

GUT CHECK

Opening up the interior while adding respectfully is the Massey Hoffman way

Bill Massey, AIA, is a Green Bay native who attended undergraduate school and worked in Minneapolis before wandering from Paris (for work) to New Haven (for graduate school) before arriving in Chicago to work for Booth Hansen in 1994. He worked there—primarily on residential designs—for 11 years and then opened Massey Hoffman with fellow Booth Hansen alum David Hoffman, AIA. The firm portfolio includes a downtown retail and clinic space, but it mostly comprises residential additions where the partners draw on the character of existing buildings to create a strong dialogue between eras.

Massey sat down for a discussion on his background and two recent projects.

How did you get interested in architecture?

My dad was a lather—when lathe and plaster was the way to finish spaces. I'd see the buildings he was working on, and that was of interest to me. But his job was so labor-intensive, there was just no way I was interested in that. And it never was full-time; there were always times when he was out of work.

What's the story of the Landmark Residence?

The building is a "contributing structure" in a landmark district. The Landmarks Commission doesn't want to see what you're adding. The client liked the character—it was a Victorian house—but they wanted it to be as open as possible and they wanted modern amenities. We shored up the shell and completely removed the inside, using current structural technology with wood trusses and steel beams and columns.

The addition is a garage [in the rear] with a master suite above. We lined the master bedroom with sycamore panels that became closet space. You have storage around you, but it's a wood-paneled room. The bay is for the tub in the master bathroom. We got fancy and took some leaded glass in the house as inspiration for the muntin pattern.



Photos courtesy of the firm

For the project known as the Landmark Residence, Massey says, new sections had to be concealed from street view. The front remains as it was (left), while an addition in the rear opens the master bedroom to abundant daylight.



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What's the Suburban Transformation?

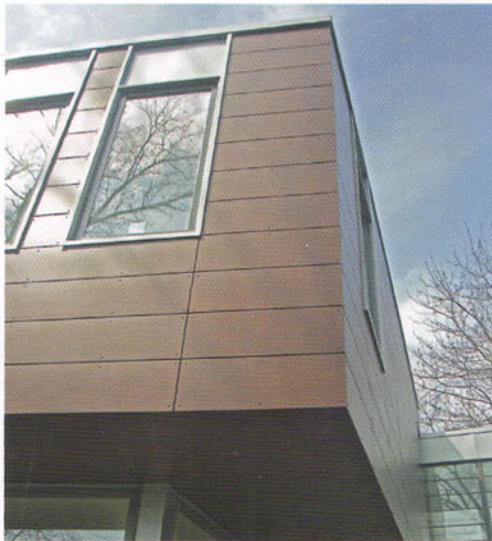
The clients said, "We used to live in a Peter Behrens house in Germany, and we bought this house because it reminded us of that." It's a simple brick box, it had old metal-framed windows; the exterior was pretty taut. Adding onto this house without overtaking the original house was our charge.

The idea was to create a composition of parts—elements of brick, metal, rainscreen, and glass. They wrap and unwrap around each other. They were adding a lot of square footage to the property, but they wanted it to remain modest from the street.

We tried to open the inside up as much as possible, picked up additional ceiling height by dropping the floor in the kitchen and family room, and reconfigured the upper level for their needs. When you walk through, there's a pretty good blurring as to what's old and what's new.

How do you approach new construction?

It's no different. Every project comes with a wish list from the client—program, feeling, character. When it's an addition, we have to look at how to marry the building with what they want. We keep the clients involved; we collaborate. We focus on what they want and then try to make that request a reality. → **Edward Keegan**



This project, which Massey calls the Suburban Transformation, entailed complementing a taut boxy structure (below) with an addition (left) clad in several elements: brick, metal, rainscreen and glass.

