

'Craftsman' receives brotherly transformation

'Livable and comfortable' restoration creates two residences for sale in Kitsilano

BY KIM PEMBERTON, VANCOUVER SUN OCTOBER 17, 2009



Xavier (left) and Joel Massey in front of the duplex they restored on West Third Avenue. They say they are living their dream by working with older homes. Photos, J2

Photograph by: Ward Perrin, Vancouver Sun, Vancouver Sun

Still on the younger side of 30, the two Massey brothers are making a name for themselves in the restoration of older Vancouver homes.

Xavier is 27, Joel, 29: it might be easy to assume the pair would be strictly into modern homes.

But while the brothers do like contemporary homes, their company specializes in bridging both old and new.

They bring clean lines and an open concept to the interior spaces of older homes, where the exteriors and heritage characters are either maintained or restored.

Their most recent project is located in the Vancouver neighbourhood of Kitsilano, the transformation of a 1912 Craftsman into two duplexes and the addition of a coach house to the property.

The new home, purchased by Joel and his wife, is not out of place next to the older home. They share a small courtyard, and despite the smaller lot size, neither the coach house nor the duplexes have a sense of being squeezed onto the property.

This was achieved, in part, by a covenant with the next-door neighbour who agreed to share a side walkway, which provides easy access to all four homes. The end result is eco-density at its best.

"Our whole objective is to create homes that are unique," says Xavier Massey.

"This is exactly what eco-density is about -- creating livable and comfortable spaces with separation [between homes]."

Family made important contributions to the completion of the project.

The brothers' stepfather built the kitchen and master-bedroom cabinetry and additional built-in storage in the rear duplex.

Their father, a carpenter, often pitched in on the construction and finishing phases.

In addition, Xavier's fiancé, Rukiya Bernard, is a home stager and appears on the HGTV series *The Stagers*.

She did all the interior decorating and got help staging the homes from Dekora's Matthew Finlason, a senior stager with the show.

Both Xavier and Joel are carpenters by trade, so they put their skills to good use throughout all of the project's stages.

Previously, they worked for a company specializing in concrete formwork in management and site supervision, but quit two years ago to form their own company, Ronse Massey Development, a mix of both parents' names.

"This is our dream of what we want to do. We've always been fascinated by architecture and heritage buildings.

"These homes have so much more energy. They have a history. You can build new and make them look the same, but they're not the same," says Xavier.

A highlight on the project was a visit from a former resident. She shared her own childhood stories -- dating from the time she lived there 40 years ago - and told them of the time rocks were heated in the

fireplace so that they could be brought into her bed to keep warm.

The brothers named their project in her honour: the Bancroft Project.

The brothers' next project is a heritage house at the corner of Point Grey Road and Alma Street.

The two duplexes at 2030 West Third Ave. are now on the market.

The front duplex has an asking price of \$1.468 million and the rear duplex, a price of \$1.395 million. The front duplex has 1,527 square feet; the rear, 1,364 square feet.

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