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KEITH BEATY / TORONTO STAR

Brothers Michael, right, and Peter McCann are the foremost architectural renderers and model builders in the industry, having won a number of international awards for their work.



A watercolour by Michael McCann brings a sense of mystique to the rendering for the Nicholas Residences.

Sibling rivalry

Artistic McCann brothers add their creative touch to Nicholas Residences

HEATHER GREENWOOD DAVIS
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

If the point of a sales centre is to get potential purchasers salivating, the Nicholas Residences centre has hit the mark.

Purchasers who thought they were visiting to “browse” and ended up signing on for one of the units in the 29-storey building can thank (or blame) two Toronto brothers for the temptation.

The gorgeous architectural watercolours on the wall depicting flowering terraces in the summer and quaint streetscapes is the work of internationally renowned artist and Ontario College of Art

grad Michael McCann.

And the 3-D model that is centre stage showcases the precise details of everything from the barbecues on the rooftop terrace to the brick facade of the lower levels was done by his brother, internationally sought after 3-D model whiz Peter McCann.

The fact that the Nicholas Residences — slated to be ready in May 2013 — were able to get both brothers on the project is a feat in itself. Just getting the two in the same city can be a challenge.

Michael's watercolour architectural renderings have been summoned by ev-

eryone from Saddam Hussein to Bill Clinton, and Peter's 3-D interpretations have been sought for buildings around the world, including the Burj Khalifa in Dubai — the world's tallest building — which required the 27-foot model to be shipped in pieces across the planet.

And yet the busy duo put other work aside to work on a condominium tower that they say will be an asset to the Toronto architectural landscape.

“The Nicholas is more personal,” explains Peter. “You get to be more hands

MCCANN continued on H16

McCann brothers bring artful flair to architectural models

MCCANN from HI

on, whereas with the Burj I think I had 25 people working on it so there are areas that you just don't even see."

"This was a classic opportunity," adds Michael. "That location is just unbelievable. When you walk south on that street there's this wonderful row of Victorian houses and it's about a driver and 7-iron to Yorkville.

"It's in all the right areas," he continues. "It's kind of quaint and quiet but sitting on the cusp of one of the most active areas of the city."

While both men admit that years of working with friends at Urban Capital Property, Alit Developments and Core Architects was an enticement (the duo who have only worked together on the same project three times in Michael's 39 years and Peter's 28 in the business), they also embraced the opportunity to work together on something in their hometown.

They haven't always yearned to be together.

As kids, born 10 years apart, the relationship was one of tolerance rather than brotherly love.

"I didn't acknowledge his existence," says older brother Michael, laughing. One day that changed.

"I can tell you exactly when it happened," he says, wagging his finger in recollection as Peter looks on, already smiling in anticipation of the story he knows is coming.

"In 1966, I was going off to work on

SNAP TO IT

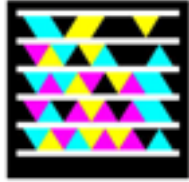
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photo gallery of Peter and Michael McCann's work.

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a Norwegian freighter from Toronto to Liverpool and my father brought me and what's-his-name (winks) Peter down to the ship that was docked here in Toronto to see me off. I came back about four months later. He was only 10 years old and he had carved a model of the ship."

The detailed replica of the freighter that young Peter had seen only for a few moments as he waved goodbye to his older sibling, had such an impact on him that he'd constructed it twice.

"I went home and I could visualize what the boat looked like," recalls Peter, about 40 years after the fact. "I built the first freighter out of card, tape and a pair of scissors and just from memory. And then when I built that one, I thought you know I

can build a better one and I did."

The recognition that his younger brother had an artistic talent was something Michael could relate to.

He'd been about 5 years old when he'd discovered his own artistic leanings.

"I grew up in Cabbagetown," he recalls. "There were about four or five guys on the street, most of newly immigrated parents. We would sit out on the porches and draw."

Peter recalls Michael once painted a picture for an uncle that had the family talking.

"Oh yeah, I knocked off a Rembrandt," Michael recalls. "It was an easy one though — an old lady sitting by a fireplace."

Of the group of five pre-schoolers, two grew up to be commercial artists and Michael turned to architectural art. The men credit their creativity to growing up in a house of four brothers, with parents who didn't have money to spend on fancy toys.

"In those days we didn't have any money," recalls Michael. "My father was a tailor and I had to snatch some of his paper from his patterns to draw on. I used to wait for him to get his laundry back on a Monday to draw on the card. Boy, I couldn't wait to get a hold of those five shirts."

Ten years behind him, Peter was spending time with the tailor as well.

"He used to pay me something like 25 cents an hour to help with the patterns.

NICHOLAS RESIDENCES

Location: 75 St. Nicholas St. (Yonge and Bloor area)

Developer: Urban Capital Property Group/Alit Developments

Architect: Core Architects

Interior design: Cecconi Simone Interior Design Consultants

Landscape architecture: Ferris + Associations Inc.

Tentative occupancy: May 1, 2013

Development size: 29 storeys

Layout/floor plan: Studio, 1 bedroom, 1 bedroom plus den, 2 bedroom

Size range: 395 square feet to 778 square feet

Price range: Mid-\$200,000s to more than \$1 million

Sales office: 67 St. Nicholas St.

Hours of operation: Previewing, by appointment only

Phone: 416-233-7772

Website: www.nicholasresidences.com

Email: sales@nicholasresidences.com

HOME FEATURES

- Every suite has a balcony, French balcony, or terrace
- 9-foot ceilings in principal rooms, 10-foot in lower & upper penthouse
- Pre-finished engineered wood flooring or German engineered, high performance, wide-plank laminate flooring

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

- Energy efficient in-suite HVAC system with energy recovery ventilator (ERV)
- Exterior glazing with low E glass
- Low flush toilets
- Rain water harvested for irrigation
- Individual suite hydro metering

"I only got 10 cents an hour. I got ripped off," Michael interjects.

Peter laughs and continues. "I'd be cutting and making the patterns for the suits. I think that's partially why I love building things."

Their mediums and approaches to their work are vastly different, a fact that Core Architects' Babak Eslahjou says added to the beauty of the project.

"It's quite interesting to see the two of them and their work," says

Eslahjou. "Where Peter uses the very latest in technology, Michael probably still has the very first paintbrush he ever bought.

"The nature of their work comes out in their personalities," he adds. "(Michael's) work is really representational, an interpretation of what the building is, whereas Peter's is an accurate and factual description of the building. Michael brings passion and emotion. Peter is genuine, honest and exact."