de BLOIS BUILT

Mike and Roisin de Blois founded their company in 2009 and built it around a deliberate ceiling: three to six projects a year, each with the partners' full attention. From Trent Hills in Northumberland County, de Blois Built serves clients from Toronto to the Bay of Quinte.



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de Blois Built began in 2009 under a different banner, Bright Design Build, founded by Mike de Blois and his wife Roisin. The rebrand to the family name came later, and Roisin describes it as a company growing into itself. Mike came up from the front lines, apprenticing as a carpenter, earning his Red Seal, and graduating into general contracting, and after decades in the industry the couple reached what she calls a level of maturity and confidence that spans both edges of the trade: the administrative discipline of running projects as a general contractor and the skilled-trade craft underneath it. Putting the family name on the door was a statement of identity and values.

TWO VALUES, NAMED DELIBERATELY

When the couple examined how the company had evolved, two values surfaced: connection and curiosity. Connection is the general contractor's actual job as Roisin frames it. The builder sits in the middle of every project as the connector among clients, designers, trade partners, and stakeholders, and on some projects that can mean 30 or 40 stakeholders to hold together. Curiosity is the answer to an industry she believes is often devalued and stigmatized despite its genuine complexity, administrative and technical alike.

“Trying to figure things out, always trying to evolve, always trying to improve,” is how she puts it: learning from mistakes, staying dynamic, and progressing step by step through a process that is rarely linear. Both values extend to the firm's teams, where mentoring and support are treated as commitments rather than slogans.

The connection value reaches past the jobsite entirely. The couple are active in their local music community, hosting festivals and house concerts, with stages the company built on their own property. It is, Roisin notes, a natural crossover with what the firm already stands for: community and connection.

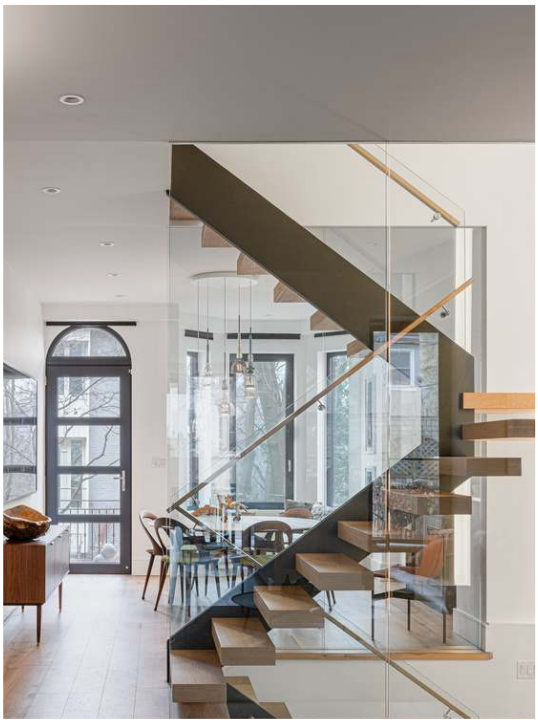


THE BOUTIQUE CEILING

de Blois Built deliberately caps its volume rather than scaling. The range, depending on project size and the economy's mood, runs roughly three to six projects a year, a mix of smaller and larger builds, and the number is set by a simple test: the firm's capacity to give every client and every project its full attention. Past that line, Roisin says, the work is at risk of diluting, and so is the balance between the couple's professional and personal lives.

The ceiling also reflects how the firm actually works. While one year's projects are in production, the next year's are already in preconstruction, which de Blois Built treats as a core service rather than a preamble. The discipline was earned gradually.

Mike started out taking on the scopes that fit his expertise at the time, bathrooms, decks, fences, kitchens, then main floors, then additions, then full guts. There was no single leap, Roisin says, just stepping stones, year by year.





BUILDING THEIR OWN

Among the firm's showcase projects is the family's own home on Richardson Road, which was featured in Grapevine Magazine. Building it meant becoming their own client, with all the advantages and none of the convenience: the project ran after hours, because business hours belong to clients, and it demanded the same labour, project management, and supervision the firm sells.

It took longer for exactly that reason. But Roisin watched the process give Mike something client work rarely allows: room to indulge a builder's creativity. He collaborated with the architect on the structure, then took much of the interior finishing into his own hands. Carpenters, Roisin observes, are creative at heart and often carry an engineer's mind for sequencing, because unlike a single trade, they have to see the whole build.

THE HIBOU PROJECT

The project Roisin calls the firm's first significant architectural endeavour sits a few doors from where the family once lived in Etobicoke. Hibou was a 1950s bungalow on a big lot, tight little rooms inside, owned by the couple's neighbours, and the same architect who designed the family's own home led the full architectural and interior design scope.

hThe project had drama before it began: while it was still in planning, a massive flood hit the Humber Valley floodplain and filled the clients' basement while they were on the other side of the country, with the de Blois family on hand to help. The renovation itself ran about a year.

The house kept its 1950s character on the exterior and was opened up completely within, done, in Roisin's words, very tastefully, very subtle, but really beautiful. The finished home was picked up by Dwell. “I think that home will stand the test of time,” she says.

CREDENTIALS AND THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

de Blois Built is a RenoMark member, Tarion registered, and licensed with the Home Construction Regulatory Authority, alongside membership in the Canadian Home Builders' Association, the regional home builders' association, and the local chamber of commerce.

Roisin is direct about why the credentials matter in an industry where a significant share of the market operates unregulated: they sit on top of more than two decades of doing the work, and they are reflected in the level of service the firm can stand behind.

