

Architectural Analysis of 231 Thorain Boulevard

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231 Thorain is a story-book interpretation of “home” built during a time of crisis, in the midst of the American Depression. These simple but appealing bungalows were at times subsidized by the U.S. government to provide young couples with hope for a future and a place to start a family. They were made affordable by their small scale and by employing minimal wood trimwork and moldings. The opening of the front porch is framed with a gingerbread-cut wave and the slender piers are embellished with classical molding. The original attic vents and 6-inch wide flat window frames still ornament the house and studio’s exterior, however all of the windows have been replaced with contemporary ones. The beauty of this type of house lies in its simplicity---the architectural form becomes architectural decoration.

In a sheltering manner, the parent-child gabled roofs, the charmingly simple square windows and the ordinary chimney describe the elemental features of a child’s drawing of a house. It is these iconic features of the house that captured the imagination of architects like Robert Venturi, who built their practice on the elevation, if not glorification, of quintessential American vernacular architecture in the 1960’s and 70’s. Venturi’s house for his mother Vanna ushered in the era of Postmodernism by employing and exaggerating certain classical details such as the pediment (triangular shape created by the gabled roof) and the window muntins, details which were considered an anathema to designers of Modern Architecture in this era. The novelty of Venturi’s house for his mother also lay in its interpretation of an archetype--- the child’s image of house.

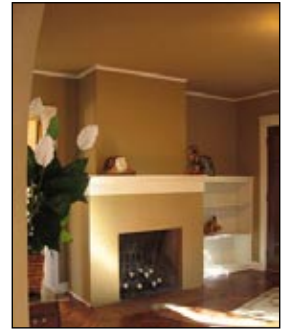


The abstract composition of 231 Thorain’s exterior is reflected in its interior design, however with a subtle elevation in sophistication. No contemporary middle-income house will provide you with the sophisticated details of a 1930’s pared-down bungalow, such as the elegant sweep of the arch separating the living and dining rooms, classical proportions the fireplace and the tri-beveling of the door panels and frames. The kitchen cabinetry retains the original French glass doors, brass hinges (although now painted over), and two pullout cutting boards. The house also seems to sparkle due to the original cut-glass door knobs and the glass mosaic tile in the bathrooms; a well-chosen pattern

that mimics the former hexagonal tile that likely covered the floors in the 1930s. A quaint telephone nook with a classical arch and square panel complete the historical components of this home.

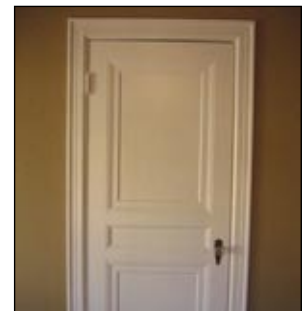
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