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Welcome sun

Change the mood of a room with earthly elements

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Sunlight is a welcome visitor in Michigan homes especially during winter months when sunshine makes only minimal guest appearances.

Inviting sunshine, and introducing other outdoor elements indoors, can change the mood of any room — and maybe even help you forget about the cold.

Fusing outdoors with indoors is still popular in homes across the globe. Working with natural sunlight is something that Robert Ziegelman, an architect with the Birmingham firm Luckenbach-Ziegelman, works with beautifully. Ziegelman understands the need for sunlight and the necessity to harmonize outdoor and indoor design elements.

Open spaces such as balconies, windows and bay windows, are design elements homeowners can use to invite sunlight.

"For example, what's wonderful about a bay window is that it's three-dimensional and it completely opens the view in a room," said Ziegelman while pointing to a picture of a home he designed in Colorado.

Ziegelman, a member of the American Institute of Architects, was the architect for the Pontiac Silverdome, and the Birmingham Fire Station. While his firm is best known for its non-residential designs, Ziegelman says home design is really where the fun is found. He has designed a number of homes and renovations for affluent Michigan residents.

Let the sun shine

Sun shines all day through windows he strategically placed in a Birmingham house. By rotating the roof structure 15 degrees in a Colorado home, Ziegelman created interesting spaces and corners that emit light and accentuate a mountainous view that complements the interior decor.

The stunning Caribbean-style home he designed on Turks & Caicos Island in the Caribbean for a Michigan couple, smooths the outdoor-indoor transition with elegant wooden "shutters" over screens, and slate flooring indoors and out.

In another home under way in West Bloomfield, Ziegelman is working with the movement of the sun so its rays will shine even in the lower level.

"It won't feel like a basement, or a lower level," he said with a smile.

Simple touches

Not everyone has Robert Ziegelman available to design or re-design their home, but we can learn from his breath-taking ideas and concepts. Some ideas come from the uncomplicated minds of children.

"Ask a child to draw a house," he said

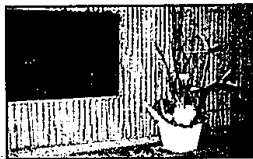


PHOTO COURTESY OF PUBLICITY WORKS

Simplicity: Colorful floral arrangements with Birds of Paradise, like this one created by Tiffany Florist of Birmingham, enhance the wooded Caribbean-feeling of this eclectic room.

enthusiastically while discussing the Birmingham house he "lightened up."

"See what they draw." They draw simple boxed houses. In the Birmingham home, he used that simple concept rather than create another "Bigfoot" house.

"We did what was appropriate with an Early American Salt Box, rectangle," he said. "...a modern house with a variety of interior spaces with the discipline of a rectangle."

Again, sunlight and the outdoor view were incorporated into the design. On a simpler scale, adding color and a few tropical accessories can help diminish that gray winter feeling, and lift your spirits.

Tropical plants, available at many local florists including Tiffany Florist in Birmingham, are colorful accents that warm any room.

Paint bathrooms and living rooms, especially big open walls, with natural colors such as terra cotta, or faux wood paint to create an outdoorsy atmosphere.

Adding other earthly elements to your decor like stone, granite and marble also bring the outdoors in. Consider a natural stone bathroom vanity which can be found at companies like Booms Stone Co. in Redford.

For flooring check out places like T.J. Ceramic Tile of Southfield that specialize in granite, marble, and ceramic tile. Rattan furniture also lends a taste of the tropics to any room.

On the upper scale of home design, a grand plan is under way at 250 Martin Street in downtown Birmingham. Ziegelman designed the eight-unit condo building across from the city's picturesque Shain Park to include oversized outdoor living spaces.

By increasing the width of the balcony and creating railings that do not obstruct the view, Ziegelman kept true to his philosophy that sun and light are as essential to building as bricks and mortar.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK LATKUNIA

Michigan light: Sun is a key element considered by architect Robert Ziegelman when he designs houses in Michigan. Ziegelman works with the rectangular shape of this Birmingham house to complement the surroundings. Strategically arranged windows bring in sunlight at key times of the day, without letting too much light in. The placement of the windows give the living area the feeling of being open to the outdoors.

Playful flying things brighten decor

"Things with wings" are popular for the garden. Indoors, the same is true.

Colors and creatures inspired by nature on prominent indoor areas create a smooth flow from the outside to the inside.

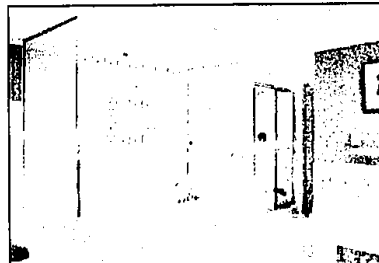
"Char green, sand, white, red, black, and dark brown are colors of nature ... Mahogany is the wood of choice since it enriches the environment. Slate flooring and polished concrete walls help create a natural, minimalist feeling," said Juan Portez of the International Interior Design Association.

For a playful outdoor look in the bathroom, those colors can be combined with "things with wings." For the noncommittal, Stick 'n Stile Design Appliqués by Environmental Graphics are a contemporary way to customize ceramic tiles. The peel-n-stick bath appliqués are removable to change with the styles.

Current choices are Fiji Palms, water and summer themes and geometric shapes. Just stick on to a clean tiles, shower doors, mirrors or ceramic tiles.

And when the trend becomes passé, just remove them with a heat from a blow dryer.

Stick 'n Stile Design Appliqués are available at Bed Bath and Beyond Stores.



Faux: The Fiji Palms peel-n-stick appliqués, from Environmental Graphics, are a close lookalike to true customized ceramic tiles.



Working with the environment: A consideration of this home was its acoustics — members of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra perform there. Also, this home, created by architect Robert Ziegelman, shows how a home can blend into the environment. By rotating the roof structure 15 degrees, a simple geometric form becomes a complex series of spaces allowing the view of the Colorado mountains to shine through.

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