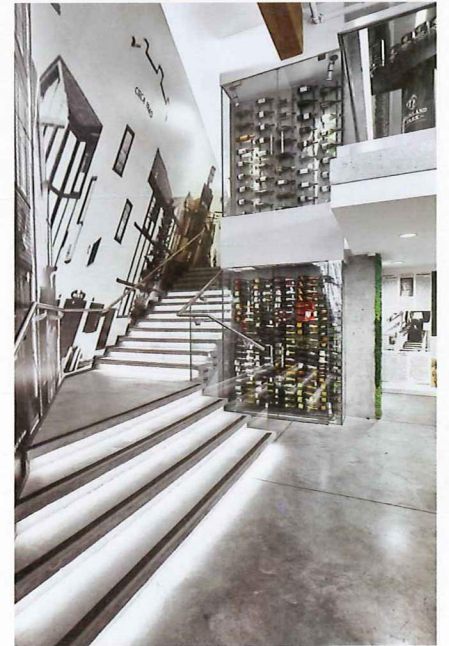
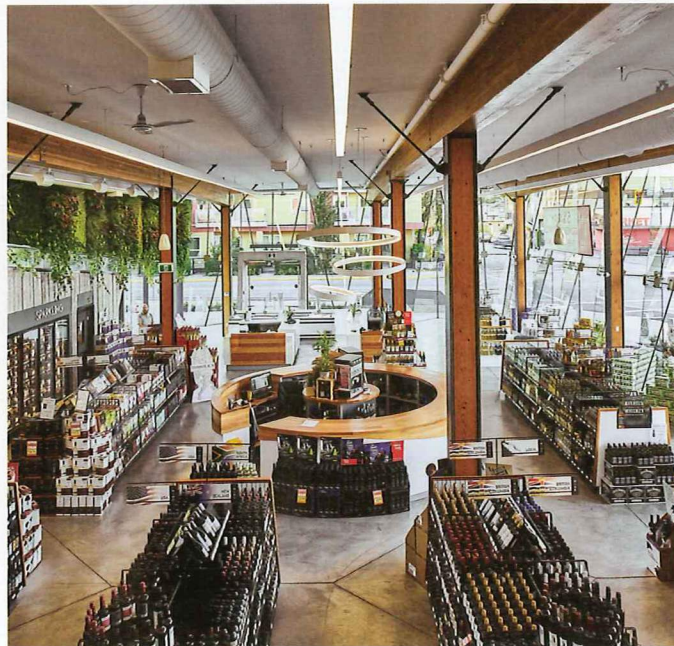




Raise a Glass

This page **The concept for the Tudor House Liquor Store building massing is two interlocking volumes: an elongated glass box for the main retail space; and a faceted opaque block that houses the storage area and service rooms.**



Two retail establishments prove there is such a thing as spirited liquor store design.





This spread **The building form for Lakeview Wine Company's tasting and retail pavilion is a striking wedge shape with an exterior of Japanese 'Shou Sugi Ban' charred cedar, with natural cedar accents used for emphasis and contrast. A glass cube lounge at the end of the tasting room is a focal point, drawing the eye and the visitor through the building. The cube offers panoramic views into the vines and can function as a private tasting room.**

Artfully designed display shelves, several seating areas for tasting, and the abundance of light through those big windows and attractive circular skylights spanning the length of the space, give it an open and welcoming feeling. You don't notice that the finishes are fairly quotidian: from the warm-tinted polished concrete floor to the plain painted-steel structural beams. What you do feel is light and space, and even a bit of art, in the light fixtures by Propeller Design (one of them featuring vintage gas-station beer glasses from the '60s) and LZP, and a fireplace lined in glass mosaic tiles. Particularly striking is the ceiling lined in Douglas fir plywood, cut in random widths and lengths to play up the contrasts in the colour and grain of the boards. "It may be just plywood, but it looks like much more than it is," says Curran.

In Esquimalt, B.C., outside of Victoria, the goals of the owners of Tudor House Liquor Store were broader than just revitalizing the business itself. The part of the small city where the store was to be located hadn't been improved much in the last few years, and they wanted to create something that would bring attention not just to their business, but the neighbourhood.

Owners of several area pubs and restaurants, the clients had admired GBL Architects' design for a theatre lobby built as part of the Vancouver Olympics. "They asked us to come up with something that was visually playful and would create some dynamism in the neighbourhood," principal architect Andrew Emmerson explains.

Taking their cue from the Pacific Ocean shore just a few blocks away, the team came up with a design that is, in essence, an interpretation of a rocky, wooded coastline. Tall, deeply angled planes of glass suggest ocean waves; glulam and natural-wood surfaces and structural posts are trees, and concrete stands in for rocks. There's even a green wall extending along one side, a metaphor for mossy outcrops.

The angular lines and planes repeat in small and large ways inside and out: the edges of the roof overhangs, extensions on either side of the building clad in weathered cedar boards, even the concrete bollards that line the forecourt. Despite its clean open design, there's a feeling of motion about all the angles that's accessible, even fun.

In both cases, the designs have produced successful results far beyond their initial costs. According to Emmerson, "They could have located their store in the midst of Victoria, but they wanted to put it in Esquimalt to revitalize the area, and it's become a bit of a destination."

At Lakeview Wine Company, public response to the new store has been so strong that there's already talk of raising a second building for group tastings and events. "It's a good problem to have," says Curran, "to be so busy you need new space. It proves that good design is good business." ■

By Martha Uniacke Breen

In the hierarchy of retail design, liquor stores rarely rank high on the list. Since the product is often seen as fairly demand-driven, usually cost triumphs over aesthetics; most liquor retail outlets are little more than utilitarian boxes, equipped with gondolas and shelves for bottles and not much else. But a couple of recent projects have bucked that trend, and earned a bountiful harvest for their owners.

The new owners of Lakeview Wine Company's tasting and retail pavilion, just outside Niagara-on-the-Lake, had bought it out of bankruptcy, along with the adjoining vineyard and the doublewide trailer that had been the original store. They approached principal architect Bill Curran of TCA Architects in Hamilton, Ont. "They wanted a significant design to signal the turnaround [from bankruptcy] to people. But they were burdened with a very low capital budget." The goal was to use humble materials in surprisingly effective ways.

First up was to re-site the building at the edge of the vineyard, creating a sense of arrival as you approach. "Because it's set back, we wanted a very simple form that would be striking and impactful from a distance. We were inspired by the simple architecture of the area: sheds, barns, and other low buildings."

From the parking lot, the store has an almost cottagey look. A wooden footbridge over a small stream leads to a cloistered entry porch, with small benches and a pivoting entry door in brilliantly striped zebra-wood. The building itself is an elongated wedge, low at the entry and rising to a grand two-storey-high glass cube at the far end that houses a private tasting area. Most of the side walls are taken up with wide, irregularly spaced windows, guiding the eye towards a dramatic view of the vineyard and the Niagara Escarpment in the distance.