

ELEVATED ELEGANCE

Essentials for Fine Living



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Introduction

Many of us dream of spaces that passionately express our inner creativity, our sanctuary, and our place of interaction. And rightly so, as it is the place where we build our lives and our dreams one moment at a time. Spaces can create an ambience of comfort and rejuvenation, as well as a sense of harmony within ourselves, thus promoting well being in our lives.

Our relationship to space can be mysterious and often very subtle however if we demystify the principles of design in the spaces that impact us, we may note that they have essential commonalities. Many architects have written on the principles of beauty or the strategies of construction and have provided enlightened thoughts on the pragmatics and mysteries of design, architecture, and home.

Well designed spaces create experiences of luxury and personal elevation, whatever the budget, through the qualities it gives to ourselves and our family, and also awakens within us.

This concise book highlights these thoughts in simple, applicable, and essential characteristics that relate to our human wellbeing and create design excellence. Whether the budget is limitless or moderate, we can create richness and a sense of fulfillment through our human experience. These design essentials, although simple are something we each dream of uniquely.

What does design, specifically architectural design, do for us? Of course it creates shelter but more than that it creates a feeling, an identity, a way of being, a way of living. It is the most ancient and most modern media, to which we express our sense of place. There is an excitement and mystery involved that nourishes us very deeply. Good design and good architectural design evokes this deep nourishment.

Form and space can leave a unique sense of timelessness and wellbeing for our future. In a way, form follows evolution and at whatever level of innovation, it is the power of the elements that create an elegance beyond style. It is this "Elevated Elegance" that gives us the feeling of sanctuary, of creativity, of nourishment, and of home. Architecture that elevates has an incredible value and almost always includes the essentials of fine living.

I

The Drama Spot

FOCAL POINT · MEANING · AMBIENCE



Living Room, Brach Guest House

First, let us ask why does space impact us for better or for worse? We know we need shelter but some spaces surpass common shelter and uplift and soothe. This is because we express ourselves most fully through feeling. Like music some things are better left without words and best expressed through feeling. This is the art of architecture whether capturing the feeling of a culture, of a place, or of a household. These feelings create participation in the drama of life. So we will start with the boldest and perhaps the most sublime of the essentials for creating simple elegance, The Drama Spot.

In designing or remodeling a space, this might not be the first consideration but is a key element. Famous American Architect, Frank Lloyd Wright had the core of most of his homes centered on the fireplace. Vaulted spaces, curved walls, flared skylights, cantilevered rooms, balconies in atriums, folded roofs, dramatic staircase are all expressions of the Drama Spot.

The Drama Spot creates a core or focal point like the climax in a movie that gives meaning and ambience to the storyline of the space. Meaning thus gives substance to space and provides outward expression.



