



## Creative Spaces: The Toronto Oasis of Michael Budman and Diane Bald

Posted by Elana Safronsky Tuesday, May 10, 2011 9:05 AM

**The co-founder of Roots and the design director share a “magical oasis” in the middle of Toronto -- a beautifully proportioned home built on eight lots that marries the glamour of 1940s Hollywood with the timeless elegance of Paris.**



By: *Rana Florida*, [Creative Class Group](#); [Special Contributor to HGTV.ca](#)

Photography by: [Harry Gils](#)

**Who:** Michael Budman, an outdoorsman and avid hockey player as well as the co-founder of [Roots](#), Canada's leading lifestyle brand known around the world for its quality leather goods, apparel, accessories and home furnishings. Diane Bald is a multifaceted creator -- an architect by trade, Diane also designs everything from handbags to furniture, and is the design director at Roots.

**What:** A Georgian revival-style home built in 1936, with an addition put on in 1957. The home is approximately 8,000 square feet (including the basement), and boasts seven bedrooms, eight bathrooms a classical oversize swimming pool, full size ice skating rink, and outdoor fire pit.

**Where:** Toronto.

**Why:** Because Michael and Diane have been at the forefront of Canadian and international taste-making and their home is a fascinating anthology of design and style.



*Diane Bald and Michael Budman*

" We have collected books for as long as I can remember. I had all my art and architecture books from university and Michael had a wonderful collection from Paris. I can't think of a trip that we take where we don't come home with three or four books. Michael's brother [Jim Budman] bought us the personal library of [Henry Youngman](#) after he passed away, as well as the countless sports, travel, biographies and design books that we cherish. I take many photographs of my work and our family travels, I also like to document events. In this age of digital photography the only way to really view pictures is to put them in book form. ." --***Diane Bald***

***Rana Florida: Your home is situated on 8 lots. How did you find such expansive land in the middle of the city?***

**Diane Bald:** My mother Renee Bald found the house. We weren't officially looking to move but she insisted we see this. I took Michael and it was the first house he really liked. I had my mother write up the offer and I subtly dropped the line, 'Why don't we put an offer in just for fun,' as all offers were due on Monday at 2:00. We never really thought we'd get the house, but as it turns out the owner knew Michael as he had coached his son's hockey team and he said, "I want Budman to have it." So out of eight builders who put bids in, we were the only family that had plans to live there and not subdivide the land or tear down the house. It was an unexpected opportunity, we took the leap and we're so happy we did. We bought the home in 1998.



***RF: Your house is more than seventy-five years old. How much renovation did you have to do to bring it up to date?***

**DB:** We did extensive work without affecting the integrity of the original house. The bone structure of the house was amazing—well proportioned rooms, high ceilings, excellent flow of space, beautiful trim work which we kept and added to where needed, and once the curtains were all taken down, large window openings were revealed. The house was completely carpeted so there were only wood sub floors; it was a gem that was ready to be cut, polished and set.

**DB:** We were lucky that we had a long closing on the house and Michael and I would go there after work and spend hours just getting the feel of the house. We had time to design and redesign the space before we took it over so that when we closed we went right to work and within four months we had finished the renovation...new heating, new plumbing and wiring, wood floors, radiant marble floors, new bathrooms, and demolition of a lot of walls, reconfiguring many of the spaces.

**DB:** Wherever we could, we reused and recycled windows from one place to the next, creating interior light wells, and we reused the antique light fixtures that we were lucky enough to inherit. It wasn't a "lets tear it down mentality," which so many people are doing nowadays... It was more about, how can we give this wonderful piece of architecture a freshness without ruining the integrity and at the same time make it work for our family.



*Dining room*

**DB:** We wanted to heighten the door openings on the main floor but loved the existing doors and wanted to use them, so we added [transoms](#) to achieve taller openings while recycling the existing doors and trim.

**DB:** There were also amazing original windows which were 12 over 12 -- 12 panes of glass over 12 panes of glass in a double hung window. It is pretty rare to see a double hung window of that size and it must have been considered a very large and unusual window opening in 1936 when the house was built. We didn't want to cover the windows with curtains or blinds; we wanted the house to be full of light. Michael's brother [Jim Budman](#) collects [Higgins glass](#) and came up with window installations using Higgins six inch rondelles that give us privacy and amazing light and shadow when the sun shines through. A beautiful way to integrate art and function.



**FR:** *You've published your own books, including one on the small lake house you designed for Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta Jones. Is your love for books the reason for the floor to ceiling built-in bookshelves in the dining room?*

**DB:** We could never live without our books. Books are knowledge and inspiration for what we do and we both love to be surrounded by them. They are a wonderful resource to have right at your fingertips!! Due to the abundance of books we have collected we needed another room to put them in and the dining room had 2 great walls which were conducive to book shelves. The books really enhance that space, making it warm and soulful.



*Entrance: the round table with the circle base was designed in the '30s by [Jacques Henri Lartigue](#), a famous photographer. This was an edition made by Ecart.*

**RF:** *Who did you look to for design inspiration? For instance, were your floors inspired by Paul Williams?*

**DB:** To Michael and I the house always felt like a 1940s Hollywood home so that was our design inspiration. It hit us the moment we walked into the space. We've always had a love for supper clubs; we love the look of the black and white marble floors from the Brown Derby in LA. And yes, we love the houses of [Paul Williams](#), who was the leading Los Angeles architect of that era.

