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HOMES

Dream home: A \$2 million Hamilton reno designed with 'Reservoir Dogs' in mind

By **Georgie Binks** Special to the Star

Tue., March 9, 2021 | ⌚ 3 min. read

To Hamiltonians they may just look like three incredibly cool dwellings, but these unique homes near Hamilton Harbour had a dark beginning mindful of the movie "Reservoir Dogs."

It's "grungy, creepy, warehouse feel" made architect William Curran immediately think of the 1992 movie, he said. Curran named each home for the film's three characters.





The original building, constructed in 1883 has been through many different incarnations over the years — from a parts manufacturer for the Ford Motor Company to a Prohibition-era liquor warehouse.

That history has included installations of walk-in safes to store money from bootlegging and a ramp for the barrels of booze, pieces of history Curran has been able to work into the homes' designs.

Mr. Orange (1,337 square feet) has a living, dining and kitchen area, master bedroom, den and two private gardens and a two-storey roof “periscope” with a skylight in the den. Mr. Pink (1,416 square feet) has a two-storey foyer tower skylight, kitchen, living and dining room, with skylights over the dining room and a gallery.

The largest unit, Mr. White (1,825 square feet) has a bedroom and bedroom/den, indoor/outdoor shower, large garden, writer's loft with a private roof deck and huge side garden. The ramp is now a gallery to the basement and one of the walk-in safes is a wine cooler.

The three homes completed in 2019 took 18 months to design and build at a cost of \$2 million.

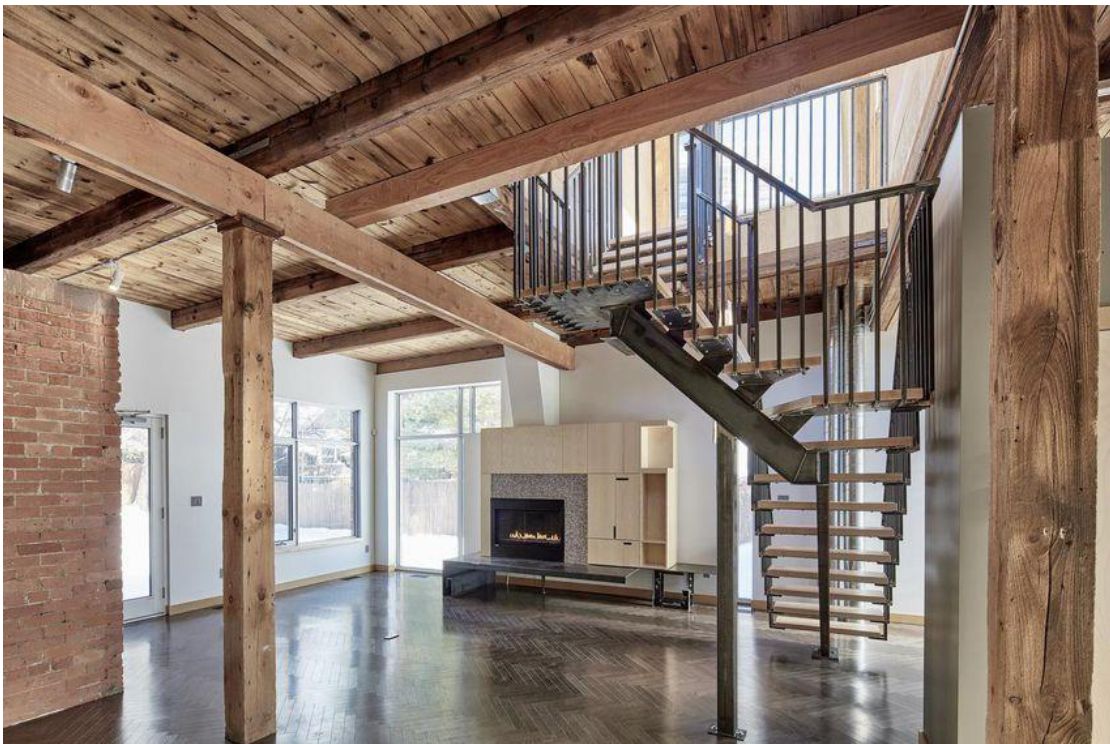
William Curran, principal with Thier and Curran Architects Inc., in Hamilton, answers a few questions about Reservoir Dogs — the homes.



What is the “Reservoir Dogs” influence in the design?

