

# HOUSE & HOME

## Before & After

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**Smitten Kitchen: DEB PERELMAN'S Must-have Recipes**

Architecture **MOSHE SAFDIE** | Design **RICHARD OUELLETTE and MAXIME VANDAL**  
Photography **ANDRÉ RIDER** | Text **SIMONE OLIVERO**

# STYLE & SUBSTANCE

Les Ensembliers renovates an elegant pied-à-terre in an iconic architectural complex.



The low-profile furniture doesn't interfere with the view of the river and downtown Montreal. Custom **armchairs**, Les Ensembliers; framed **art** by Jean-Paul Riopelle, Galerie Simon Blais.

Produced by Stacy Begg

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Richard Ouellette (left) and Maxime Vandal of Les Ensembliers.

**L**IKE A SET OF BLOCKS stacked on the bank of the St. Lawrence River, Habitat 67 isn't just an apartment complex, it's part of Montreal history. Built in 1967 as part of Expo 67, the unique Brutalist structure was Moshe Safdie's thesis project while studying architecture at McGill University. Moshe, who later went on to design the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and the awe-inspiring Jewel Changi Airport in Singapore, had a vision for dense living quarters in the heart of the city that would still offer a suburban sense of privacy and space. Constructed on Cité-du-Havre, an artificial peninsula, Habitat 67 is composed of prefabricated concrete blocks arranged to create 148 residences. Instead of a tall tower with long corridors, blocks are stacked lengthwise and connect through outdoor passageways that weave through landscaped gardens. "They're like little houses in disguise," says Richard Ouellette of Les Ensembliers.

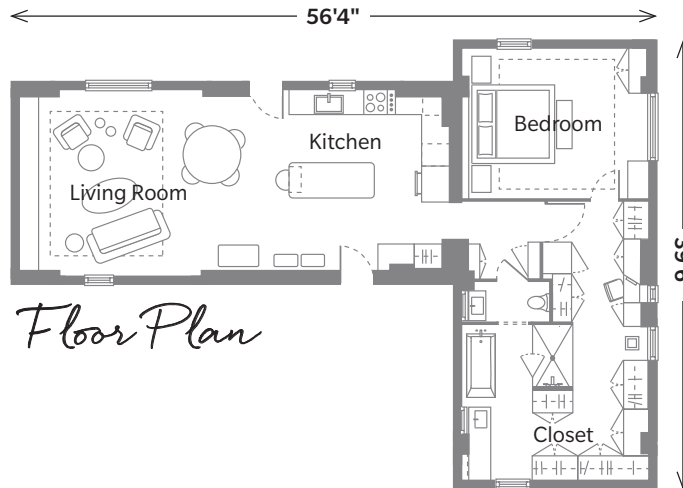


Richard and partner Maxime Vandal were given carte blanche by their client to transform the two-block, 1,300-square-foot unit into a sleek pied-à-terre. (She has a place outside Montreal with her husband, but often stays in the city when she's working.) Richard and Maxime stripped the two-bedroom unit down to its concrete shell and rebuilt it as a one-bedroom dwelling with a large custom closet to accommodate the client's extensive wardrobe. "One cube is for living and entertaining, and the other is a private sanctuary," says Richard.

In the main cube, hard surfaces are balanced with a soft plaster finish on the walls and materials such as velvet and bouclé. Accessories were sourced from local artisans whose work embraces the nostalgic spirit of Habitat 67 while furniture was kept low and curved to maintain flow. "We treated this project a little like a boat," says Maxime. "Every inch was well thought out to maximize the experience."

**TOP:** The leather and wood dining chairs are a nod to the boats in the nearby port. **Articulated scence** (far right), Workstead; **sofa** (left), Arteriors; **dining chairs**, Artemest; **floor tile**, Ciot; **dining table**, framed **art** (on credenza), Kelli.

**LEFT AND OPPOSITE:** "The curved island and minimalist cabinets blend and give the feeling of something more open," says Maxime of the kitchen. **Marble scence** (on wall), Allied Maker; **faucet**, Brizo.



**HABITAT 67**  
**2600 AVENUE**  
**PIERRE-DUPOY,**  
**MONTREAL**

**ARCHITECT:**

Moshe Safdie

**COMPLETION DATE:**

1967

**MANAGEMENT**  
**COMPANY:**

Société en Commandite  
 Complexe d'Habitation 67

**NUMBER OF**  
**FLOORS/UNITS:**

12 floors, 354 stacked  
 blocks, 148 units

**AVERAGE PRICE:**

Approx. \$768/sq.ft.

**UNIT SIZES:**

624–3,000 sq.ft.

**MAINTENANCE FEES:**

Approx.  
 \$936–\$4,500/month

**AMENITIES:**

Private shuttle to city  
 centre, 24-hour doorman,  
 tennis courts and mail  
 delivery door service

**STORAGE UNITS:**

One per residence

**PARKING:**

Indoor and outdoor  
 parking lots

**OCCUPANCY:**

Two, three and four-  
 bedroom units are  
 currently on the market



**BOTTOM RIGHT:** “In the closet hallway, an angled wall next to the window has a mirror that pivots to create a vanity where the client can do her makeup,” says Maxime. *Custom chair, Les Ensembliers.*



## WHY SHE CHOSE IT

**A SLICE OF HISTORY:** “Our client enjoys the benefit of the city, and the privacy and beauty of the grounds, plus, she’s living in a landmark building,” says Richard.

**PET-FRIENDLY:** “The cubes are connected by exterior walkways and lots of green space, so it’s ideal for her dog,” says Maxime.

**PRIVATE VERSUS PUBLIC SPACE:** “There’s a secret door in front of the principal bedroom that can be closed off to completely separate the public entertaining space from the client’s private sanctuary,” says Maxime.

Elements like the sconce are repeated in the dining area to marry the spaces. *Articulated sconce, Workstead; candlesticks by Fabrique Déco, La Ferme Humminghill.*



**“ONE CUBE IS FOR LIVING AND ENTERTAINING, AND THE OTHER IS HER PRIVATE SANCTUARY”**

— *Richard Ouellette, designer*



A wood-paneled antechamber leads to the closet, bathroom and bedroom area, which has a moody palette accented with blond wood and plush rugs. “It gives the sensation of being its own little hideaway,” says Maxime. “It’s that place where you read your book and wind down at the end of the day.”

At the big reveal, the client was brought to tears when she saw the rejuvenated condo. “She could feel the experience of Moshe Safdie’s vision of the space,” says Richard. “It’s warm and feminine with a vintage Italian vibe that feels respectful of the architecture.” Adds Maxime: “We modernized the space but also brought back its spirit.”

**TOP LEFT:** “We created little moments of Shaker style to add texture in the closet, but it’s all simple and clean-lined, using the same material,” says Maxime. *Custom closet design, Les Ensembliers; rug, The Red Carpet & Rug Company.*

**RIGHT:** In the principal bathroom, Maxime and Richard transformed a niche in the original concrete wall casing into shelving for decorative *objets*. *Flush-mount light fixtures, Luminaire Authentik; wall tile, Ramacieri Soligo.*