Office, Brach Guest House



Master Bedroom, Cypress Residence

II

The Cozy Spot

PROPORTION · INTIMACY · REST

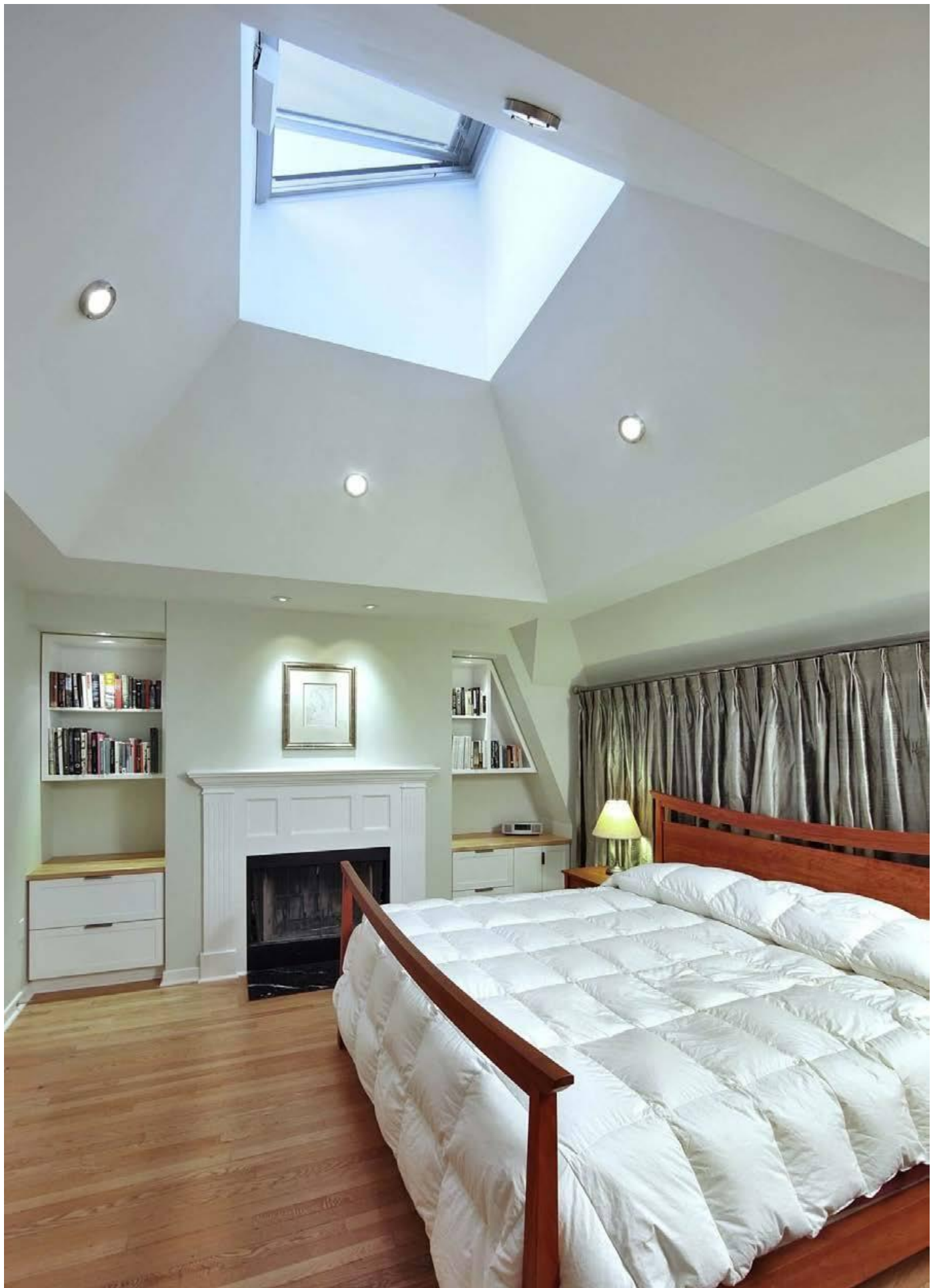


Great Room, Van Leeuwen Residence

Inner Expression is just as vital and creates balance in our energies. We require space to assist in digesting our thoughts and experiences, our tenderness, and to give preciousness, warmth, and intimacy to our relationships and at times to renew ourselves. We generally describe space that relaxes and embraces as a space that is Cozy.

The COZY Spot creates a sense of proportion to our human scale and has detail. The form of the space, a sense of privacy or closeness, and soft sensory experiences are all a part of the Cozy Spot.

