

A photograph of a curved wooden interior, likely a staircase or a small office space. The walls and ceiling are made of vertical wooden planks. A large skylight is visible at the top, and a smaller, glowing yellow light fixture is mounted on the floor in the foreground. The text "OFFICE SPACE" is overlaid on the image in a white, sans-serif font, enclosed in a thin white rectangular border.

OFFICE SPACE

BY JENNY QUILL

FAREWELL FLUORESCENTS *Opposite: A small, yellow-glass window and a skylight cut between the rafters help lighten up long workdays in this office.*

ACCORDING TO A 2003 AMERICAN INTERACTIVE CONSUMER SURVEY, 23.5-MILLION AMERICAN EMPLOYEES WORK FROM HOME DURING BUSINESS HOURS AT LEAST ONE DAY PER MONTH. ADD TO THAT FIGURE AN ADDITIONAL 23.4-MILLION SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS, AND IT BECOMES CRYSTAL CLEAR WHY HOMEOWNERS AND BUILDERS ARE NOW INSISTING THAT AN OFFICE (OR TWO) BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF CUSTOM-HOME DESIGN. HERE, WE TAKE YOU INSIDE TWO HOME OFFICES—ONE ON THE MORE TRADITIONAL SIDE, THE OTHER A MODERNIST REVISION—TO DISCOVER WHAT THE OWNERS WERE LOOKING FOR, WHAT THEY GOT AND HOW YOU CAN APPLY THEIR IDEAS AND DESIGNS TO YOUR OWN HOME.

LET THE LIGHT SHINE IN

The home office often suffers from an overdose of clunky hardware (think fax machines), leading to a serious shortage of ambience. So when it came time to design their home office, the Lows gave architect Eddie Jones the creative reigns. The final product is part office, part secret lair and part cozy living room.

Lighting played an important role in making this “cocoon space” with its narrow, hide-out-like entry an inviting place to work. Jones had originally included a yellow-glass window placed high up on the wall, two view-level windows and one window that faced the fireplace so that if the owners had a fire burning, they could gaze upon the flames. However, the Lows came back after its initial completion asking for more light, so Jones creatively cut a skylight between the rafters and added “slivers” of stained glass, allowing not only more natural light to flood in, but also a rainbow of color—combining the functional with the aesthetic, something that Jones feels is necessary, even for an essentially utilitarian space.



ONLINE OFFICE *While your home office should suit your personality, it also needs to be a practical, functional, ready-for-meetings-or-mergers kind of space. Here are some quick clicks to source.*

- **www.homeofficelife.com.** The site of home-office expert Lisa Kanarek. You'll find great organizational tips, thorough resource listings for books (including Kanarek's "Home Office Life: Making a Space to Work at Home"), furniture and other online sites worthy of browsing.
- **www.hermanmiller.com.** The official site of Herman Miller for the Home, which sells upscale, modern furnishings and accessories for workaday folks. Don't miss the articles on such design-related topics as ergonomics. Also unskippable: the company's e-zine, Jugglezine (www.jugglezine.com), where you'll find hilarious essays (because you can always use a good laugh in between crown-molding selections) that delve into the subtler nuances (say, the Zen of desktop management) of the work-at-home reality.
- **www.atworkathome.com.** Architect Neal Zimmerman's site runs the gamut of home-office-related design dilemmas. Zimmerman has written several books on the topic, including "At Work, At Home" (Taunton Press, 2001) and "Home Office Design" (John Wiley & Sons, 1996).
- **www.greatbuildings.com.** While not focused on home offices per se, this thorough reference guide to some of the world's most prestigious architectural wonders—from the Doge's Palace to Dulles International Airport—should surely inspire. Search its database for images, information on the architects and accompanying notes and commentary by leading design figures. The site works in conjunction with Architecture Week (www.architectureweek.com), an outstanding online magazine.

"The usefulness of the space goes beyond satisfying the functional requirements," he says. "Unless it's a beautiful space you want to be in for hours, it doesn't matter how functional it is. It has to have enrichment about it, something that allows you to want to be there."

Indeed, the details are what make the room: how the afternoon light reflects off the compacted-dirt walls—the soul of the room—and the maple veneer cabinetry and display cases designed by Jones to

"THE USEFULNESS OF THE SPACE GOES BEYOND SATISFYING THE FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS."

accommodate the owner's cherished memorabilia and awards. To accommodate the functional criterion, Jones set aside space for filing cabinets, vertical storage, the fax machine, phone lines and a CPU. The result is a room where Jones usually finds the owners hanging out when he drops by to visit.

Architect and Builder: Eddie Jones; Jones Studio, Inc.

