



PHOTOGRAPH BY ASHLEY FRASER

Anthony Bruni is a new breed of architect, one who contends that building homes is like storytelling — and his own home reflects that belief

A smile rolls across Anthony Bruni's tanned face as he watches a young girl skipping down Grant Street toward the Parkdale Market, her parents in tow. "Daddy, is that a house? Mommy, is that a house?"

"I hear a lot of that," says the 37-year-old architect moments after ducking inside his glass and panelled home where light dances over a suspended staircase made of thick maple and hefty steel.

Bruni has recently become a full partner in the firm run by his long-time mentor, Jim Colizza. Together the pair of Sault St. Marie natives and graduates of Carleton University are the backbone of Colizza Bruni Architecture, a small, award-winning firm dedicated to fitting modern homes into emerging neighbourhoods, including the working-class community of Hintonburg.

This fit man, with a ready smile, is the new face in a growing tribe of architects devoted to modern

design in a city bound by politics and tradition.

He is also one half of the design smarts behind the slick, semi-detached home that completely confused the young girl who was skipping by it, near the market.

Colizza's daughter, Victoria, lives in the rear unit, while Bruni and his new wife, Tianna, live in the home facing the street, where new homes snuggle up to old homes and mornings start early as merchants set up their stalls of vegetables, fruit and flowers.

Both homes are modest affairs, blessed with distinctive personalities and each boasting just 1,200 square feet of light and glass. Both impressed judges overseeing the Ontario Association of Architects' design competition last spring, and earned two hefty glass trophies, including the best all-round entry. This is the second time Bruni and Colizza have walked off with top honours at the provincial level, the first coming in >>

By Sheila Brady



Anthony Bruni's own home, at right, is just 1,200 square feet. It puts his design philosophy into practice.



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2006 for an apartment building on Richmond Road near the Lincoln Heights Shopping Centre that looks like a series of stacked steel cubes.

Bruni likes to work with simple, natural and honest materials—honey-coloured maple, etched steel, exposed concrete and thick glass panels—especially in this neighbourhood where homes are often built of wood and brick. He shuns the great imitators, vinyl, and stucco, just as he turns away from design that imitates or is borrowed from another era.

He works in the present, just like his father, who designed and built the family's home in the Soo in the '70s. The home reflected the senior Bruni's skills and interests. A mason by trade, Franco Bruni wrapped his home in brick, then designed a stone fireplace in the living room. "He built everything with his two hands," says the man's fourth child, who had three brothers and two older sisters who helped his mother, Barbara, prepare dinners from scratch seven days a week.

"The meal would be made at the kitchen table and then we would all sit down together. We would talk, yell, scream and laugh a lot," says Bruni, who worked with his father when he was 11. That's when his love affair with the texture and feel of rock and natural materials began.

It shouldn't be a surprise that Bruni designed his Grant Street home, which focuses on the kitchen and an open dining area, with dark-stained cabinetry wrapping around the walls, almost like a sculpture.

He devoted hours to building the Hintonburg home, just like his father decades before. The younger Bruni placed a chemically treated steel around the living room fireplace and hung hefty glass panels to form a see-through wall between the kitchen and the open stairs. He even made the wood and steel dining room table.

Both homes, the family home in the Soo and his home on Grant Street, speak to their times, says Bruni, who compares architecture to building a story.

"Good architecture evokes a sense of time and place. It is about storytelling, how the design works and how the house relates to the street. I would say that I am a story-teller with a pen and design," he says. Indeed, he drew the plans for the Grant Street homes four years ago, then he tweaked them. For example, he added a slim >>

Bruni likes to work with simple, natural and honest materials such as wood, glass and steel.



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www.naismithhome.com



An important piece of Canadian and sports history, here is the childhood home of Dr. James Naismith, the inventor of basketball. The Naismith House is a prominent and architecturally powerful historical landmark. This heritage home sits on 45 acres of picturesque rolling farm-land, boasts approximately 200 feet of Mississippi water front, and is set well back from the highway. This beautiful one-and-a-half storey house, constructed in 1850, highlights the Georgian Vernacular architectural style with Regency style elements. The exterior of the home has maintained most of its original features while the interior has been lovingly brought up to the comforts of today. The Naismith House is truly spectacular; it has a wonderful character and feels warm and inviting to all that step foot inside. **Listed at \$1,195,000**



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Bruni added a slim window in his kitchen after sitting in the space and studying how the light worked.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ASHLEY FRASER

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window in the kitchen after sitting in the unfinished space and watching how the light worked.

“Light and simple, honest materials are essential,” says Bruni, who used a thin wafer of steel as a kitchen counter instead of wrapping the steel around the edge and giving the impression the steel was fat. He exposed the steel edge, showing off the true nature of the material.

He is already designing his next home in his head, planning a bit more space to accommodate children. There will likely be three bedrooms and if the family grows, the children will share a bedroom. “There were six of us and four bedrooms in the Soo. I shared a bedroom with Frank and we are still very tight.”

Bruni has already bought a lot on a nearby street. It’s forward-thinking for the man, who at one time thought about taking fine arts at Queen’s University, but eventually settled on architecture at Carleton.

“I usually like to live in the moment and let life take me where it’s going to go,” he says, and adds that it was good fortune when he walked into Colizza’s Chamberlain Street office in ’98, and

asked if he had any work for a fourth-year architecture student.

There wasn’t, but one week later, Colizza invited him for dinner. “Jim liked to encourage students from the Soo,” says Bruni, who was asked to paint the exterior of his mentor’s Echo Drive home. “It wasn’t exactly what I expected, but it was work. He called me back to do some drafting and then I gained his trust and we have been together ever since.

“We are two brains with one thought,” says Bruni. That thought, at its root, is about slipping modern homes that speak to 2011 into working-class neighbourhoods. Neither man wants to oversee a large firm — each wants to carefully plan and design a few homes a year.

It’s a philosophy of balance, says Bruni. “You work. You eat well. You live well and you try to balance everything out.”

And what does Franco Bruni think of his son’s modern home? “My father doesn’t say much.” But when he saw the home his son built for his own family, “he had this smile on his face and I believe he is very proud of this house.”



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