

at HOME & *at* WORK

*architects' and designers'
empowered spaces*

Carol Soucek King, Ph.D.



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&
at WORK

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With my gratitude to all those who have empowered me, most especially...

My husband Richard King, with whose support and love I feel I could do anything.

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This book's editor Kevin Clark to whom the idea of focusing on architects' and interior designers' own homes and offices first occurred, Joanne Caggiano for her organizational and administrative help, and Mark Serchuck and Penny Sibal, for seeing a need to produce this book.

My gifted associates at *Designers West/Designers World*: Rick Eng, Angeline Vogl, Keli Dugger, and the generous Susan Pomrantz without whose constant help and buoyant spirit this book would not have been possible.

My great friend Walton E. Brown, publisher of *Designers West* and *Designers World* magazines through whose pages I have been allowed entry into so many empowered spaces.

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Throughout life, in order for us to communicate who we really are, we must make the most of our tools. The result of this ability, once gained, is power...the power to represent and reinforce who we are today and who we want to be.

The following chapters are based on visits with sixty architects and interior designers, some already world leaders in their field, others just beginning to leave their mark. Through developed skills and a refined sense of their own individual character, these professionals have molded the environments in which they live and work into clear projections of their own personal and public identities.

Through these professionals it becomes evident that what one considers a powerful space is highly personal, with as many interpretations as there are individuals. However, there is one common thread running throughout everything they say and practice: the realization that the truly powerful space is the result of organized and deeply felt emotion. It is that perspective which is necessary for those who would enliven space and empower it.

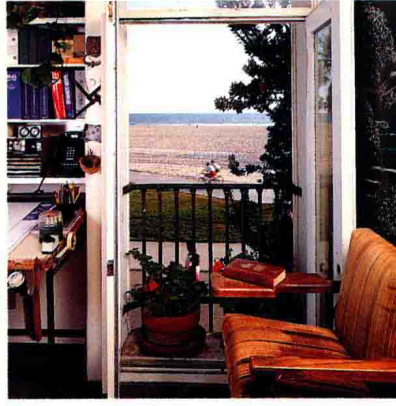
The ability of these professionals to be intimately in touch with their innermost creative selves has enabled them to find truth when expressing themselves through their environments. In fact, they expressed themselves with such brilliant clarity, even when de-

scribing what it is they do, that they changed somewhat my approach in undertaking this work. When I first began the series of interviews that would make up this collection, I had assumed I would turn them into the typical descriptive type of article in which the subjects' quotes are used only intermittently. As I progressed, however, I found that what they had to say was expressed with so much individuality and came so directly from the heart that I decided to interfere as little as possible. It was privilege enough to try to put their ideas down on paper with the same sort of directness that they had been given to me. In doing so, I have hoped to serve primarily as recorder, passing along the wisdom of finely tuned professionals who are also artists...aware of what they have accomplished and eager to go further still.

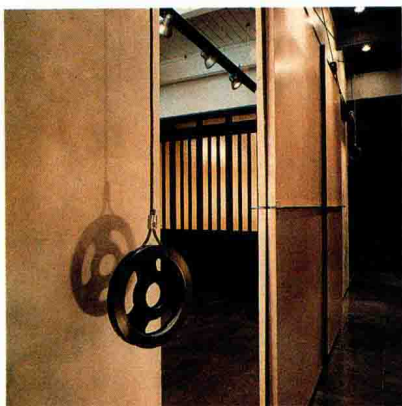
As they describe the environments in which they live and work, as well as explain their design philosophy in general, other design industry professionals will find this book filled with insight. But it is intended as an inspirational guide for all who are interested in extending their understanding of the degree to which personal space can be made useful and expressive.

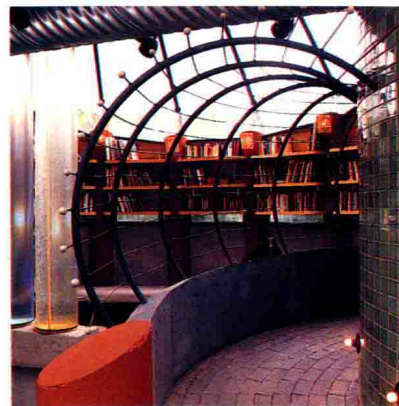
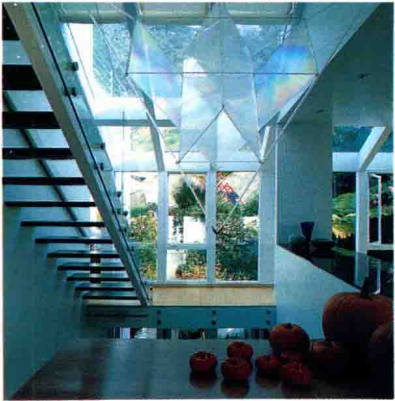
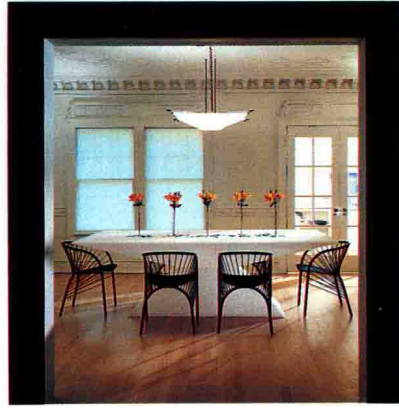
I myself have felt highly motivated and continually uplifted by what these architects and designers have conveyed. May the reader feel the same.