DESIGN MEMO *Want to get the look of the Low home office? Your quick guide to doing it:*

- The beautiful veneer cabinetry and display cases were designed by Eddie Jones (602.264.2941, www.jonesstudioinc.com) and made by Meyer and Lundahl Manufacturing Company (602.254.9286, www.meyerandlundahl.com).
- The modern-but-functional chairs and furnishings were purchased through Corporate Interior Systems (CIS), 602.304.0100, www.cisinphx.com.
- Adding treasured mementos and collectibles is an excellent way to personalize an office space. The homeowner, an avid dog lover, wanted to show off his collection of Royal Dalton dog figurines that has taken some 50 years to assemble (his wife estimates that he has more than 150), and so Jones built a glass-case display. Looking for similar pieces? Happy hunting—the homeowner truly shopped the world over, from flea markets to e-Bay to dog shows and stores throughout Europe.



DESIGN MEMO *Go ahead—shamelessly steal other people's décor. Here's what you can take away from Ron Heslep's home office:*

- Select artwork based on your preferences—not just because it meshes with the latest color scheme. You can pick up Southwestern bronze sculptures similar to Heslep's at Legacy Gallery (480.945.1113).
- Space out. You need room for all of those modern-day office trinkets, so select a desk and other counter space (or have them custom made) that are spacious enough for paperwork, a computer (whether it's a desktop or laptop will also come into play),

fax machine, phone and printer. "If they have a desktop," says designer Paula Den Boer, "make sure they have a hidden cupboard for their CPU with enough ventilation." Don't forget that all of these gadgets also require wires and electrical outlets.

- The quality of light in your office is of paramount importance. The three large windows in Ron's office are shaded by solar-timed blinds. These ensure you can have the right amount of light at all times and not be drenched in blazing-hot sunlight come high noon. Check out Mr. P's Blinds and Shades Company (480.947.1854) for more information on similar window trimmings.

“WE SHAPE OUR BUILDINGS;
THEREAFTER THEY SHAPE US.”
—WINSTON CHURCHILL

A TRADITIONAL TAKE

“It was a long, involved process,” says Ron Heslep of the first custom home he and his wife, Barb, built in North Scottsdale. “We didn’t realize there were so many decisions.” But all of the fretting over small details paid off, a fact that shines through much like the bright afternoon light that pours forth into his office-away-from-the-office. It’s all about traditional comfort—rich, dark woods and muted tans put one instantly at ease. You’ll get a quick introduction to Ron’s interests the second you walk through the heavy wood door. “As a kid,” says Ron, “I liked cowboys and Indians. If I found a nice piece that had value, I’d buy it.” The Southwestern theme is continued with sculptures along the shelves that Ron started picking up at galleries after the home was built.


But this office is not merely for show. Ron runs his business from this room when he’s in town, so it needs to be functional—a request that was high on designer Paula Den Boer’s list. “Homeowners need to be aware of what computer or laptop they need,” she says, “to make sure there’s plenty of electrical, room to fit your computer and ease of desk surface.” Den Boer selected a large desk with room aplenty for stacks of paperwork, Ron’s laptop, a fax machine and a printer. “I think the surface should be less busy,” she says. “When it gets too busy, it doesn’t work.”

Ingenious solar-timed blinds allow in the perfect amount of sunlight at all the right times. But perhaps the most notable aspect of this office is its location. “I asked for it to be off the master bedroom on purpose,” Ron says. “I wanted the master bedroom suite to be self-containing.” The office has its own bathroom, meaning there’s really no reason to leave. And while it is just feet away from the master bedroom, it feels like its own private retreat, worlds away from any household hustle and bustle—perfect for getting all those last-minute to-do’s done.

HOW YOUR OFFICE DESIGN IS AFFECTING YOUR BRAIN

Studies have been conducted in recent years to determine how our physical environments affect our productivity and the way we behave at and feel about work. It has been shown that, among other things, quality of light, outside views and our ability to control our environment are some of the leading factors in determining what makes us happy or unhappy at the office. And while these studies predominantly reflect corporate-office environments, this information also holds important lessons for home-office design.

In May 2003, the American Institute of Architects established the Academy of Neuroscience for Architecture (ANFA), which aims to “explore research that bridges neuroscience with architecture.” It is the first think tank in the world that focuses specifically on how architecture and design influence the brain and, consequently, human behavior. Its members—leading architects and neuroscientists—are involved in a number of research projects, including one that studies the brain-sector responses to classical and contemporary designs of residential, religious and educational facilities. For more information on ANFA, visit www.neuroscienceforarchitecture.org.

Barb’s office is a testament to the fact that you don’t need four walls, a big, oak desk or an ergonomic chair to get your work done. “We debated and debated,” says Barb. “I’m organized clutter, he’s a neat freak. We found we work better in separate spaces. I don’t like being closed in.” So her workspace is part and parcel of the kitchen, the filing cabinets and drawers cleverly concealed by matching cabinetry and pull-out cabinets, where the fax and printer are neatly, and covertly, stored. Her desk not only affords her wide, open space, but also expansive views of the Valley and the mountains beyond. “Sometimes when I’m sitting here,” she says, “I can hear tapping, and it’s the birds tapping on the window.” And while she admits that the view is sometimes a tad distracting, she wouldn’t trade her corner office for anything. 

Architect and Builder: Shiloh Custom Homes

Interior Designer: Paula Den Boer, Ashley P. Design