



Only the most seasoned of architects could successfully meet the needs of this client: a home that was maintenance-free, architecturally interesting from every angle, appropriate for a seven-member, three-generation family and designed to last a lifetime.

A dramatic steel arbor extending from the guest/pool house to the main house is structurally beautiful from any angle. The owners' desire for low to no maintenance was achieved with Zinalume steel roofing, concrete masonry units, cement stucco and fiber-cement siding. RIGHT: A pair of mahogany-edged sliding pocket doors between the kitchen, dining and living rooms can easily be closed for privacy. The hardwood floor is pinkado, similar in appearance to mahogany but as hard and durable as teak. The gas fireplace with its custom stainless steel cover is testament to the owners' love of commercial-style aesthetics.

"We wanted a home that would be flexible as our family grew," says the homeowner. "We wanted beauty, functionality and easy care, a house that would wear well with time. We didn't have any particular design in mind, other than we knew we liked an open flow kind of feeling."

Lane Williams, AIA and Jill Lewis, AIA, of Lane Williams Architects in Seattle, met all the requirements and more in the 5,000-square-foot design in Kirkland.

The living spaces are informal and flexible in use, designed to adapt to changing family needs. For example, a semi-detached guesthouse is currently used as a pool house and changing area, with easy-care concrete floor, bathroom and kitchenette. But in the future it may become an office, guest house or, given its wheelchair access, a mother-in-law apartment. Another room in the basement is now a bedroom for the oldest child, but with its separate entry may become a play room, guest room or home office as the need arises.

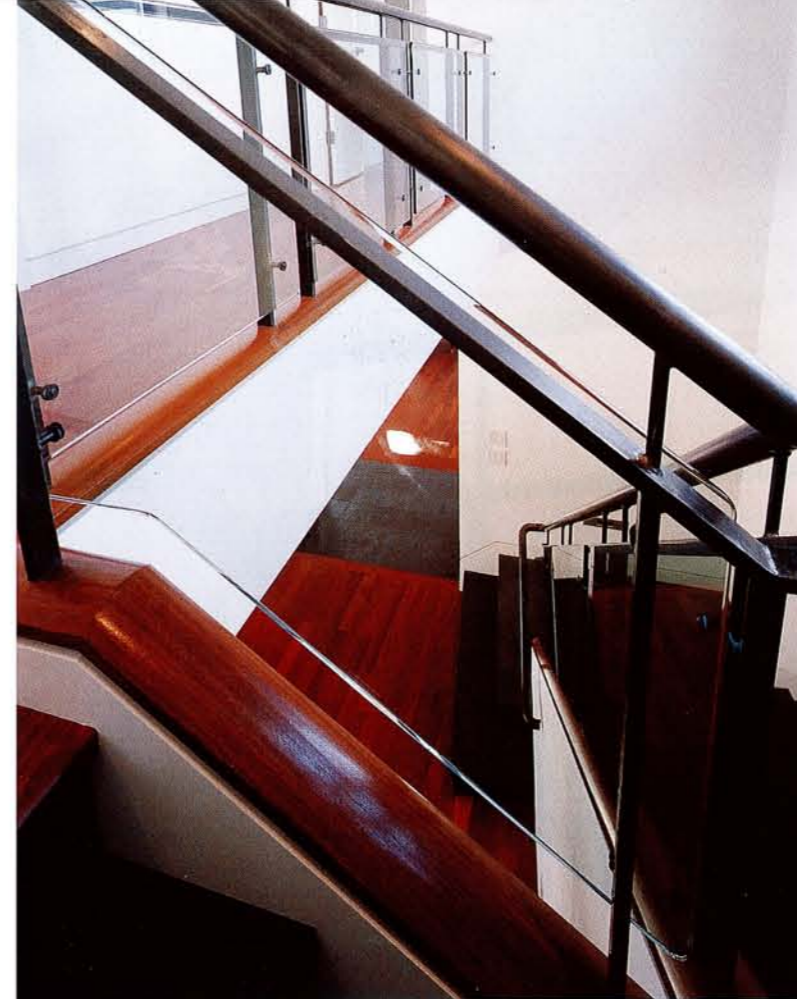


# PLAYING THE ANGLES

WRITTEN BY JULIA COFFEY PHOTOGRAPHY BY J. F. HOUSEL



Rice paper sandwiched between layers of window glass provides serenity and privacy in the master bathroom. The bench, placed to step into the deep jetted tub, is made of ipe, aka Ironwood, a hardwood similar to teak that holds up well in moist areas. The tub, limestone and granite, is typical of all bathrooms throughout the house.



