

THE POSSIBLE DREAM

A VIEW FROM THE STREET CORNER OF THE CONCRETE-AND-GLASS LIVING ROOM "BOX" IS THE MOST PROMINENT POINT ON THE SITE, WITH DARK-GRAY STUCCO AND CEMENT SIDING THE REST OF THE RESIDENCE. CONCRETE WALLS TERRACING A DROUGHT-TOLERANT LANDSCAPE ECHO THE EXTERIOR, WHILE THE EXTENSIVE USE OF OVERSIZED WINDOWS THROUGHOUT GIVE THE HOME PLENTY OF NATURAL LIGHT DURING EVERY SEASON.

IN A KIRKLAND CONTEMPORARY WHERE THERE'S A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING, A YOUNG FAMILY AND FRIENDS ARE UNITED AT ITS CENTER

WRITTEN BY ROBYN CANNON PHOTOGRAPHS BY LARA SWIMMER



▲ THE EXTERIOR CONCRETE WALLS OF THE FORMAL LIVING ROOM CONTINUE INSIDE, WRAPPING THE FIREPLACE VOLUME AND PROVIDING A STRONG FOCAL POINT IN THE ROOM. A DELICATE SKIM-COAT REFINES THEIR FINISH AND RESEMBLES NATURAL LIMESTONE. MEANWHILE, PALE-STAINED-OAK PANELS ABOVE THE FIREBOX ADD VISUAL WARMTH, WHILE EBONY-STAINED-OAK SHELVES TO THE LEFT BALANCE THE STRONG VERTICAL LINE OF THE FIREPLACE COMPOSITION. ►► A VIRTUAL FLY-THROUGH DURING THE DESIGN PHASE DEMONSTRATED A NEED FOR MOVABLE SEPARATION BETWEEN THE DINING AREA AND SCULLERY, SO A PERMANENT WALL WAS REPLACED WITH A 9-BY-9-FOOT STAINED-OAK AND SLIDING-GLASS DOOR. WITH THE TOUCH OF A FINGER, DIRTY DISHES ARE OUT OF SIGHT DURING MEALS, THE PARTIAL WALL TO THE RIGHT WILL ONE DAY PROVIDE A HOME FOR A NEW ADDITION TO THE SMITH'S CONTEMPORARY ART COLLECTION; FOR NOW, IT DIVIDES FOOD PREP AREA AND GENTLY ILLUMINATES THE CEILING WITH HIDDEN RECESSED LIGHTING.



BUILD A LIST

When the Smiths charged Lane Williams Architects with the design of their Kirkland residence, it was not without extensive input. Here is the list of words the couple developed to describe the home they desired:

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| OVERALL: | MASTER BEDROOM/ BATHROOM: |
| Warm | Retreat |
| Inviting | Private |
| Welcoming | |
| Cozy | KITCHEN/ FAMILY ROOM: |
| Restful | Public |
| Clean | Open |
| Simple | Casual |
| Sophisticated | Informal |
| Bright | Working/ functional |
| Open | Innovative |
| Romantic | |
| Practical | LIVING ROOM: |
| Functional | Formal |
| Purposeful | Sophisticated |
| Innovative | Urban |
| Clever | |
| Dynamic | ANTONYMS: |
| Fresh | Boxy |
| Comprehensible | Different |
| Fascinating | Weird |
| Engaging | Cold |
| Tempting | Stark |
| Stylish | Austere |
| Cohesive | Empty |
| Refined | Messy |
| Urbane | Cluttered |
| Cheerful/ happy | Superfluous |
| Optimistic | Phony |
| Honest | Pink |
| Unpretentious | |
| Sincere | |
| Unadorned | |

Home, it's been said, is where you drop your briefcase and pick up your life. It's a place for celebrations, where friendships are strengthened and family is nurtured.

In Kirkland, Debra and Jeff Smith and their two children are living that dream. A little more than three years ago, the couple purchased and razed a run-down cottage, making room for a contemporary residence designed by Seattle's Lane Williams Architects.

The year-long design process, working with project architect Jill Lewis, resulted in a warm, practical, unpretentious, cohesive, clean and simple home—just a few of the adjectives that the Smiths presented to Lewis as important aspects of their new house. They even went so far as to tell her what they didn't want: nothing weird, superfluous, stark, phony or—heaven forbid—pink, thank you.

The architectural team proved to be a good fit for the family, due in

large part to the fact that the firm believes the function of a home should drive its form. "Our values are really about being relevant with an honest use of materials," Lewis says. "We always try to build with materials that are natural; we like concrete, natural wood, steel. There's something really beautiful about everything in a project being expressed for the material it is, or the function it is. The result is calm, peaceful and serene buildings that I think we're all happier living in."

The Smiths had specific ideas, too, about the spaces they required, and how they should relate to one another.

"The focus of so many water-view homes is the water," says Lane Williams. "Although the living room and master bedroom of this house enjoy views of Lake Washington, the real focus is inward, to a common living area and a private courtyard that is the center of daily family activity." It was important to Debra and Jeff, he adds, that their children be able to play in clear view of the kitchen, family room and living room while simultaneously opening those rooms to the sun.

