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PHOTOS BY (Tomasz Majcherczyk)

## Home of the Week: An artist's palette of spaces

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**240 STERLING RD., TORONTO**

**Asking price: \$1.375-million**

**Lot size: 30- by 117-feet**

**Taxes: \$5,769**

**Agents: Jill and Bill Parlee (Chestnut Park Real Estate Ltd.) and Don Mulholland (Bosley Real Estate Ltd.)**

### The back story

Kent Monkman bought a small factory building near Bloor and Landsdowne for two key reasons: in the early months of 2008, the internationally acclaimed multimedia artist had run out of space in the storefront on Christie Street, where previously he had been living and working. "I had five assistants and we were on top of each other," says Mr. Monkman whose latest show, *Casualties of Modernity*, opens Friday at the Denver Art Museum. "I had to move to a bigger place to accommodate the work."

After months of searching, Mr. Monkman found 240 Sterling Rd., a 3,300-square-foot building located on a street that was also home to a car detailing shop, a chocolate factory and a sprinkling of early-20th century workers' cottages. Formerly the workshop of landscape architect Terry McGlade, it was an industrial space already given to the production of beauty. The 28-foot wide property, for which he originally paid \$620,000, came with two large skylights, a mezzanine loft and a large parking pad. But best of all, it came with 16-foot ceilings.

"It wasn't going to be a stretch to turn it into my art studio," says Mr. Monkman. Or so he thought.

The original plan had been to make Sterling Road a work space, with Mr. Monkman committed to living elsewhere. But in the fall of 2008 the recession had hit and Mr. Monkman had to scale back. The decision was to create a live/work space instead, and so for nearly six months the building lay empty while Mr. Monkman raised money for the renovation and found the right architect.

## What's new

Toronto designer Jason Halter, a former associate of Bruce Mau Design, worked together with architect Anthony Provenzano in carrying out the renovation that commenced in 2009 and lasted six months.

The entire space was transformed, starting with the infrastructure, which had to be modified to allow for the flexibility of a live/work environment.

An old furnace was ripped out and replaced with a more efficient heating system. The original garage door was removed to make way for a new commercial door-and-window system that instantly made the interior brighter. Mr. Halter also removed a dropped ceiling and replaced it with the addition of a large skylight to increase the flow of natural light throughout the space.

“All these things made for a great place to make art,” says Mr. Monkman, who used the space to create a series of large-scale paintings, among them *Les Castors du Roi*, which he created for the Montreal Museum of Fine Art.

But to make the space inhabitable, more architectural changes needed to be introduced, among them a galley kitchen, a bedroom with a bathroom, polished concrete on the floors and exposed wooden beams on the ceilings. The open concept living room doubles as a gallery.

Under the mezzanine is storage space where Mr. Monkman can hide his art supplies and canvases when he wants to entertain.

It's big enough to shelter an LG washer and dryer unit along with teepee poles, which Mr. Monkman sometimes uses when creating site-specific art for galleries and museums across Canada and around the world.

## Best feature

When work is done and the sun is setting in the sky, Mr. Monkman retreats to the rooftop garden that Mr. McGlade designed before vacating the property five years ago, planting it with tall grasses and ground covers. This is where Mr. Monkman unwinds and regenerates. He loves it there. Necessity is the only reason he is giving it all up. Mr. Monkman is moving because, again, he has run out of space.

“I am back to having four full time assistants,” he says, “and together we often have multiple large scale paintings and other installations going at the same time.”

He is already renting a larger studio space across the street. When he does move, Mr. Monkman says he will miss the ceiling heights, for sure. But he will also miss the sense of privacy: “The building is nestled into a quiet street, so I have always been pleasantly surprised by how quiet it is,” he says. “The street level access has also been a boon for moving large crates in and out.”