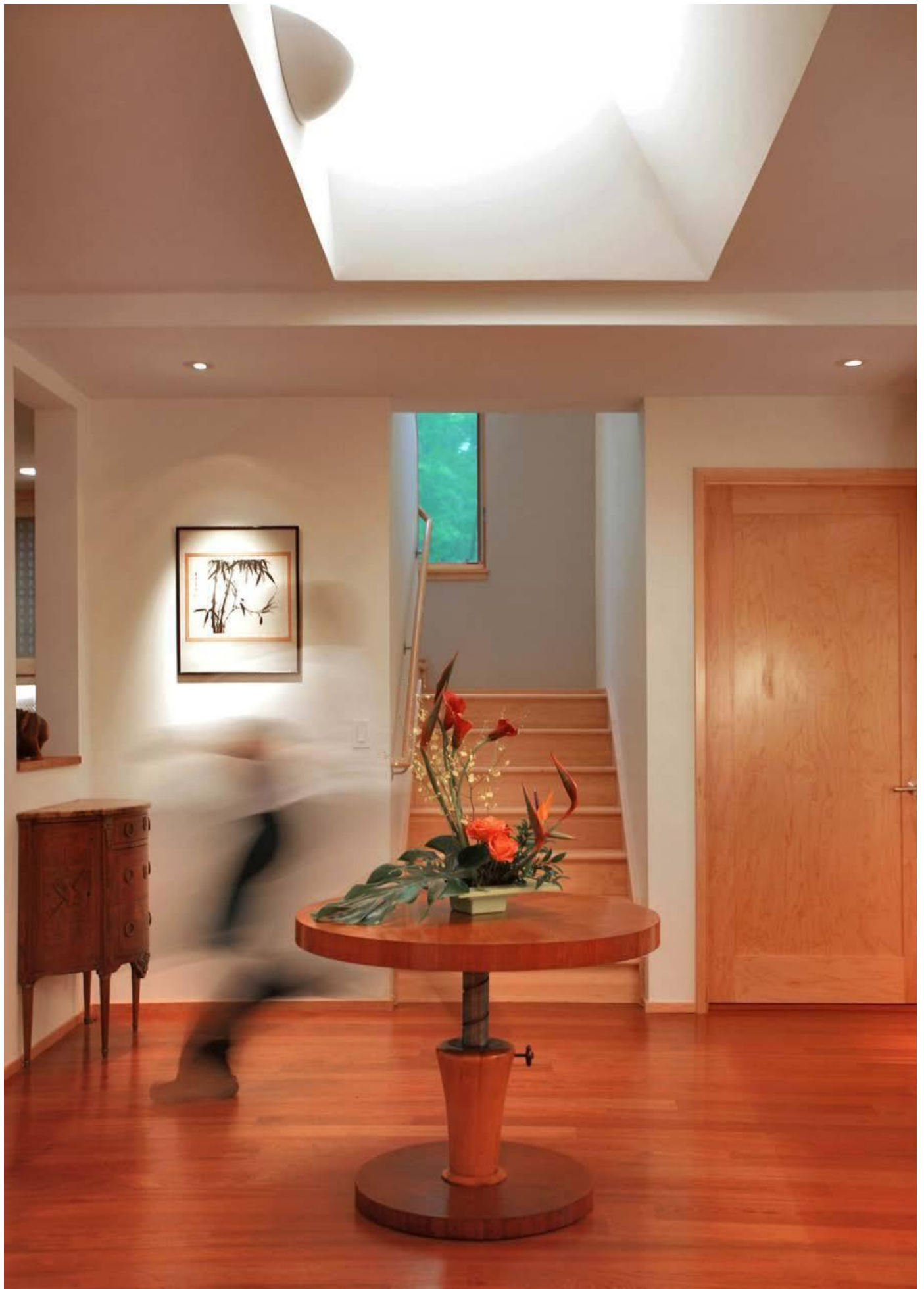
The Cozy Spot is generally a place of rest and offers potential for reflection and awareness.



