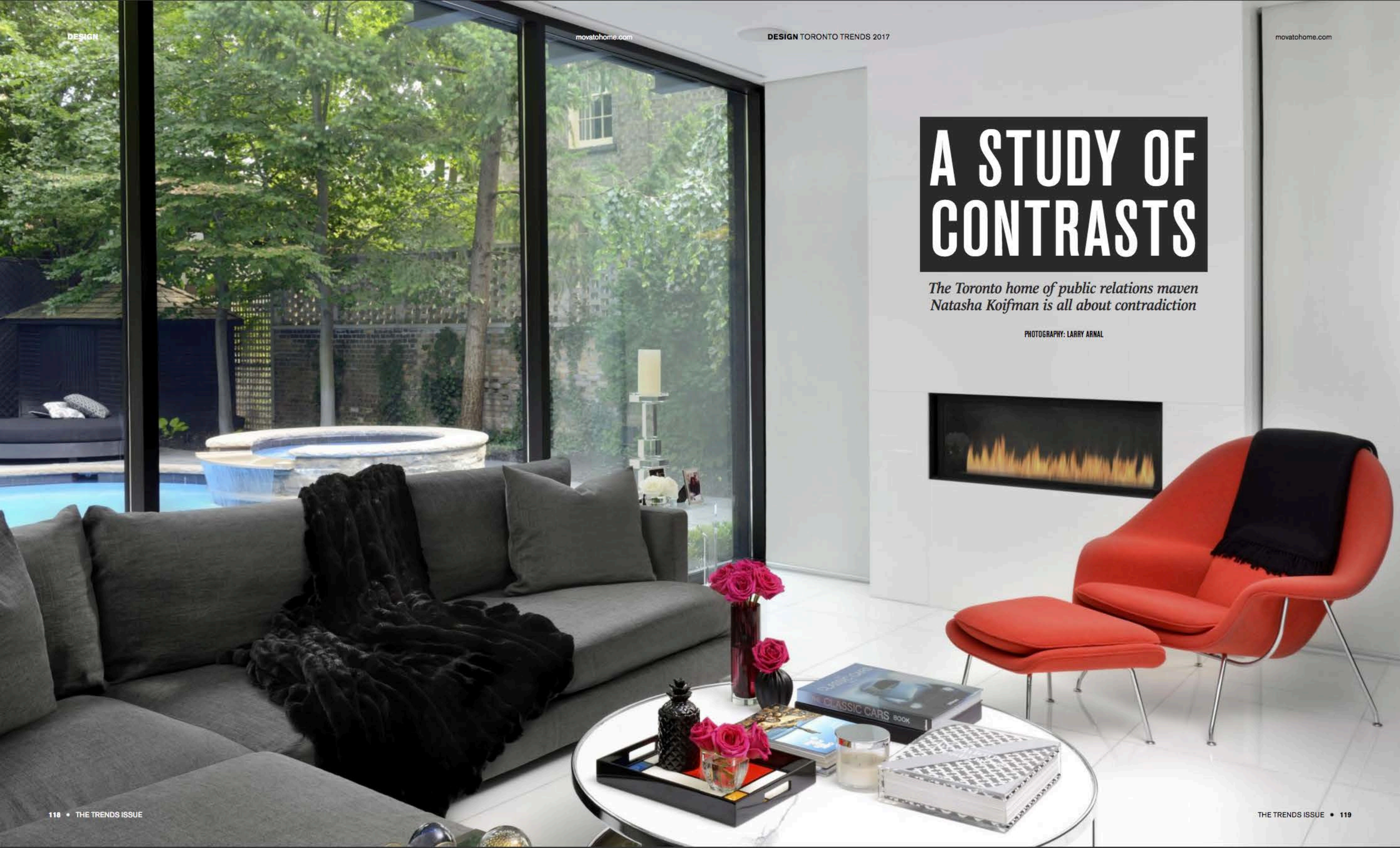


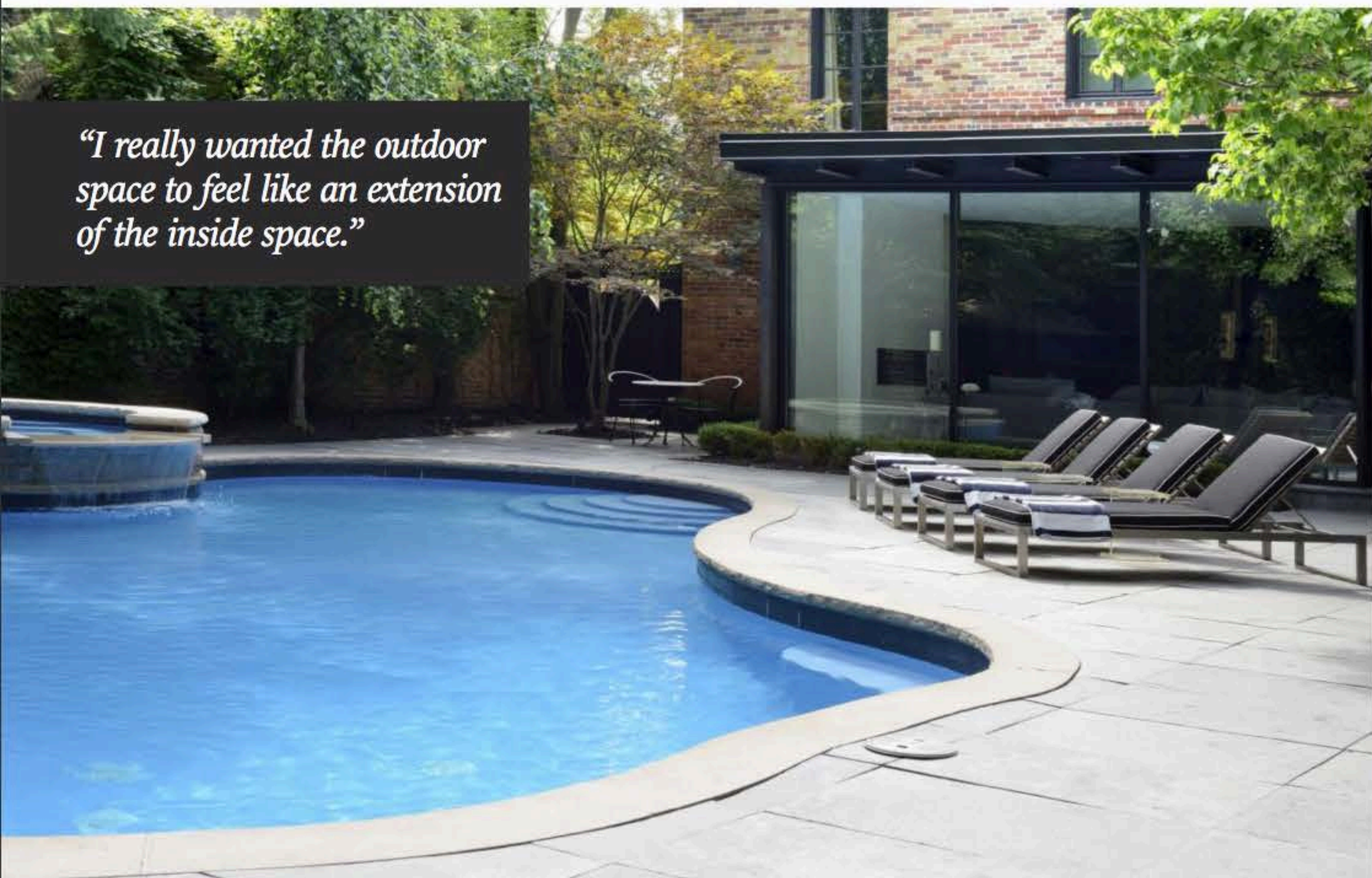
A STUDY OF CONTRASTS

The Toronto home of public relations maven Natasha Koifman is all about contradiction

PHOTOGRAPHY: LARRY ARNAL



“I really wanted the outdoor space to feel like an extension of the inside space.”



The area around the pool was redone, incorporating the extension that was built on to the back of the house.

