four bedrooms exist on the top level, separated by dark-stained wood walkways that cross over the main floor below. “We had to use commercial-grade beams here because that was the only way to get the length we needed,” says Sharon. “They don’t make beams this big for residential homes.” Each walkway is framed by sturdy, glass-and-steel half walls “so my son can stand up here and call to me in the kitchen, and we’ll see each other.”

That kitchen is where most of the living happens in this home. “We have lots of parties here,” says Sharon. Family gatherings are often buffet style (“we put the food in the dining room and everyone just helps themselves,”) but Sharon also hosts her employees for work-focused visits and meetings. When the sun is high, she sometimes needs to move her laptop from the kitchen to the dining room to avoid a glare on her screen. Inconvenient, yes, but we’re not shedding any tears for her. 🍷



*In all the bathrooms, the vanities are floating fixtures “because everything was chosen to draw the eye upward,” Sharon says. That includes the mirrors that run from sink edge to ceiling, and the wall-mounted faucets that extend from them.*

