

Office Space

Written by Written by Nichole Brophy

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Creating award-winning designs is how these architects have made their marks, so we turned the tables to explore the environments that inspire their ingenuity.

Bing Hu

The Hangar One facility located in the Scottsdale Airpark is an architect's dream. While sections of the hangar house corporate aircrafts, a sizable portion of the building is home to H & S International, the headquarters of acclaimed architect Bing Hu.

"This is already a very incredible, beautiful space so we didn't really want to do anything to the look," Hu says. "We just worked with it to make it more inspiring." Hu did so by adding splashes of primary colors throughout the 12,000-sq-ft office, a vision clearly realized in an area of the Hangar one facility known as the green room.

Encapsulated by a green-tinted, glass-walled entrance, the green room is an architect work space punctuated by a primary-colored plexiglass ceiling situated atop aluminum trellises. Turning your focus upward allows the eye to see through the patches of yellows, reds and blues into an additional work space above. Rays of light refract through the ceiling and provide a stimulating hue on the design environment below.

Upon occupying the Hangar One facility, which was originally designed by Adam Tihany with Swaback Partners, Hu knew which office would be his from the get-go. Essentially a glass room on all sides with glass doors that mimic aircraft systems, Hu's office, much like air traffic control, oversees a segment of the runway and the planes on the ramp each day.

"I like speed," says Hu, whose current primary design focus is on high-end residential resorts--essentially grand-scale custom residences. "I like to watch the planes go by every 10 minutes, because this is one of the busiest single-runway airports in the nation. So to watch them take off or the landing speed as they go by is very exciting. I just enjoy fast things."

Dale Gardon

For Dale Gardon, principal of Scottsdale-based Dale Gardon Design, going to the office is like coming home.

"I was interested in making offices with more residential character so that when you spend so much time here as we do, you might as well be comfortable," says Gardon, who classifies the interior of his 8,000-sq.-ft. office as "rus-tech," a term his firm coined to describe its use of rustic materials combined with a technological feel embodied by exposed building systems.

The achievement of that concept is apparent throughout the office's interior and exterior spaces. The kitchen, for example, is as cozy and well-appointed as one you'd find in a custom residence. An outdoor barbecue and gathering patio afford staff the opportunity to enjoy at-home luxuries while at work from nine to five.

The central design area, lined with tall portable design boards detailing individual projects, is positioned below intricate beaming with industrial appeal that provides visual passageways in every direction. From this space, the eye is attracted outside and upstairs to visibly elevated spaces, and enticed into side rooms highlighted by hues that contrast with the location's desert palette.

"I always want to see into another space," Gardon says. "There is a relatedness in our architecture where upstairs, downstairs, inside and outside there is a relatedness wherever you go. Some people call it a control thing where you have to have surveillance, I prefer to say that it is architectural enjoyment," Gardon says, chuckling.

Several architectural standouts are sprinkled around the complex: a partially see-through glass bridge leading to Gardon's personal office, an alternate step staircase and an exciting loft with breathtaking views of Windgate Pass.

"An inspiring office environment makes people feel better," Gardon says. "The world is living by spec office, and that is unfortunate. If I had a personal quest, it would be [helping] people realizing that and finding ways to take the joe average office environment and just make it more inspiring."

Vern Swaback

Since 1986, Vern Swaback of Swaback Partners arrives each day at an office complex he designed just off McDonald Drive in Scottsdale. If you didn't know it was there, you could easily miss it, but once inside, you'd wonder how you ever did.

The complex encircles an interior courtyard brimming with natural desert vegetation and calming water features. The sensation could be likened to that of a world-class spa in some far off destination because once inside, you find its Central Scottsdale location is no longer apparent.

"When I walk in through the portal gate every morning, I'm not coming to work—I'm coming to life," Swaback says. "I've told employees here, 'I don't know how much you need this place, but this place needs you; I need you.'"

Swaback's staff of 50 are scattered through out the 12,000-sq.-ft. office space. Their friendly faces peek out from around and above the maze-like dividing walls that dictate the flow of the setting. The web-like quality supplies character by making it impossible to turn in any direction without catching a glimpse of a past, present or future Swaback project.

Swaback's personal office space reveals the classic natural colorings, contours and artwork of the architectural master, Frank Lloyd Wright, for whom Swaback served as an apprentice prior to Wright's death. Distinguished by cherry wood, high ceilings and a vast library of architectural literature, Swaback's space also features custom-designed furniture and accessories.

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"You can visit certain architectural offices where the only part you might see looks like a law office or some other professional office," Swaback says. "The minute you enter here, you are entering a workshop where everything we do is on display. There is no back room with people working away; the whole place is just who we are."