

## NEW IN HOMES

## NORTH TORONTO

## Munge was inspired by Guggenheim

York Theatre converted into gallery-like condo presentation centre

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SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Those who used to go see movies at the now defunct York Theatre on Eglinton Ave. no doubt recall the floating, circular staircase that wound its way up from the lobby to the second-floor theatre entrance.

For developer Miguel Singer, principal of Madison Homes — which has converted the space into a presentation centre for The Madison, a 644-unit condo to be built on the site — the staircase was part of what made the York special.

So when interior designer Alessandro Munge recommended they rip it out to create a double-height rotunda in which to showcase a large model of the two-tower condo, the developer was taken aback.

Singer and his sister Nelly Zagdanski, also a Madison Homes principal, had envisioned the sales centre being located on the second floor, where the theatre itself used to be. (Over the past decade the York had been repurposed as an events hall and more recently served as a fitness club.)

“There is this wonderful height on the second floor,” Munge explains. “And I said, ‘That’s a great idea, but I don’t believe in people climbing for retail. You don’t climb to buy something.’”

What’s more, the building has a two-storey glass wall that looks out to Eglinton, and Munge saw an opportunity to create a sales centre that never closed, a la the windows of Holt Renfrew, so passersby at all times of day and night could peer in, view the condo model and see through to the back of the presentation centre.

Munge’s suggestion to blow out the staircase didn’t sit well with Singer at first. “He kind of scratched his head and said that’s crazy,” the designer recalls. “I said, ‘I know, but you’ll thank me.’”

“And sure enough, when we walked through the space when it was done, he said, ‘Sonofabitch, you



Alessandro Munge designed the space at The Madison’s presentation centre to echo the Guggenheim Museum in New York City.

were right!’ It really worked out in our favour in the end.”

Taking up an entire block of Eglinton between Dunfield Ave. and Lillian St., The Madison will include 644 condos and more than 53,000 square feet of retail space, anchored by a large grocery store.

The Madison will have two glass towers — one 33 storeys, the other 30 — connected by an eight-floor podium. Residences range from 500-square-foot one-bedroom units to 1,000-square-foot two-bedroom-plus-den suites. The condos will have nine-foot ceilings, engineered laminate flooring and most units will have balconies.

Prices start in the mid \$200,000s. The Madison is currently being sold to priority purchasers and condos will be available to the general public this fall.

Removing the staircase could be seen as a metaphor. Gerry Ryan,

principal of Ryan Design, who designed the centre with Munge, explains that while the York Theatre used to operate there, a conscious effort was made to avoid using that as a theme for the sales space. “We thought, let the (Madison) building be the theme. Let what we’re doing be the theme,” Ryan says.

“The design of the space is based on using nice materials — a clean and modern design, more like what the building will be in the end, not some cliché that has nothing to do with it.”

At a cost of about \$1 million, the Madison presentation centre has been remade to resemble New York’s Guggenheim Museum, Munge says. “We wanted that space to feel like a gallery and the building (model) itself to be the sculpture within the gallery.”

The sales centre features numerous touch screens, including a 16-

foot-long display — comprising four, 48-inch flatscreens seamlessly butted together — that runs a loop of project visuals and renderings.

In keeping with the Guggenheim motif, “the monitors are the art on the walls,” Munge says, “a way of communicating the amenity space around the building as well as the amenity space within the building.”

The floor of the sales centre is a combination of white and soft taupe marble and all the furniture is coated in a high-gloss black lacquer. There is a long bar-like table in the middle of the main room, where prospective purchasers can chat with sales staff and review floor plans on iPads before making a deal.

The back of the sales centre houses The Madison model suite: a furnished two-bedroom-plus-den unit with windows that offer a preview of the kinds of vistas south-facing units will have — created us-

ing photographs taken by a camera attached to a balloon, Singer notes.

Kitchens come with granite countertops, under-cabinet lighting, islands in select suites, and a stainless steel appliance package that includes a built-in wall oven and cook-top. Bathrooms will have CaesarStone counter tops, frameless glass shower stalls and ceramic floor tile.

To promote The Madison, the developers purchased the rights to Petula Clark’s 1960s hit “Downtown,” got permission to change the chorus to “Midtown” and hired an orchestra and singer to record the song for a catchy radio jingle.

There’s a display in the front lobby of the presentation centre where the song’s lyrics have been etched. And it seems to be doing the trick, Ryan notes.

“People come into the sales office humming that song.”