The firm also invests in its own education with unusual seriousness. For roughly ten years it has been a member of Breakthrough Academy, a residential construction consultancy whose peer network puts the couple in regular contact with builders across Canada and the United States to compare systems, estimating, project management, sales, and mentorship practices.

Mike holds his Red Seal, the company runs apprenticeship programs, and the partners see themselves as mentors and educators, attending and giving workshops, reading, and listening their way through the industry's evolution.



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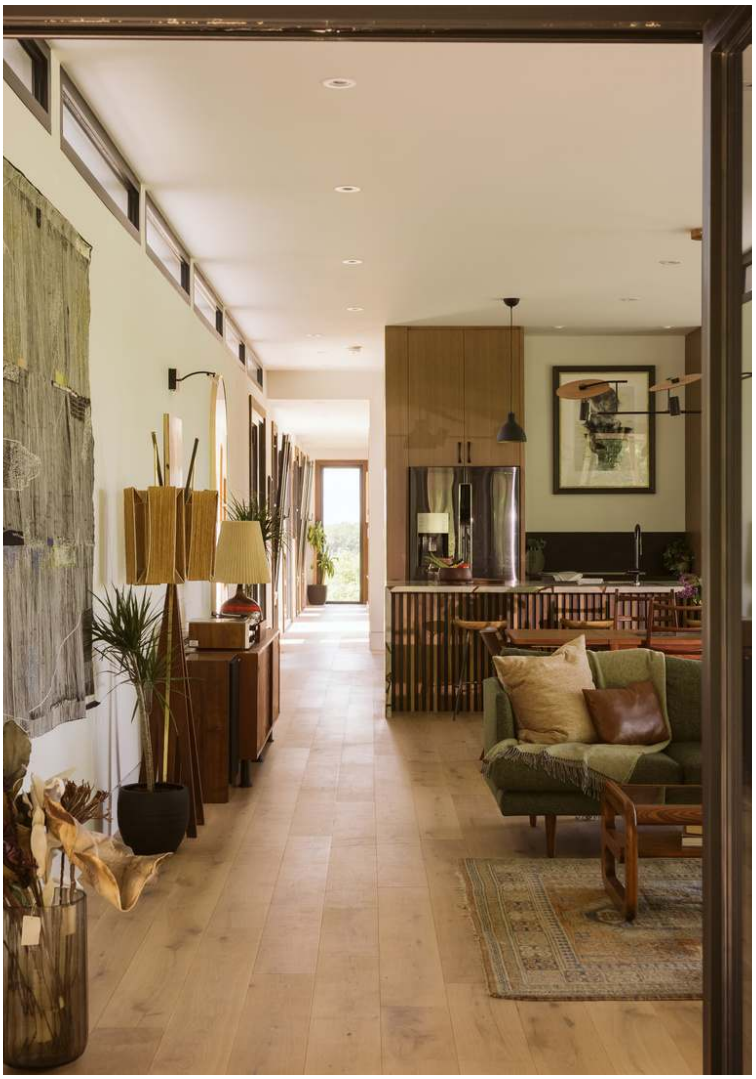


SYSTEMS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF RISK

The firm's operational core runs on JobTread for project management, Google Workspace as the internal engine, and QuickBooks for accounting, increasingly supported by emerging AI tools. The industry, Roisin notes, has long outgrown the handshake and the piece of paper.

Once projects reach real scale, the general contractor's true function emerges. “That's what project management is: managing risk,” she says. The firm evolved from its own internal spreadsheets into these platforms precisely because of the volumes of data a project generates, tenders, estimates, bids, line items, scope definition and scope changes, costing, margins, schedules.

The platforms earn their keep by making that data traceable and reusable across projects and years, with the vast majority of project communication channelled through the system rather than scattered across text messages. But Roisin is clear-eyed about their limits. “They're only as good as the energy put into them,” she says. The firm's own processes have to be built into the tools, and the payoff is a single highway of data that can be read through an analytics lens, and then a strategic one.



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TRADES AND SUPPLIERS ACROSS TWO NETWORKS

de Blois Built keeps a deliberately lean core and works through a network of trusted trades and suppliers rather than holding everything in house. The network is really two networks. The first was built over two decades in Toronto, where the firm still runs projects. The second has been cultivated since the family relocated to Northumberland County six or seven years ago, extending across the surrounding counties, the Kawarthas, and the eastern corridor of the GTA.

Selection is fit-based rather than habit-based: instead of pressing repeat on the same roster, the firm asks which kitchen company, which trade, which supplier is right for this particular project, and new scopes bring new partners through a screening process the firm keeps deliberately rigorous. Underneath it is a stated respect for everyone's time and resources, and a sales philosophy to match: the right client and the right builder have to fit each other. “It's like a two-way street,” Roisin says. “It has to go both ways.”

SUSTAINABILITY WITHIN ANY BUDGET

Mike and Roisin are both in their early fifties, and Roisin is candid that the horizon has entered the conversation. “We're definitely starting to think of the finishing line,” she says, and what the next ten years look like is an evolving question. What it will not look like is aggressive growth. The goal is sustainability in the fullest sense the firm uses the word: sustaining excellent service, quality, value, sound systems, and margins that keep the company healthy, at a volume the partners can stand behind.

The variables ahead are the industry's as much as the firm's. The economic landscape and consumer behaviour have shifted over the past couple of years, and the integration of AI has already changed the industry noticeably within the last year alone. Closer to home, there is another possibility. The couple's five children will come of age over the next decade, and some are showing interest in the industry, whether trades, engineering, or design. If they choose that road, their parents intend to mentor it. “That's a nice thought,” Roisin says. “A second generation business.”

THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

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