

Life by design

Darren Sanger-Smith

Designer and principal,
Structured Creations

By Susanne Hasulo

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Structured Creations is a design firm specializing in custom home designs. For the past 12 years, owner Darren Sanger-Smith and his team of designers have created custom homes and other residential properties throughout Ontario. The company also offers a full range of design services for interior remodeling and renovations.

Describe your business philosophy.

I've always believed that everybody should have the right, if they care about it, to have good design. We're dedicated to providing innovative yet sensible design solutions. There are a lot of projects that we do that are small, and our fees are minimum. We make them palatable so that the client can afford to use our services. I care about those kinds of projects as much as doing a \$2 million custom home.

What does custom design mean to you?

If I design a house for a client, I sit down with them to understand how they live in the house, how they work within it, eat and entertain, what their kids' needs are. I take all that, plus images and ideas they like, and then with my experience take into consideration things like sunrise and sunset, landscaping, trees, the adjacent houses. I put it all into a packaged, built form for them so they can visualize it and see it. The space would be designed to exactly the way you want it to be.

Favourite Burlington architecture?

Burlington is a beautiful city from my standpoint. I love the downtown core, the old part, west of Brant Street between Caroline and Central High School. I drive through there all the time and see what people are doing. I go to places like Roseland and love some of the old houses. There's so much potential there to make it a real beautiful downtown core. People are fixing up their houses; they understand the value of it.

Are you ever *not* designing?

Anyone who knows me knows that I always have about five pencils in my pocket. I am constantly sketching. I'm a bit old school: I still do all my designs on a drafting table with a pencil, T-square and trace paper. It doesn't go on a computer until we've worked it all out perfectly.

Future goals?

We're doing some Internet marketing right now to grow the business outside of Ontario (we do stuff all over from London to Ottawa). I'd like to start getting into the U.S. We've also done a couple projects down in the Caribbean. You don't ever want to be so big that you lose the customization or the passion for the work. I'd rather stay small and do 20 projects a year and have three people in the office than have 40 people in the office doing 140 projects a year and not be able to have that personal touch into the project when I can. We haven't reached that point yet.

Visit Structured Creations' Dream Home at the 2009 National Home Show, see www.structuredcreations.com for more information.

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