IT HAS LONG BEEN ESTABLISHED that opposites attract. It's a law of nature, at least the human kind. Contradictions, on the other hand, fall into a whole other realm. These statements of opposition – if graceful – drift away from the rules of law to boldly stand as artful, even whimsical, displays of good taste.

For proof, walk into Natasha Koifman's Toronto home. There's a hint of contradiction in almost every room. Some are a result of design, others a reflection of the owner herself, an impression that she has instinctively embedded throughout her living space.

“I'm an introvert who lives an extrovert's life,” Natasha says, admitting to a fundamental personal contradiction as she attempts to

explain why her home is so important to her. The president of NKPR, a public relations firm with offices in Toronto and New York, she leads a busy life, and relishes the calm that her home provides.

It's a stately older home in the heart of central Toronto, but she has given it a modern edge that has transformed the space into her personal oasis through the use of art and furnishings. She has also completed work on an extension that connects the interior to the garden and pool area at the back.

“I really wanted the outdoor space to feel like an extension of the inside space,” Natasha says.



The stainless-steel countertop and waterfall island stand out in the all-white kitchen.

Now, she finds herself enjoying the start of each day with the tranquility this new space generates. “What I love is waking up and, first thing in the morning, I sit by the fireplace. The first 30 minutes, I sit and look out. It makes my heart peaceful,” she says.

The space, which includes a den with a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows and a linear gas fireplace, has also transformed the kitchen, and floods the home's main floor with natural light.

“I suffer a bit from light disorder, so I really wanted a bright space,” she says.

Adding to the brightness is Natasha's insistence that all the rooms be in white – from the large floor-to-ceiling marble slab

fireplace surround in the den, to the kitchen and the elegant curved wall that frames the staircase.

And, almost as an aside, she explains how her need for all this brightness stands in contrast to her wardrobe, which is exclusively black.

The all-white kitchen makes a bold statement. It is only when she explains the origins of its design that the contradiction of this room comes into sharper view. The kitchen in her previous house, she explains, was all black lacquer. When it came to designing this one, it was straightforward: “I wanted the opposite.”





