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HOME
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Pacific Palace

Kari Whitman rolls out the red carpet for this regal L.A. pad

ARCHITECTS

PROVIDING CONCEPTS AND PROGRAMS FOR DELUXE HOMES



Engawa House

Sullivan Conard Architects' Engawa House is situated on the shores of Lake Washington with views of Mt. Rainier. Wood-framed in hemlock, the residence's basic form is comprised of expansive, horizontal roof eaves featuring a high clerestory leading to a central "light core," a volume of space illuminating the center of the home. A custom, floor-to-ceiling entry door with cast bronze hardware by Stefan Gulassa (stefangulassa.com) and Sullivan Conard Architect, Stephen Sullivan, introduces the Japanese design theme. The fabrication of the door handle is comprised of silk cord wrap over inlaid shagreen, the same technique used in the making of traditional Japanese samurai swords. The grand room, a large, light-filled entertaining space, features Lift and Slide floor-to-ceiling doors in solid fir by Quantum (quantumwindows.com), and custom blue spruce ceiling beams by GR Plume (grplume.com). The house's "engawa" or veranda leads to a spectacularly manicured landscape garden by TR Welch and Associates (trwelch.com).

Sullivan Conard Architects

INSPIRATION FOUND IN JAPANESE ARCHITECTURE AND THE HISTORY OF CRAFT IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

by Jamie Farshchi

A history of craftsmanship in the Pacific Northwest was a driving influence in the design of Sullivan Conard Architect's Engawa House, a home set on the shores of Lake Washington that finds its roots in Japanese architecture and modernism.

Peter Conard, a principal at the Seattle-based firm, sees the design as "a celebration of wood and craft," two concepts that are specific to the language of Japanese architecture and the rich traditions of the Northwest region.

The structure is a long, slim but bold, L-shaped design. Its levels are layered in such a way that one imagines an aerial view in which the horizontal roofs appear as a single form.

The residence is timber-framed in hemlock, and the wood's light color adds radiance to an already light-filled open space. At the center of the home is a high ceiling that opens to a clerestory that directs light down and lets it radiate throughout. Conard refers to this as home's "light core."

"In the [Pacific] Northwest the sun is a finite and coveted commodity," he explains, "the balance of light on multiple sides of the room is critically important, when you move from one room to the other, light becomes this unifier."

Reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright, the exterior concrete structure at once contrasts and integrates seamlessly into its natural surrounding. This is where the Japanese architectural concept of "engawa," the creation of an intermediate space that integrates the outdoor and interior of a home, is most evident in the design.

"The engawa is the edge of a dwelling that connects the house and the garden," Conard says. "That concept was hit on really early in the process and informed everything from the way the house re-

PHOTOS: BENJAMIN BENSCHNEIDER

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lates to the terrace, to the way the center [of the home] connects to the edge.”

Stephen Sullivan, the founding Principal at Sullivan Conard and architect on the project, has a notable affinity for Japanese design, having pursued pottery in the nation before moving back to the US to practice architecture. It’s this affinity that bodes particularly well with the clients, a retired couple with an interest in Japanese architecture and a livelihood etched out in the Northwest’s timber industry. The result is a design that is clearly and highly considered, each element selected for the way it informs the overall design.

The home’s two cast-in-place concrete chimneys are a case in point. These impressive concrete structures add a complexity to the design. The first chimney serves two fireplaces. The second chimney is split in two, half its mass utilized by a fireplace the other featuring a stair case running from the family room to the second level.

Concrete was chosen for its raw, coarse characteristics, a contrast to the wood featured throughout. Wood grain was also imprinted on the concrete in what Conard calls “horizontal striations,” as a reference to the interior of the home.

The clients were highly engaged in the conception of the space, an involvement that Conard sees as a critical part of the design process. “We have to understand who we’re working with and who we’re designing for. We have a strong focus on client service and it’s very important for us to make the process fun,” he says.

With work spanning from Sydney to the Sherland Islands, Sullivan Conard Architects has been in business for 25 years. Stephen Sullivan has a background in fine arts while Peter Conard studied geology as an undergraduate and practiced as a carpenter before completing a master’s degree at the University of Oregon’s School of Architecture and Allied Arts.

“We come to the work from very different angles,” Conard says. “Stephen has a more intuitive approach while mine is more analytical and that’s why it works.” ■

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Covered walkways and second-floor terraces provide sheltered engagement with the outdoors on the lake side of the house.

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Designed to bring light into the core of the house, the Light Core, a three-dimensional timber-framed structure, serves as the primary spatial orientation of the home as well as its formal path of circulation.

03

The living room and study are both examples of the home’s emphasis on natural materials.

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