SOLITUDE in the CITY

The carefully engineered skylights in Swain’s elevated “back house” bedroom (the only room with air-conditioning) are installed in the roof to add height. On a couple surfaces of his bedroom (Western maple, salvaged fir floor, decorative copper, gray natural exposed steel with lacquer finish), Swain keeps heart-shaped rocks ... and two wooden hearts his dad crafted for his moon when they met, at 16, in 1926.

AS YOU AMBLE along the buddy landscaped, wood-planked path to Bob Swain’s Phinney Ridge home — once you find Bob Swain’s Phinney Ridge home — your shoulders slump. Your neck descends. You breathe deeply (remember that?) and sigh, not even on purpose: “Ahh.”

Wait just one city-slickin’ minute here — is this a house, or some kind of mystic hidden oasis? Yes. And yes.

The sitting area of Swain’s study is “super-quiet,” he says, and overlooks a garden through an open wall of glass. Swain says he placed windows where he has “major privacy.”

A former president of the Pratt Fine Arts Center board of trustees, Swain says he “carefully thought to support a lot of art” in his home. His cathedral-ceilinged living area is a virtual gallery of collected art and furnishings by classic designers, with a Le Corbusier cube chair, Noguchi table and Frank sofa alongside a reclined and regal rocking chair from the 1960s.

“We live too intense lives,” says Swain, the architect/designer behind Robert Edison Swain Architecture + Design. “In a busy city, how do you create refuge? It’s an emotional experience as you decompress before you make it to the front door.”

Technically (though not argumentatively, because we are very relaxed), there are three...
doors to the three living "envi-
ronments" that make up Swan's
intentionally tucked-away and
thoughtfully renovated 1905
home. Together, they add up to
1,730 square feet, give or take,
split between the main build-
ing's upper level, a back-house
master suite-office (formerly a
one-car garage) and a lower-
level entertainment area Swan
jokingly (but kind of aptly, actu-
ally) calls a "credenza."
Swain bought his "cabin in the
woods" hideaway in 1998.
The "tong, skinny, T-shaped
bungalow on a pint" had been
modified over the years but,
looking, maybe not to its full
potential.
"The first thing I did was just
cleanse," Swain says. Adding,
ashenwood. See yes, old slug carpet
and smoke-yellow walls. By,
bear, glaze picks up refrigerator.
Out went the "classic work-
shop" vibe. In came the
outside. And now every
width-reaching window offers
a soothing view of greenery.
"I love climbing, hiking and
wilderness," Swain says. "My
fantasy is living in a Cascade
cabin I could sleep in every
night after work without driving
to Methow. This is like a vaca-
tion every day in the city."
But it's a vacation spot where
tings work.
"Everything works at least
three purposes, and it has to be
beautiful," says Swain, a credit
to his New England build-
heritage. "Everything is very
changeable. It's a way to fit
things you shouldn't and be able
to a small space."
Sticking examples are ram-

It's fitting that the back
house used to be a garage,
because now it seems
transformable. Swain's
gloriously skylight-filled bedroom, up high,
"driven by the sky," to create
storage space underneath. His
study turns into a yoga area;
one once he moves chairs, rests
a coffee table under a bigger
and transforms the massage
table from its coffee-
headboard nook. The same space
forms into business meeting ➤

Ming's Gallery GRAND OPENING

REDMOND TOWN CENTER
7225 170th Ave NE, Redmond
ANTIQES • FINE FURNITURE • ART
Japan | China | Korea | Burma | Thailand | Nepal
425.814.0178 • mingsgallery.com

Spring decking on sale now! FSC Certified Redwood + Cumaru in stock!

Solutions
Greenhome
Earth friendly building products & home store
1216 W Nickerson St
Seattle, WA 98119
206.284.2281

Turn Your Bath Into a devine Bath! BATH REMODEL SALE 50% OFF CUSTOM TILE ENDS THIS MONTH

STYLE - One Stop. Shop at Home.
PROCESS - We guide, you decide.
INSTALLATION - Quick. Easy. Only Weeks.

device bath
TRENDPROOF REMODELING

FREE IN-MHOME CONSULTATION
866.264.8960 WWW.DEVINEBATH.COM

THE SEATTLE TIMES • MARCH 29, 2016 23
central when he angles the larger table 90 degrees, slides a wooden door to block the bedroom stairs, and hangs presentations from a picture rail.

- Opposite the ruined steel-sided, copper-flashed fireplace in the living area, a beautiful bookcase looks a lot like your usual bookcase but in the move — and exposes a hidden staircase leading to the lower level.

- Down those stairs, the former crawl space is now a magical place of preto-change. Poof! It’s a gathering spot: dinner around a 300-pound madrone slab table and movies in the entertainment nook (on custom seating Susan designed). A small office. It’s a complete guesthouse. Or apartment. Or pied-à-terre. The sitting area becomes a queen bed; glass-faced doors define the new sleeping space, and you’ll find your guest bathroom behind, and kind of nestled within, the translucent glass walls framed by steel-sheathed bookcases. That mirror above the granite sink looks just outside! Also a door to the service area.

- Elsewhere (everywhere), walls hide drawers and light switches; screens shield electric panels and garden supply; furnishings hold shelves; and nooks conceal storage spaces, travel gear and even a rolling wine shelf.

“Tired of doing things to this house is that I don’t let you feel everything is ever a compromise. It’s all in the detailing and thoughtfulness and mindfulness.”

Mindfulness, did she say? Ahh.