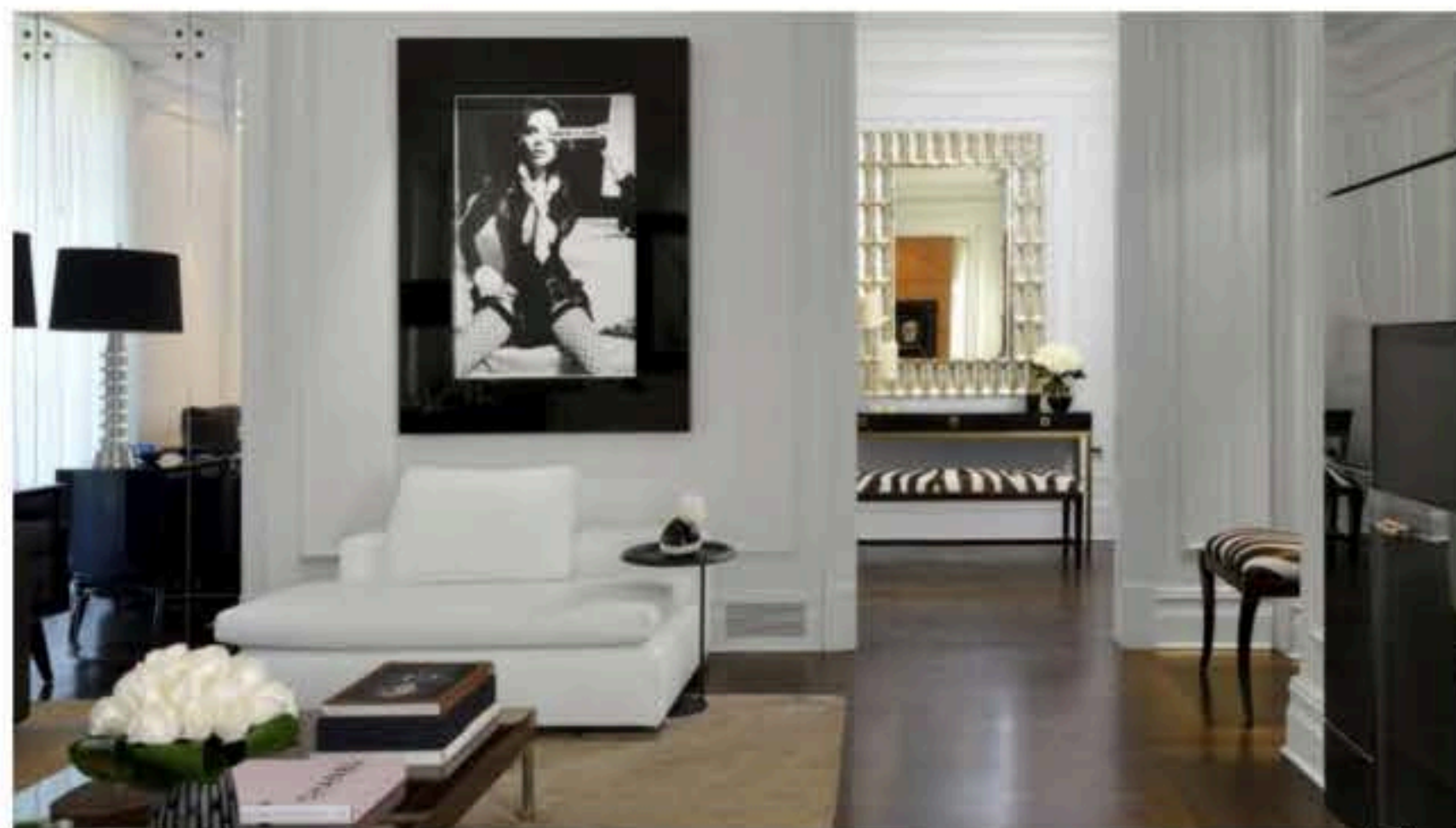
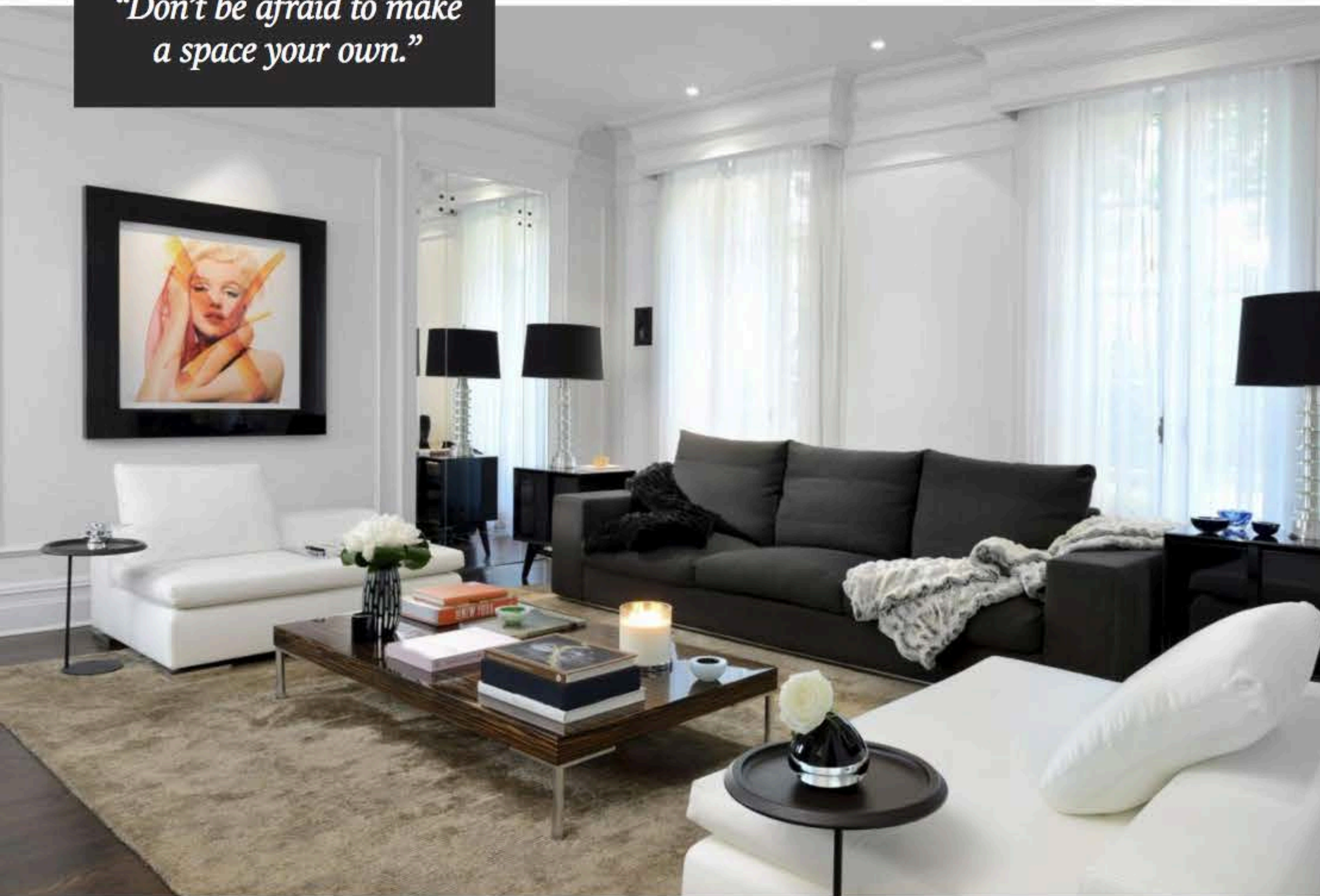
The large solid wood dining table was moved into the oval room through the opening in the wall before the large floor-to-ceiling window was installed. The floors are made of European walnut. B&B Italia chairs: Studio B.



