**FLOAT HOME**

***Lake Union, Washington***

Project Area: **2,100 square feet**

**Overview:**

The float was constructed in Vancouver, BC, and all structural connections had to be located beforehand. The float was moved down to the ship repair yards adjacent Gasworks Park and the home construction was done there. Upon completion, the home was towed across Lake Union by tug and set into its permanent location.

The Seattle Houseboat and Float Home community is unique: the residents share access and live in close proximity to one another, yet there is a community diversity that is unrivaled. The location challenge is creating a home that has some sense of the history of place. The existing homes do little to set parameters, giving unlimited freedom, but a freedom that must be melded, not exploited.

**Purpose Description:**

The original intent of the client was to ‘fit in’ with some of the surrounding neighbors by mimicking the craftsman style that is most prominent (though by no means exclusive).

The homeowners are a retired Seattle couple that wanted to downsize. They went from a 4,000 + square foot home to less than 2,000 square feet.

After walking the locks, however, it was decided that the craftsman style had been imposed on the wharf. A more natural reference to the past would be to emulate the marina warehouses that have adorned the docks for centuries with little change in appearance. These large, box-like structures dominate the Seattle waterfront and reflect the utilitarian roots of Seattle and men like: Doc Maynard, Arthur Denny, and Ivar Haglund.

The ‘wharf aesthetic’ drove the exterior detailing to an industrial end, and the owner-contractor dubbed his home ‘The Floating Cannery’ by the end of the project. The exterior cages, including one around the roof access spiral stair, reinforce the warehouse approach. The vertical banding is reminiscent of crates that are loaded on to barges in the port, while the Trespa panels add warmth to the façade. To reinforce this warm look, Western Red Cedar is used throughout the home.

**Design Approach:**

The straightforward ideals of the home called for a simple layout. The lower floor was kept open by keeping all solid structure on the exterior walls. The stair that connects the lower floor to the upper is centrally supported with a single wide flange and allows sight lines to remain intact. The whole level connects to the exterior by way of glass overhead doors.

The upper level is a personal retreat, private from the adjacent homes through the use of small punch windows, with large expansive views out toward the water. The scale of the home allows for additional spaces such as a laundry room and guest suite.

The roof deck is accessible from a ground floor spiral stair, as well as a ships ladder from the master deck. This space is a nice outdoor retreat with beautiful views back toward the city.

The simple forms created by the exterior shape melded well with the modern lifestyle. The main floors were finished in a polished concrete which house radiant floor heat. The materials on the main floor were chosen to reflect the urban location. Mill finish steel was used for the structure and the stairs, Glue Lam floor joists with 2x6 Hem Fir wood decking was used for the floors. This mix of industrial warehouse and urban loft gives the house a distinctive feel of richness.