

HOMES

Dream home: Wedge-shaped design and muscle car colours in a Prince Edward County home

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Splashes of muscle-car orange stop Ridge Residence's black siding from completely blending the home into its woodlands property in Prince Edward County.

Thanks to the owner's love of a high-performance cars and their bold colours — as well as the home's unusual wedge shape — Ridge Residence, located along the Murray Canal in the northwest corner of the county, has become something of a local tourist attraction.

While the home was designed by Hamilton architect Bill Curran, homeowner Gary Ridge built most of it.

The 1,440-square-foot residence has one bedroom, bathroom, living and kitchen area around which the home revolves. It also has two dens to accommodate the Ridges' hobbies: Gary's is hot sauce and Carol's is buying and selling stamps. Large windows facing both north and south provide abundant light, plus views of the canal in the front and of the woods behind.

Three other buildings cluster nearby: a garage, a two-storey volumed studio building and a semi-enclosed outdoor sitting room.

Building materials for the home include standard lumber framing, concrete Sonotube foundations, prefinished corrugated metal siding and aluminum windows. Sustainable features are instantaneous water heating, bamboo flooring and locally-sourced materials.

Ridge Residence took two years to design and build its four structures and was completed in 2016.

Architect Bill Curran, principal at Thier and Curran Architects Inc. in Hamilton, Ont., answers a few questions about Ridge Residence:



What inspired your design for this home?

The Ridges wanted a small, simple, economical retirement home they could self-build. So, a simple, compact rectangular plan emerged.

They also wanted something unique, so we explored ways to break the box and add some visual drama, hence the sloping front wall, which created a wedge shape with the sloping roof. Pushing the windows back into a slot created additional visual impact.

Then, we suggested lining the slot with a 1970s muscle car paint colour, and the orange spoke to Gary's car obsession.



What were his thoughts in selecting the black siding?

The lot is quite high-profile along the expressway and facing onto the Murray Canal, and they didn't want it to be too obtrusive. From my many canoe trips, I knew moose and bear with their black coats blend in with the forest and its strong dappled shadows. Hence the black to help the house disappear back into the woods around it.



What were the challenges in designing and building the home?

There actually were no challenges, oddly. The Ridges were great collaborators, we had a wonderful dialogue as the design evolved, they were decisive and very thoughtful about every aspect.



What was it like to have the owner/resident build the home?

As a retired construction foreman, Gary is very knowledgeable and very particular — but that never seemed a challenge. We kept the house simple, but he wanted it unusual so the wedge form was something he embraced readily.

'A modern barn'

Homeowner Gary Ridge describes the creation of his contemporary house.



What did you want with this house design?

We don't like regular, mainstream housing. We just always felt it was built for other people and you had to fit yourself into it. We didn't want a big house. We didn't want any trim, no eavestrough, just straight floors, straight walls and glass.

I told Bill to make it look like a barn — a modern barn. We like the styles of Frank Gehry, Scandinavian architects and Todd Saunders who built Fogo Island.



Was it difficult to construct with the angles?

Not for me. I built this with a helper — we did everything and we did it all by hand. We didn't use any machines. We put the tresses up on the roof by ourselves, we didn't use a crane.

If you break down the components of building a house, they're all regular building techniques, they're just put in different spots. I really enjoyed it so I didn't look at any of it as a dirty job.

The most difficult part of it was working around the tourists. They'd ask, 'What are you doing?' or 'Why is that shaped like that?' It's been five years and we still have an audience.