III

Dynamic Circulation

MOVEMENT · FLOW · BREATHABILITY



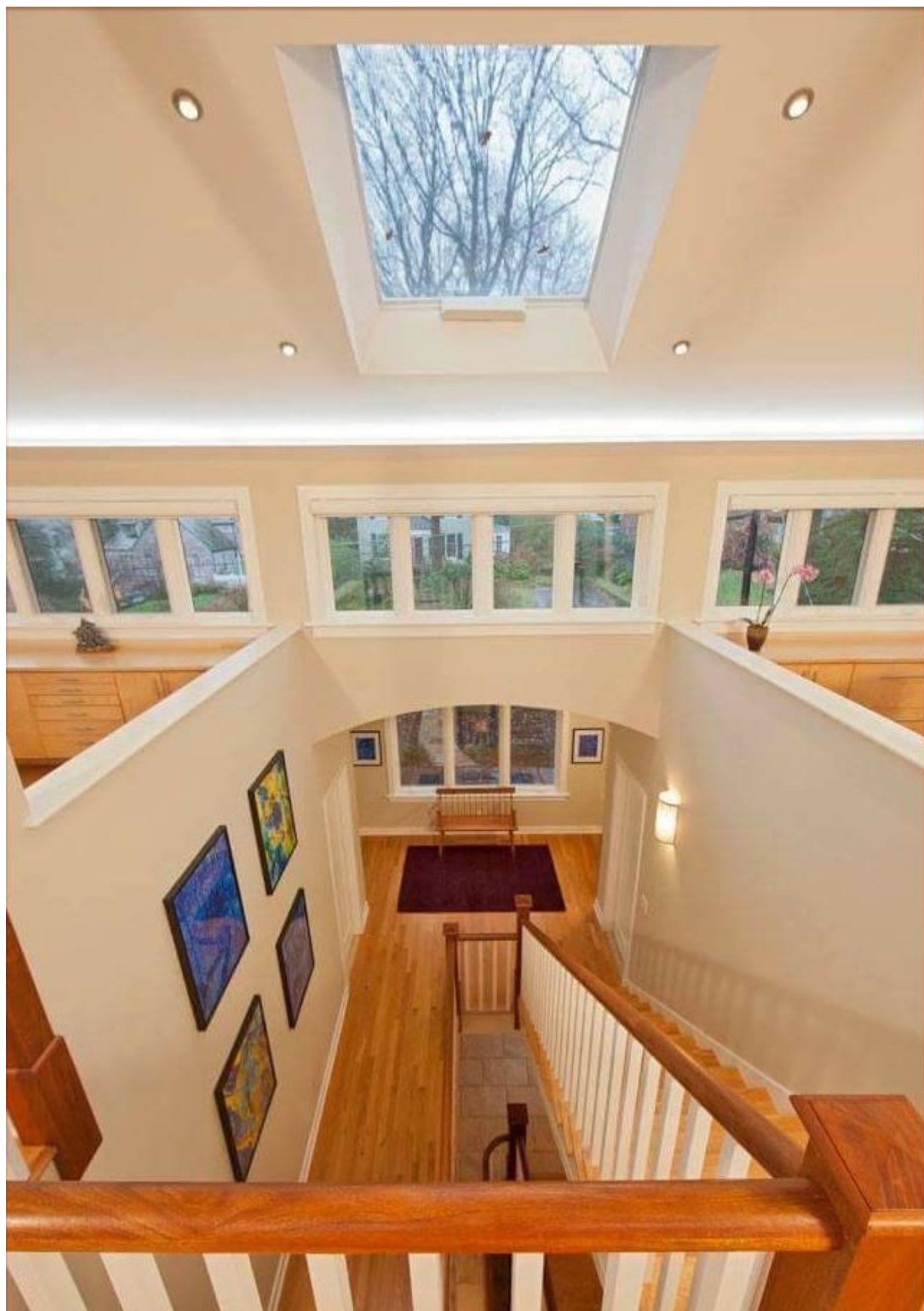
Although home is often a place of rest, it is also a place of movement. How we move through space is very important to our body language. If our body is cramped or subjected to sharp objects we are not free to move rhythmically through space. How we relate through our body language affects our subconscious mind. We can adapt to many things but moving graciously and with clarity is very healthy and essential for our daily routines.

21st century living also involves entertaining guests and family on a frequent basis. Some spaces need dual purposing to consider the multiple dynamics of use. Good circulation through space also means increased potential for positive interactivity. Proper and comfortable movement through space generally improves breathability and brings natural daylighting into the central spaces. Natural ventilation assists in healthy living and should be considered a part of contemporary lifestyle.

Individual spaces can be elegant, however, are further strengthened and become more dynamic through a holistic sense, and through proxy to the main elements of the design as a whole.

The organization of elements and sequence of spaces encourages smooth transitions and potential dynamic activity and relationship between the architectural volumes and its details. Keeping circulation straightforward and concise allows the focus to be on enjoyment, as the function is clear.





IV

Expressive Entry

ARRIVAL · IDENTITY · INVITATION

Impressions are significant. Entrance is where we welcome our friends and family distinctively. Just as fashion can be timeless or trendy so is the manner we express entry. In music the overture sets the tone and tempo for the song to unfold. Within the entrance is a suggestion of what is to come within the house. Entry also connects the landscape and the streetscape to the home and also highlights the passage between inside and outside, boundary and invitation.



Entry Facade, Groves Residence

A gracious entry communicates in form in relationship to the architecture. A soft and slightly indirect approach to the main door is preferable as it creates a sequencing of spaces between indoor and outdoor and vice versa. Often, there is a slight change in height above the landscape at the entry, which becomes an opportunity for detailing in the architecture. This is a place of buffer and slight protection from the

elements, however also generally open to them. Natural features or landscaping can be integrated for increased effect and embrace.

A balanced and expressive facade incorporates signature and cohesion with the program of the space and the main character of the design, volumes, roofline, and landscape. Upon entry to the house, the foyer space partially contains guests until invited further into the house but also offers a glimpse of perception of the horizontal and vertical movement through the house and its primary spaces.