The owners' fondness for commercial-quality construction led to a unique railing with a gun-blueing finish and plate glass panels. The stair treads are charcoal gray, precast concrete with a slight texture like fine sandpaper to prevent slipping. Look carefully and you'll see the walls are not parallel, which creates interesting slopes in the roof lines. The glowing portion of the house that overhangs the entryway – the master bathroom – is referred to as the 'Japanese lantern' by the owner.



The living room doubles as a music room with a separate space created for children only, and a large closet, located between the living room and dining room, is referred to as the "command center". All the wiring that connects to stereo or video equipment or computers runs into this closet and is easily accessible.

"The overall design was shaped by concerns for spatial flow, acoustics and the clients' desire for a distinctive architectural image," says Williams.

The house is designed in three parts, or wings. The first contains the entry, a central courtyard, swimming pool and play area. Additional rooms are located in the second wing, and a semi-detached building forms the third wall of the courtyard.

While some spaces offer a view of Lake Washington, most are oriented to the interior courtyard that serves as an outdoor gathering and play space for family and guests.

"One of our guiding principles was that the house wrap around a private outdoor living space, a sunny area landscaped to shield it from the neighbors," says Williams.

A swimming pool and play area for children is located here. Active play spaces, separated from the quieter central

courtyard, are designed so children can play unsupervised, and the pool is safely enclosed with self-locking gates.

"Of course, my kids figured out how to open the gates faster than most adults," admits the owner, laughing.

One of the owners' favorite parts of the house is the mudroom, designed by Williams. Each member of the family has a cubicle in a series of open cabinets to store coats and backpacks. Underneath a bench is a drawer for shoes.

"It's located right off the garage, so when we come in, we take off our shoes and coats and put them away," says the owner. "Everyone who sees our mudroom wants one of their own."

The kitchen is the heart of this house, and is large, accessible and extraordinarily well equipped.

"The kitchen was very important to us," says the owner, "We wanted it to be spacious, because we do a lot of group cooking with friends."

The owner is an excellent cook, and the professional style appliances are not just for show. The stainless steel hood has a powerful ventilation system to accommodate a 30,000 Btu wok ring and six burners.



Everything about this kitchen is in keeping with a modern, commercial-style design, including the chrome pulls and corrugated metal finish on the face of these drawers.

The large island, perfect for group cooking efforts, is soapstone, a natural stone that is softer than granite and completely impervious to food stains. "You can't say this of any other stones," says Williams.

One look at the hood and you know that the owner is a serious cook given to preparing large, extravagant meals. Custom fabricated out of stainless steel, it is powerful enough to capture the smoke, steam and flames that rise from a 30,000 Btu wok ring and six burners.

In order to focus on cooking and entertaining, the kitchen was thoughtfully designed to be easy to use. A handy stainless steel shelf by the stove holds olive oil, cooking sherries, wine and other flavorings used for preparing meals.

Easy care was crucial. The sinks are durable stainless steel, and cabinets are faced with metal-faced laminate, a thin layer of ribbed metal. The slate backsplash is ceramic tile in the owner's favorite color – eggplant – with lighter accent tiles set into it. The island is soapstone and the counters honed granite.

Because the owners were keen on building everything as bullet-proof as possible, longevity was a primary concern in the selection of all materials. The exterior is clad with Zinalume steel roofing and a combination of concrete masonry units, cement stucco and fiber-cement siding. Windows are commercial-grade aluminum and accents are steel and concrete.

"The owners loved commercial-style materials and the idea of anything that would be easy to maintain," says Williams. "In a typical Northwest contemporary home, exposed natural wood demands a lot of upkeep. This home is as close to maintenance-free as you can get."

The clients' strong desire for a spare, commercial aesthetic is tempered by warm elements throughout. The interiors of the windows are trimmed out with African ribbon mahogany liners, and doors and cabinets are mahogany. The flooring is pinkado, an exotic Asian hardwood with properties similar to teak but mahogany in color.

An Asian influence is apparent throughout the home in its artwork and the simplicity of design. Sliding pocket doors look like Japanese screens, with mahogany borders and rice paper sandwiched between the layers of glass.

The greatest challenge of this project, says Williams, was the complexity of the design's geometry.

"None of the walls are parallel to one another," he says. "Initially, the idea for these odd angles began with the living room/music room. We knew acoustically we'd get better sound quality in a space where the walls were not parallel to each other. Then, as we started using trapezoid instead of linear shapes, we found that things started to flow better."

Williams carried this theme throughout the house; even the garage walls are not parallel.

"This kind of unique design doesn't happen when working with a client who has set, conservative ideas," he says. "This is what happens when they encourage you to go a little bit further." ■

Architect: Lane Williams, Lane Williams Architects