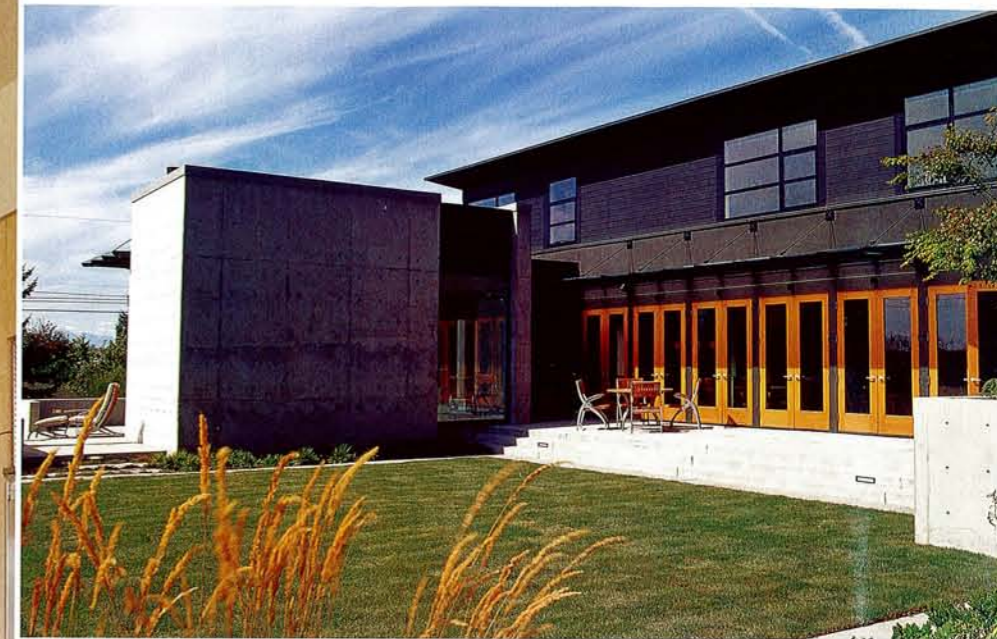
Design Details

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▲ A SIMPLE SQUARE OF GRASS PROVIDES A LUSH, GREEN COURTYARD FOR OUTDOOR ENTERTAINING AND A SAFE AREA FOR YOUNG CHILDREN TO PLAY. A GLASS AND METAL AWNING SHADES THE LONG SERIES OF DOORS THAT CONNECT THE DINING, KITCHEN AND FAMILY ROOM TO THE OUTDOORS AND PROTECTS AN OUTDOOR DINING AND BARBECUE AREA. ⇐ THE KITCHEN ISLAND PROVIDES A LARGE SPACE FOR FOOD PREP AND CASUAL FAMILY MEALS. A SIX-BURNER VIKING RANGE WITH GRILL IS CENTRAL TO THE WALL OF CABINETS OPPOSITE THE ISLAND, WHILE PANTRY AND DISHWASHING AREAS EXTEND TO THE RIGHT AND ARE SEPARATED FROM THE FORMAL DINING AREA AROUND THE CORNER. A MIELE COFFEE SYSTEM, USED DAILY FOR AT-HOME ESPRESSO SERVICE, IS BUILT SEAMLESSLY INTO THE WALL NEXT TO A SUB-ZERO REFRIGERATOR.

Before ground was even broken, though, Lewis created a virtual reality fly-through on the computer, so the Smiths could get a sense of how the internal spaces would flow. "It was a great idea," Debra says, "because we found things that we wanted to change—and saved some disappointments later on." One example was the addition of a 9-by-9-foot glass-and-wood-panel sliding door that now divides the dining room from the kitchen and pantry, where a stationary wall was originally planned. "If we'd left the wall, it would have made a small space feel like a tunnel," Debra adds. "But now we have maximum flexibility, and the panel almost functions as a piece of art."

Indeed, the entire residence is well thought out. The first thing that stands out as you enter the residence is the conspicuous lack of everyday items. "They don't like clutter," Lewis says. "So we lined the walls with hidden cabinetry. Concealed drawers are filled with toys for the kids, home entertainment equipment is behind closed doors, glassware and serving pieces all have a place out of sight."

Careful attention was also paid to lighting throughout the home, from bouncing ambient light from hidden skylights to using low-voltage fixtures for diffused illumination. "The lighting has really helped build the space," Jeff points out. "It creates boundaries where they're needed and highlights walls and ceilings to provide dramatic focal points that slowly emerge as day turns to night." But for all the innovative design features discreetly incorporated throughout this unique residence, perhaps the most successful aspect is how it supports a simple and abundant family lifestyle.

"Both Debra and I wanted to create a home ... where friends just knock on the door and come hang out for a while," says Jeff. "Little by little, that idea is starting to work here. Now we have neighbors who drop in. We're hoping that this house will become a central place where people can congregate, relax and just have some fun." ■

Robyn Cannon is a Seattle writer and designer whose company, Classic Courtyards LLC, specializes in the creation and installation of European-inspired urban courtyard gardens.