



ROHAN WALTERS

What he's writing A blog
Where Starbucks, 542 College
Background "All these ideas," says Walters, a designer, turning the pages of his sketchbook to reveal pencil drawings of living-room shelving, details of a door, a cottage on a cliff, "were created in various coffee shops across the city."

You may have seen some of his designs — the most startling is a three-storey modern house, like an upended shoebox patterned in blue and yellow and red, built on stilts above swampy ground on Coxwell Ave. His speciality is building economically on unconventional spaces.

He works from his knapsack,

bringing out a laptop, client files, sketchbook, digital camera, notebooks, earplugs and earphones.

"We tell stories in different ways, some visually, some with words," says Walters, 45. He does half his work at his home studio but is part of a group of creative types who gather at this Annex Starbucks, with its living-room comfort. Some say they are more productive in this coffee shop than at home.

"Home is too quiet for the majority of the work I do. Somehow in the distraction, it allows the mind to pause and come up with another angle." He has made a lot of friends in his café peregrinations. He'll

say he's in the middle of a thought. Could they come back later?

"This is our office. It's part of a writer's life or a solitary designer's life. I have access to almost everything here."

He often contributes to blogs. Here's an entry he wrote last week:

The excerpt Many designers I know happily recall those optimistic days as young students and apprentices that we were always headed towards producing cool and meaningful work.

Unfortunately many of those feelings have been severely tempered or squashed through years of actual practice.

Now by the time designs get through the client, the developer, the bank, the project manager, the constructor, the quantity surveyor, the engineers, the neighbourhood committees, the planning examinations, the building examiners and the lawyers, sometimes there is little else to do but to mourn at the feeling that the baby went out with the bathwater.

To paraphrase (a friend) Paul: It's about time that architects take some considered risk and learn the lessons of the early architects who were also builders and developers, in order to maintain consistency of vision, manufacture and attain reasonable profits.