**RF:** *Your home feels like old Hollywood glamour meets Parisian flair meets mid century modern. Does that sound about right?*

**DB:** Well yes, I worked for [Andrée Putman](#) in Paris, who brought all of those wonderful editions from the '30s back to life: Eileen Grey, René Herbst, and Jean-Michel Frank just to name a few. In the '80s Michael had a wonderful apartment in Paris which Andrée designed. Many of the pieces we have were designed for that space, and we have lived with them ever since. They transcend time and space, it's hard to believe they are nearly 30 years old and look totally timeless as if they had been designed yesterday. To me, that's the true test of good design—how well it ages.



*Douglas Coupland for Roots Home Bulls eye table; Murano chandelier*

**RF:** *You clearly take your time sourcing furniture, a lot of which is vintage; how do you find such unique and interesting pieces?*

**DB:** We collect furniture from many decades as well as a lot of [Roots home](#) pieces, which are constantly evolving to our personal needs. We like to collect interesting furniture for inspiration in my design work as well as pieces for our home. We travel extensively and lived in Paris in the '80s, where we were exposed to many great collectors of art deco furniture as well as the famous Clignancourt flea market. We were in the right place at the right time and found some extraordinary pieces. Some come from the flea market and some were inherited.

**DB:** To our amazement, the Murano chandelier came with the house. It was purchased by the original owners of the house, who bought it on their honeymoon in Venice. We couldn't believe it when we saw it and you can imagine our surprise when it was left in the house. They knew it was an integral part of the space.





**RF:** *The bar reminds me of the Polo Lounge in the Beverly Hills hotel. Is this your favorite spot to entertain?*

**DB:** Michael loves the polo lounge at the Beverly Hills Hotel from trips he used to take there with his father when he was growing up. At the time, not too many people were putting bars into their homes but we thought it would be a great hub for entertaining. We recreated the famous booth number 3...with a twist. Although we didn't want to promote drinking in our home as our children grew up, it was a space that doubled as an intimate dining room for the 4 of us, or as a place to entertain when we had parties. It certainly is the focal point of any party we have.



*Kitchen*

**DB:** I like moving and changing things around in the house, sometimes I'll throw a small party around the table in our front hall; other times we'll do a dinner in the kitchen and create a bistro feel with the blackboard menu and long counter to serve on. The house has a lot of personality and it has a familiar, comfortable feeling which people love to come back to.



***RF:*** Love the *His and Hers* bathrooms outside the kitchen. Were those an addition?

**DB:** This space was the original kitchen, which was really just a cooks kitchen...It was too small for our family so we turned it into the powder room and thought it would be fun to do a his and hers bathroom with a shared sink.



*"Hers" bathroom and shared sink*

**RF:** *I understand you've designed a lot of your furniture for your home as well as the collection for Roots Home. Can you share your insights on furniture design as well as the Roots Home collaboration with the author and artist, [Douglas Copeland](#)?*

**DB:** The leather armchair inspired by the thirties is a central piece for [Roots home](#) and our own home. The original shoe departments at our stores had leather club chairs and people liked sitting in them so much that we started to get requests to buy them, and thus started Roots Home. Being in the leather business, we have access to the best leather in the world so it was a natural. We're proud that we make all our furniture in Toronto using only the finest materials and have a beautiful showroom at our [head office on Castlefield](#). We have an extensive collection of timeless couches and club chairs as well as organic bedding, towels, and blankets. We work closely with designers and do a lot of custom design.



**DB:** We were lucky to collaborate with [Douglas Coupland](#) last Spring on a collection of clothing, small leather goods and furniture. He is a brilliant, prolific artist/author and it was an amazing experience to work closely with him. He created a limited edition bulls eye table which was a big success. Great design at a fair price.... We hope to continue our working relationship and do more furniture in the future.



*Douglas Coupland for Roots Home Bulls eye tables*

**RF:** *What is your favorite room in the house? What is the most used room in the house?*

**DB:** love our kitchen but have to say that we use all the rooms on the main floor equally. In all of the homes we have lived in I have always put my office in the living room because I don't like the idea of one of the nicest rooms in a house never being used, which is typically the case in most homes. I put my large drafting table there to ground the room and bring life to it. It doubles as a living room as well and as a music room for entertaining. We have his and hers studies which I love....my room is full of my art and my personality and Michael's is full of the things that are near and dear to him.



**DB:** The old illuminated globe is also a vintage piece from Paris which was done as a limited edition for Henry Ford in the 1930s using car chassis. Very few were created and there happened to be one left over from the original production which we were fortunate to get.



**DB:** I think that the eclectic mix of furniture makes for an interesting living space and reflects the personalities of the household. Nothing is too precious, it all feels lived in and used, that's why people are so comfortable in our home...it's like being a good curator...How to mix it up and create something with personality, a space which becomes a great backdrop for our family and friends.



***RF: Your backyard is an urban oasis with an oversize swimming pool, full size ice skating rink, and outdoor fire pit. Do they get used often?***

**DB:** We do a lot of entertaining in the garden as it is a great place to bring people together. The garden is a magical oasis in the city. We love sports and have a hockey rink in the garden which gets used every day in the winter by Michael and his team mates. I think we are probably the only people who use their garden all year round....there isn't a day that goes by when we're not in the garden.





*Framed mirrors reflect the pool in the pool-side lounge*

**DB:** We've started a vegetable garden which I'm hoping to expand this year. I like the idea of growing our own food since we are fortunate to have so much outdoor space. The original owner had created vegetable gardens and we inherited their ruins, so I'm happy to be doing something that she had initiated so long ago. Some days it's really hard to leave the garden....you actually forget that you're living in the city.



*Garden wall art comes from the facade of a department store in New York city, bought from the collection of [Jim Budman](#).*