

Rina Okawa



Focused on creating beautiful and functional spaces, ZEN Associates is a multi-disciplinary firm providing landscape architecture and interior design to clients with an appreciation for natural materials, peaceful environments and simplicity. Offering mainly residential services, ZEN also works with restaurants, executive offices and wellness environments throughout New England and along the Eastern seaboard. Rina Okawa, Director of Interior Design for ZEN Associates, believes in creating spaces that have a positive impact on people's daily lives. "With so much of our time spent indoors, we tend to forget the power of nature and its positive influence."

Continuing, she explains "As our everyday life has become fast paced, many people crave peacefulness and serenity in their lives. That is where we come in. Our design aesthetic is authentic. It is who we are and always have been. We are not focusing on wellness, simplicity, and nature because it

is the latest trend, but because it has always been important to us. We articulate Japanese design principles into modern Western lifestyle, incorporating natural materials and creating spaces that are timeless, bridging the seamless connection between the interior and exterior.

As a leading Interior Design and Landscape Architecture firm, we have learned the importance of maintaining focus on the design aesthetic and the client's vision while working with the team to get the projects built." Approaching even the most mundane tasks with creativity and passion, Okawa and her team remain focused. "Design is not something that can be rushed or done haphazardly, but rather requires time, effort, and dedication. It's important to always strive for excellence and to constantly push yourself to learn and grow as a designer. In my experience, luck is when preparation meets opportunity, and every moment counts towards achieving your goals."

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BACK TO NATURE

It's time to strengthen the bond between interior and exterior designs.

By Madison Duddy

Open your sliding glass doors and dust off the patio furniture—indoor-outdoor living is finally back. Just as our backyards become an integral part of the home every spring, it's the cohesive design elements that create a necessary flow between interior and exterior spaces. "A seamless connection to our natural environment, both physically and visually, enhances our well-being on a daily basis," says Rina Okawa, director of interior design at ZEN Associates, Inc. (zenassociates.com). "We embrace the power of nature and the use of asymmetry, natural elements, simplicity and balance in our designs to create peaceful environments." Achieve this effortless flow before summer is in full swing thanks to a few tips from Okawa and Peter White, ZEN Associates' president and principal landscape architect.

CREATE A STRONG VISUAL AND PHYSICAL CONNECTION

"Examine the indoor and outdoor space to frame the windows carefully. For some, maximizing the views of the landscape by extending windows all the way to the floor or incorporating an entire wall of windows enables a stronger connection. For others, it's better to have a smaller opening to frame a specific view. With advances in technology, we now have more options to create the visual connection while maintaining climate, visual control and comfort." —RO

PROVIDE A DRAMATIC LANDSCAPE SETTING

"When you are in the interior space, the garden you are viewing should be beautiful, sculptural, seasonally interesting and very personal. The garden should be defined with layers of plant material and then punctuated with sculptural elements such as boulders, water features, specimen plants, lighting, and even furniture or built structures. With thoughtful design, the viewing garden should be an inviting, peaceful and memorable extension of the living space." —PW





**PROPER LIGHTING
EXTENDS THE ENJOYMENT**

“First, you must understand how the natural lighting affects both spaces. Then you can enhance the landscape with additional lighting to highlight design elements and extend the enjoyment of the garden into the evening. When the garden is illuminated at night, it will eliminate the reflection on the interior glass within the home and dissolve the black wall and boundary between indoor and outdoor spaces.” -PW



EXTEND THE INTERIOR SPACE INTO THE LANDSCAPE

“Creating a transition space which is an extension of the indoor space such as a patio, deck, porch or courtyard, not only helps to connect the spaces, but creates more living space as well.” -PW



**USE SIMILAR DESIGN
ELEMENTS AND
MATERIALS BOTH
INSIDE AND OUT**

“The use of similar materials such as wood, stone and boulders both inside and out strengthens the connection between both spaces. When natural forms, color palettes and textures, or even an indoor garden that resonate with the outdoors, are brought into the interior as the design elements, it gives a calming, peaceful atmosphere.” -RO