TORONTO EDITION

LIVING LUXE

BRIGHTER THAN THE SUN

DEMI MOORE

The star reflects on her bold and dazzling career and her most recent film in an exclusive interview

ARTFUL SIMPLICITY

OE Design by Omid Taba creates a modern estate in Forest Hill that epitomizes tranquility and elegance

A HOME WITH A VIEW

Jane Lockhart Design transforms a mid-century home in the Niagara Gorge into a contemporary retreat

Design — Decor — Architecture — Lifestyle

Summer Issue

Al Fresco ELEGANCE

Artist extraordinaire Lori Morris brings her signature extravagant and opulent design approach to outdoor living areas, taking inspiration from this estate's modern architecture and verdant landscape for a stunning poolside oasis.

By Susan Kelly
Photography by Edward James
Builder: Tony Gornick

An artist needs two things to begin creating: inspiration and a fresh canvas. And Lori Morris, one of the world's most sought-after designers of haute luxe homes, found both in the stunning architecture of this elegant country estate outside Toronto. "In designing the outdoor living spaces, I was struck by the splendid limestone exterior, an exquisite, elevated blend of modern with traditional touches that evoke a villa in Tuscany," she says.

Blending classic elegance with bold innovation to create spaces that resonate with individuality and opulence is something of a specialty for Morris. Her House of Lori Morris Design (LMD) stands as a testament to her unparalleled creativity in redefining the design landscape through highly original work. Over an illustrious 38-year career, she has gained acclaim as one of the leading designers of luxury properties in the world.

The masterful modern architecture that so inspired her is the work of Tony Gornik, principal at T. Gornik Build/Design. He custom-designed and built the home to reflect the owners' highly sophisticated and cosmopolitan taste in design and architecture. When not travelling the globe with their four children, the owners spend as much time as possible outdoors on the estate's beautiful grounds, complete with sports courts, swimming pool and dining areas.

Equally inspiring for Morris was the estate's sylvan setting. The graceful and stately mansion is virtually surrounded by mature trees that provide a richly varied and verdant backdrop. "I felt it was imperative that the outdoor living areas actually engage with the landscape of which they are a part," the vivacious design dynamo says. "My goal was to enhance the magical feeling of both nature and architecture, intertwining them with magnificent design."

Mission accomplished, as dramatically evidenced in the covered loggia. Atop the limestone-paved patio, a massive dining table and two long sofas take pride of place. Morris flanked them with large Etruscan-style urns, puckishly topped with globe-shaped topiary. With the exception of the bright green throw pillows, the furniture and accessories are a deep rich ebony hue. "Black adds modern sophistication and is very dominant," she says. "Yet when applied artfully, the colour is grounding as well."

To extend the palette and create a seamless flow, the savvy designer carried this approach into the pool area, where a striking and ornate limestone feature designed to look as if it might have come from an Italian palazzo is the focal point. Strategically placed umbrellas, chaise longues and side tables, sleek and stylish and black, were all that was needed. "In both areas, the colour black perfectly emphasizes the dark trunks of the surrounding mature trees. Together, we have a synergized palette that highlights the beautiful backdrop of the sumptuous grounds," Morris says.

In bold contrast, a floral paradise awaits in the pool-adjacent cabana room. ▸

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Its bi-fold doors open completely to the outside, which includes the estate's lush and extensive gardens. Morris intentionally evoked the plants and bright flowers found there, commissioning a custom mosaic mural depicting whimsical blooms and butterflies. The work covers an entire wall, greeting people on their way to the shower and sauna with cheerful, summer-fresh colours.

In the cabana lounge area, a massive limestone fireplace echoes the exterior architecture and makes a perfect pedestal for a large viewing screen. The designer also added wood accents to the ceiling surround and in niches, to evoke the woodland without. In contrast, white lattice panels give an intimation of a garden. One side wall is mirrored to reflect natural light and give depth to the elegant space.

After using the pool, swimmers can relax on one of two sofas upholstered in water-resistant fabric flanking the fireplace or in one of the plush chairs that can be moved in for close conversation or pushed aside for more floor room. Each is covered in a different and exuberant shade of green, each with its own texture and tactile experience. Brightly coloured, floral-patterned throw pillows complete the look. "Decorating with green in the interior brings outside in, and bright colours bring joyful energy," Morris says. "Plus, when you have them both in your landscape and in your interior, it creates a cohesive flow, a blending of textures and patterns and colours like is found in nature."

The homeowners can now fully enjoy summer in their beautiful estate. With yet another successful project on her long list of credits, Morris has moved on to the myriad projects that await as House of LMD continues to create lavishly layered bespoke environments with a soupçon of sex appeal all over North America. "We're very proud and grateful to have these opportunities to display our artistry in so many luxurious and beautiful homes," she says.