As it is a transition space to the rest of the home, it is essential also as a psychological element of security. The expressiveness of the details of the exterior entrance and the inner foyer will be individual and represent the interests and style of those within the habitat.





Washington DC Townhouse Concept



Exterior Facade, Brach Guest House



V

The Natural Element

LANDSCAPE · LIGHT · HARMONY



Exterior Facade, Foxhall Porch

Our relationship to Nature, its cycles, and its seasons are indelible. Nature and beauty engender harmony in human beings and creates the stage of "Life." Circadian rhythms, sleep patterns, daily routine, and the energy of the sun each structure our lives with great impact and connect us to our own natural cycles.

The Natural Element could be established in design through the relationship of the inner and outer spaces (landscape) which is most common. Large amounts of glass in the direction of an enchanting view is another frequent strategy. Interior living "green walls" and central gardens are becoming a 21st century amenity and allow urban living to give the feeling of nature close to home.

Harmony with the elements offers pleasure and wonder and is sensible in our fast paced lifestyles. Evocation of the language of the NATURAL Element creates distinction in design.

Bringing the language of nature inward in form and function optimizes, preserves, and fuses the nature of structure with the subtleness of nature and thus with the principles of good design strategy, strengthening the connection to both the architecture and the landscape.



Balcony, Brach Guest House



Railing, Moss Residence

VI

The Sensual Element

TEXTURE · LIGHT · SPIRIT OF PLACE



View of the Spa Music Room

Spa Music Room, Aurelia Center

The intensity of our jobs and our responsibilities often leaves us needing restoration and balance. Reconnecting to the cycles of nature is reinforced by sensuality. Sensual elements in their delight to the senses make our bodies respond positively.

The Sensual Element can be a spa like feature, a water or fire feature, a provocative color, a curving wall or ceiling, a railing or a staircase, a skylight that sculpts the light, the integration of a piece of art, a texture or a material, or the inner or outer form of a space or passage.

Through light we experience the sacred. Through material we touch the rhythms of the material world.

The sensual element has the power of storytelling and inner climax. Interaction with form, movement in the act of gentle seduction, and extraordinary translation of material creates atmosphere, resonance, and quality of spirit. Imagination can thus extend beyond program, beyond materials, beyond the elements into Genius Loci and the erotic language beyond words. The power of space is in its quality and ability to create the spirit of place by which we are nourished.

VII

Art of Healthy Materials

PALETTE · SUSTAINABILITY · CRAFT



Exterior Facade, DC Sculpture Studio

The play of materials is the most obvious enlivener of space. We design with materials in mind. Making choices that are healthy, remind us that living is art. Fresher air, thermally efficient construction, renewable materials, and sustainable options are common sense choices today and help our buildings work toward energy efficiency and a lifetime of wellness.

A simple palette of good materials can make poetry of space. Affordable luxury can be created by placing reserved higher end materials next to less expensive materials in carefully thought details. Materials are the bones and skin and also the fashion of the home. The play on materials are endless.

Generally, creating a hierarchy in the expression of materials makes for better design. Opacity, transparency, texture, lightness, iridescence, durability are

some qualities in materials that pattern our experience of space making and make suggestions of our values and attractions.



Master Shower, Stansbury Residence



Kitchen, Groves Residence



Master Shower Detail



Master Bath, Moss Residence



Exterior Facade, DC Sculpture Studio



Kitchen, Arlington House



Great Room, Brach Guest House

Conclusion

Designing for living and wellbeing creates renewal. Space can transcribe human emotion. The act of living and the art of spatial relationships, sculpting of light, respect for the landscape, and individual desires for expression create unique design opportunities. The power of design acts as a catalyst in its effects on our quality of life. Interaction with the elements and the intelligent use of natural materials conveys meaning for expressing our personal path.

The strategies for creating simple elegance have life giving dynamics because they are essentials of great design. These essentials are the structure for smart spaces. They outline and celebrate the gift of space and spatial relationships.

Enriching our experiences through design, whether traditional, exotic, or modern, these seven essentials refine our sensibilities. Creative design possibilities are endless and this exploration is a source of pleasure with the result of personal sanctuary, creative space, and a happy and healthy home.



Exterior, Arlington House

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