Carol Soucek King



the Explorers







David Weingarten and Lucia Howard

at work & at home

Contemporary ideas of places that inspire creativity are based on a heroic, abstract, minimalist model. Expanses of unadorned white surfaces, drenched in sunlight, surround a lone artist poised before an unmarked canvas/page/stone, the tabula rasa, ready to receive the impression of solitary genius. In this setting, distraction in its various guises as figuration, personal history, and other human beings are kept at bay, so that the artistic impulse will be undisturbed. In the abstract glory of this setting, the artist is freed to confront, as if for the first time, the great problems of his art.

The places our firm Ace Architects designs for itself, both home and studio, must be based on some other model. The settings we like the best (those to which we aspire) and which encourage us architecturally are jam-packed with distractions, traces of history, and souvenirs inciting memory. We far prefer John Soane's apartment in London, Elvis' Graceland in Memphis, or any house overwhelmingly redolent of its occupant, to places which are spare, cool, neutral, and anonymous, no matter how elegant.

For us, it is the singularly overwrought space, rather than the undifferentiated, that is most congenial to creativity. Nearly all our work occurs in places we have designed for ourselves. By contrast, our edge dulls in airplanes, airports, hotel rooms, the entire range of generic environments. Without the use of our own eccentric and idiosyncratic places, Ace would be in deep water, creativity-wise.

David's home on Darrell Place in San Francisco is imagined as a figurative reconstruction of the history of the Bay Region Style. The main floor is modeled on a nineteenth-century library by John Soane, recast in Bay Regional materials, a typical device of the First Bay Region Style. The building's most architectural space is its study, the Architecture Room. A perfect cube, the room is a vivid yellow with identical arches and flanking niches on each wall. A ceiling mural depicts the cycle of the Bay Region Styles, symbolized by architects holding models of their most influential buildings around the base of a domed roof. The room houses collections of metal building replicas, etchings by Piranesi, and architectural books.

top

With chairs from Cardinal Rizzonico's dinette, a set of colorful plywood chairs and table by Ace. The background is the wall of the office library covered in copper shingles.

top right

Leviathan, the home of Ace Architects, which we imagined a coppery green sea monster draped over a gray naval vessel forward and a red and white checked supertanker aft.



Leviathan, the home of Ace Architects, is a new four-story office building on the Oakland waterfront. We imagined a coppery green sea monster draped over a gray naval vessel forward and a red and white checked supertanker aft. Topside are a drafting room in the creature's belly, and the partners' offices within its brain. Metal ribs in the drafting room glisten beneath tall monitors. A copper stair at one end leads to the dome-covered brain above. Bilaterally symmetrical, the head contains the bone structure for the creature's eyes, nose, mouth, and spinal column. Windows fill the eye sockets, and the door in its mouth gives onto a lookout platform atop the creature's tentacles. This room is designed as the place for us to design, and here our most intensely creative work occurs.

Stylistically, Darrell Place and Leviathan are very different. Darrell Place is conceived in the language of traditional architecture, while Leviathan's vocabulary is Modern. Darrell Place is about architecture. It is dense with references to other architects and architectural elements that refer to other buildings. Leviathan is not about buildings at all. Its design sources are sea creatures, maritime machinery, ships, and stories of the sea.

Yet the two have much in common. Both are literal in the way they render their subjects, the sources for their design. Both are evocative and suggestive, provoking memories and fantasies. Neither subscribes to the view of architecture as a somber, serious subject. Our buildings are meant to be fun and to be enjoyed, and sometimes to entertain.

Our creative juices flow most freely in the settings that are richest to us—our own home and studio. Loaded with meanings and memories, these settings embody not only ideas and associations, but also the history of their own making. The experiences of construction, the successes and disappointments, battles, and surprises of each part of the building lend it an aura that only its designers see.

The relationship between a rich setting and creativity is analogous to that between a rich context and interesting architecture. A powerful and complex context, including not just the physical setting but also relevant history and ideas, is often a pre-condition of the best architecture. The most familiar jam-packed settings, those that hold associations and memories for us, provoke our best and most highly charged work.

