

Denys Builds Designs renowned for function and design



Impact! Staff Writer

Paul Denys's entry in this year's OCHBA housing awards is a perfect example of how creativity—and a little know how—can make for an interesting yet functional design.

His company, Denys Builds Designs, was asked to build a pergola like no other. Clients living in a third-storey downtown apartment wanted the structure to cover their rear balcony, which sat on an adjacent rooftop. But the project involved a couple of seemingly conflicting requirements.

One of the apartment dwellers was an avid gardener, and needed

occasional sunlight to shine through the pergola in order to nourish his prized collection of plants and flowers. But on particularly bright days, the structure needed to provide enough shade to ward off high temperatures that could damage the garden. The other client, an artist, required enough natural light to penetrate the pergola and illuminate her studio through a rear window opposite the balcony. Sensitive to sunlight, she also wanted the structure to provide enough shade to protect her from the sun's rays, when sitting outside.

"We needed something that would give us shade but they also

wanted something to let the sun through," say Denys. "We were trying to do two things at the same time that contradict each other—solid but translucent."

In consultation with his clients, Denys tinkered with a couple of preliminary ideas that ultimately fell short for one reason or another. At first, Denys thought about designing a system with sliding lattice panels, but that would end up being too aesthetically complicated and less than effective in providing light and shade on demand. Then Denys came up with an idea for retractable awnings, but they simply wouldn't cover the entire 14' x 12' balcony and would have

been susceptible to damage from wind gusts. Heavy snowfalls posed the risk of stretching and ripping permanent awnings, so that plan was also discarded.

In the end, Denys came up with an idea for a cedar pergola with an innovative louvered roof divided into four quadrants. Each of the four sections can be opened or closed giving his clients complete control of the amount of shade or light reaching their balcony.

"What I ended up doing was using louver fence hardware from a fence/railing system for the roof," say Denys. "You can leave it permanently open in the winter time, so you don't get any snow sitting on top of the structure. This came out to a very good compromise, covering all design aspects that the clients wanted."

The free-standing pergola combines the best of design and function. Three-piece corner posts give the structure an Oriental feel and extra sturdiness. The one foot overhanging roof provides maximum shade and horizontal lateral beams running through the corner posts support the pergola's edges and act as cantilevers for the roof structure above.

"I tried to keep structure as minimalist as possible but at the same time everything has a purpose," Denys says.

The project so impressed judges in this year's OCHBA awards that they selected the entry as a finalist in the housing innovation category. In 1994,

Denys Builds Designs won the association's design award.

The pergola is but one example of the quality work Denys Builds Designs specializes in. The company's services include most kinds of home renovations, design consultations, diagnostic investigations, and heritage restorations, with no job too big or small.

Industrious by nature, Denys's business affords him a productive, hands-on outlet for his creative energies. As his customers attest, Denys loves what he does, and that passion transforms itself into the excellent workmanship his company is known for.

"I get the chance to do a bit of everything, and I really enjoy it," he says.

A certified carpenter, Denys is also one of the few craftsmen in the Ottawa area that performs lime-based mortar repointing. This specialized skill has led to a number of heritage property restoration projects for the City of Ottawa and others.

With a vast background in painting, landscaping, carpentry, general construction renovations, Denys provides clients with a convenient one-stop shopping approach to project completion that busy customers appreciate. His company's long list of happy clients provide him with most of his business through referrals. Word-of-mouth advertising is the cornerstone to the firm's marketing strategy.