

Woman Architect Cashes in on Design Talent

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Jean Wehrheim is right at home in her office. That's because it has been converted from a workshop in her spacious Lombard ranch home. This view shows the abundance of windows and L-shaped counter top desk.



A sofa, table, and chair provide a lounging area in the office, which has a wall paneled in oak flooring. The doorway leads to a slate-floored entry and another door to the main house and kitchen.

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By Nancy Poore

THERE ARE only a few hundred accredited woman architects in this country, and Jean Wehrheim of Lombard is among them. She continues the practice which she and her late husband, John, established together.

They designed and built their handsome ranch home in "two years' worth of week-ends" about 15 years ago. It is here that Mrs. Wehrheim maintains an office.

For several years the "office" consisted mainly of a large kitchen table. Then it occurred to Mrs. Wehrheim that a workshop and storage space, added to the house a few years ago, might be converted into ideal business headquarters. After all, the former garage had already been converted into a TV room for the two children.

The conversion from workshop to office was completed just a few weeks ago. It is reached thru a slate-floored entry hall with an exterior door as well as one leading into the main house thru the kitchen.

The office is about 13 by 16 feet. To obtain good daylight, Mrs. Wehrheim had eye-level windows installed across the width of the south wall. A valance above the window conceals fluorescent lighting. The existing windows in the east wall were made shallower by covering them partially with laminated plastic wall panels and shelves.

Along these two walls there is a built-in counter top of white laminated plastic, used as a desk and drawing board. The arrangement provides Mrs. Wehrheim, her draftsman, and her secretary with plenty of work space.

Another wall is occupied by storage shelves, which are concealed by matchstick bamboo panels stretched on sliding door frames.

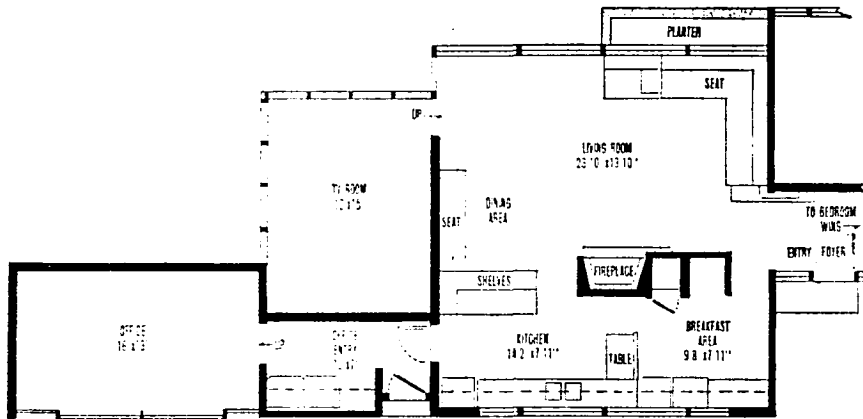
The white ceiling is decorated with wood strips on modules of about 4 feet. Another wall next to the door has been paneled in oak flooring, stained in various wood tones. This treatment demonstrates Mrs. Wehrheim's theory that "unusual effects can be achieved inexpensively."

One corner of the room has an olive green couch, a contemporary slat bench, a pair of pull-up chairs, and a coffee-maker; an ideal arrangement for pleasant consultations.

The attractive, vivacious young homemaker believes that more women should consider architectural careers.

"We have a natural inclination for designing homes," she said. "Men seem to prefer big projects, like offices and public buildings, but I know what I am doing when it comes to designing a kitchen."

Most of her drafting is also done by a woman—Mrs. Richard Roberts, a neighbor.



A flat roof with wide overhanging eaves accentuates the low silhouette of the ranch style home. The office is at the right, adjacent to the TV room with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the back yard.

(TRIBUNE Photos by Robert MacKay)