



## Z Axis

It seems fitting that Toronto-based Z Axis Design would take its name from the Cartesian coordinate that represents the third dimension of space measurement.

Founded by husband and wife team, Paul Fantauzzi and Esther Cheong, the residential design firm specializes in not only providing comprehensive design, but also construction services to bring the two-dimensional plans to life.

Z Axis is one of a growing number of firms which use a design/build model approach. This enables them to align the design process with the building process and allows for greater control. With many years of experience and a family background in construction, it seemed like a natural next step for Fantauzzi to play both architect and production manager. He oversees every step in the construction of the home or renovation and is on-site every day.

"If a designer puts something on paper and at the end of the day, be in that space when it's being erected and participate through that process, you are going to have a much better end product," he says.

This is especially true when the firm's design aesthetic is minimalist. In the uncluttered, minimalist environment, there is no room for error.

"In a modern house, there is nowhere to hide the mistakes," Cheong says.

All aspects of the design must be well planned and well executed. Cheong's belief in good proportions and detail are so strong that Z Axis is starting to provide custom furniture services, where pieces are specifically designed and produced for an individual space. This ensures absolute cohesion and balance of the elements.





In 2003, Fantauzzi and Cheong transformed an old 1950s bungalow to double as both the Z Axis offices and a place to call home. Nestled in an established neighbourhood with sweeping views of Lake Ontario, the couple's affinity to the minimalist design aesthetic is evident.

The elimination of walls, creation of open spaces, use of clean lines, simplification of forms, neutral colour palette and balanced proportions are a signature of the firm's design style.

For inspiration, the couple looks to architect and engineer Santiago Calatrava and his use of white to emphasize form and the relationship between his designs and nature.

"Most people's homes are introverted. We find it's really important to have that immediate connection to the outdoors," Cheong says.

In many Z Axis projects, as they have done in their own home, the entire back walls are removed and replaced with a wall of glass windows. In doing so, it allows the eye to be carried out beyond the end of the house and extends the living space backwards. It also gives nature a chance to become the focal point.

Against the clean palette of the white walls, the windows can let in the soft blue of a morning sky, the rich shades of green from the trees or the tangerine fire of a sunset.

For more information, visit [www.zaxisdesign.ca](http://www.zaxisdesign.ca).

words: Susan Yu

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