"I use almost every inch of my home. This is a home I would love to grow old in."

A black and white photo taken by Canadian celebrity photographer George Pimentel of the paparazzi at the Cannes Film Festival – set in a black frame with a white mat – hangs above a clear acrylic table from South Hill Home. Bowl: Avenue Road; ottoman: L'Atelier. The staircase curls elegantly upward toward the second floor. The original banister and treads stand in marked contrast to the walls.

“Don’t be afraid to make a space your own.”



(Top) Two iconic black and white photographs, sourced at the Izzy Gallery in Toronto, are displayed in the living room: A shot of actress Marilyn Monroe taken by photographer Bert Stern in June 1962 during a photo shoot commissioned by Vogue magazine six weeks before the actress’s death. The orange X was made by Monroe herself on a contact sheet, indicating that she did not like the image and did not want it used in the magazine.

(Left) A shot of former singer and celebrity Victoria Beckham by photographer Ellen von Unwerth, taken in 2003.



Wood and art are prominently displayed in a small office. A piece titled LOVE by American visual artist Peter Tunney is on one wall, while a Damien Hirst diamond-dusted skull is on the other.

The only element that her kitchen shares with the previous one is the stainless steel counters. It’s a component, she explains, that is very practical, not to mention aesthetically stunning in this new context.

Natasha laughs when asked if she enjoys her highly functional kitchen. She does, but she doesn’t cook. She loves to entertain, however.

“It’s a great house to host in. I either have really large parties – 400 people – or host something very intimate for eight to 10 people,” she says. Again, both extremes comfortably co-exist.

The look for the home was the result of the collaboration between Natasha and Toronto designer Connie Braemer.

“I wanted that New York townhouse idea,” the homeowner says. “I had a sense of what the space needed to be like.” And Braemer was able to capture what she was looking for. “She really gets my aesthetic,” Natasha says. “She can draw out what you want.”

In addition to the interiors, the backyard is much used, she says. “I use almost every inch of my home. This is a home I would love to grow old in.”

She thinks back to when she bought the house on a quiet dead-end street in 2009. She immediately recognized its “amazing bones,” but they were “covered up with a dark masculine aesthetic.”

As she looks at it today, with its bold use of iconic photographs, including shots of actress Marilyn Monroe and former singer and celebrity Victoria Beckham, Natasha offers a piece of advice: “Don’t be afraid to make a space your own.”

And don’t worry if that includes a few contradictions. Statements of opposition have style. ☛