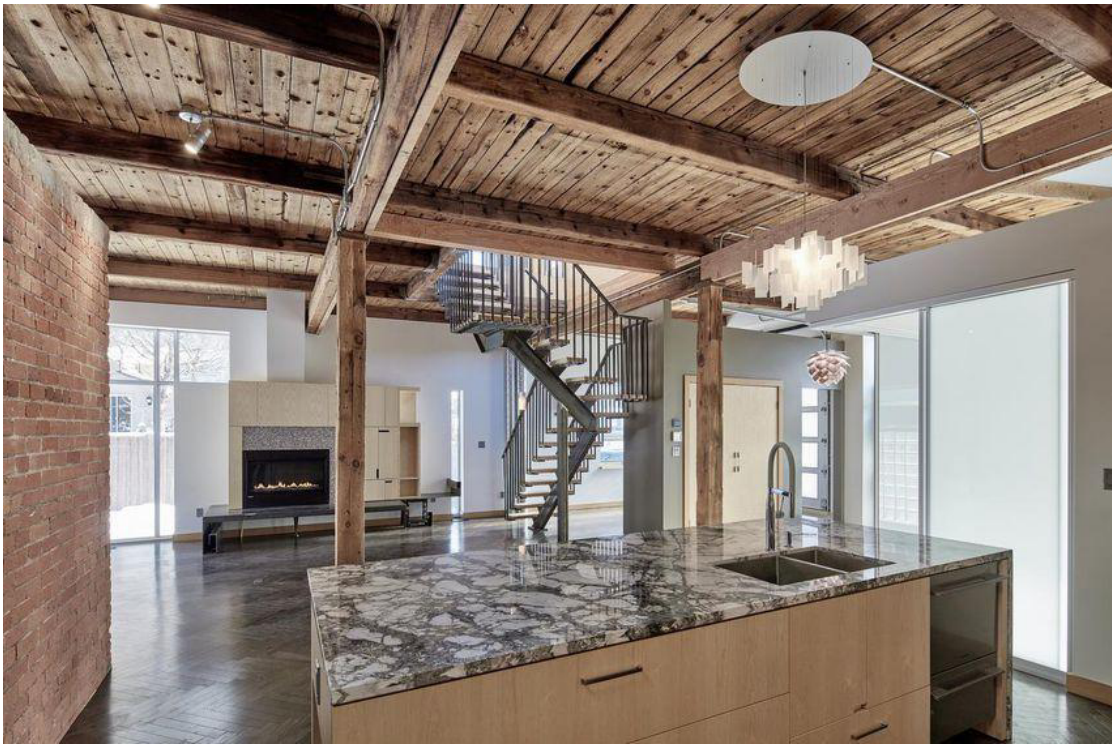
When I first went in, it had this grungy, creepy, warehouse feel to it. My brain took me to “Reservoir Dogs” and when it came time to design it, we decided to give each of the three units the character of one of the movie’s stars.

At its most simplistic we carried the colours through the unit, but we sought to try to capture the personalities and communicate that in each unit without being too over the top.



How does each design convey the three stars?

The size and type of the windows we put in, the finishes inside and the colouration. The white one ended up being lighter, brighter and more open. Mr. Orange ended up having a long narrow hallway, evocative of his nature. He was the police informant, hiding his identity, thus the long narrow corridor. With Mr. Pink, the colour is there but it’s subtle.



What remnants of the past industrial history were retained?

In the eastern part, the exterior brick is all still intact. In Mr. White, there are two walk-in safes we repurposed. The main floor one is a walk-in wine cellar. Mr. White has a ramp that goes down to the basement, you would roll barrels down. The story was it was a bootlegger's shack.



How do you hope your design will influence people in Hamilton.

We're not Toronto and there's a lack of high-quality design here, so we try to make it a little bit funkier. We hope this building with its high-profile location will catch people's attention and make them think about what a design could look like.

We wanted to show there are industrial buildings around Hamilton with the potential for residential. This was an ugly duckling but it's turned into a total landmark.



What challenges did you face?

All the normal bureaucratic challenges which in Hamilton are onerous. Then the building was in worse condition, which you always expect once you open things up and take a close look. We also had an unexpected piece of contamination: someone had dumped a 50-gallon drum of a petrochemical down the soil beside the building. We had to dig out all the contaminated material at significant cost.

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