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Scandinavian and American influences

Nils C. Finne, AIA, owner and principal architect of Finne Architects in Seattle, was raised part of the time in his native Norway and part of the time here in America. He completed undergraduate work at Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design and received his

Master of Architecture degree from Harvard. In 1985, he was a Fulbright Scholar in Helsinki and Florence. Finne has more than 25 years of experience in all phases of residential, institutional, industrial, and commercial work. His residential work has been widely published and televised nationally, and he has taught architectural design at UCLA, the University of Washington, and the University of Southern California. Finne has published several scholarly articles concerning Scandinavian architecture. He is licensed in Washington and California.

Letting in the light

With such notable connections between Scandinavian design and training in both continents, you'd expect Finne to be well-versed in both—and that expectation would be correct. "The Scandinavian outlook doesn't necessarily result in a certain style but rather in a way of

looking at things I think are very important," Finne observes.

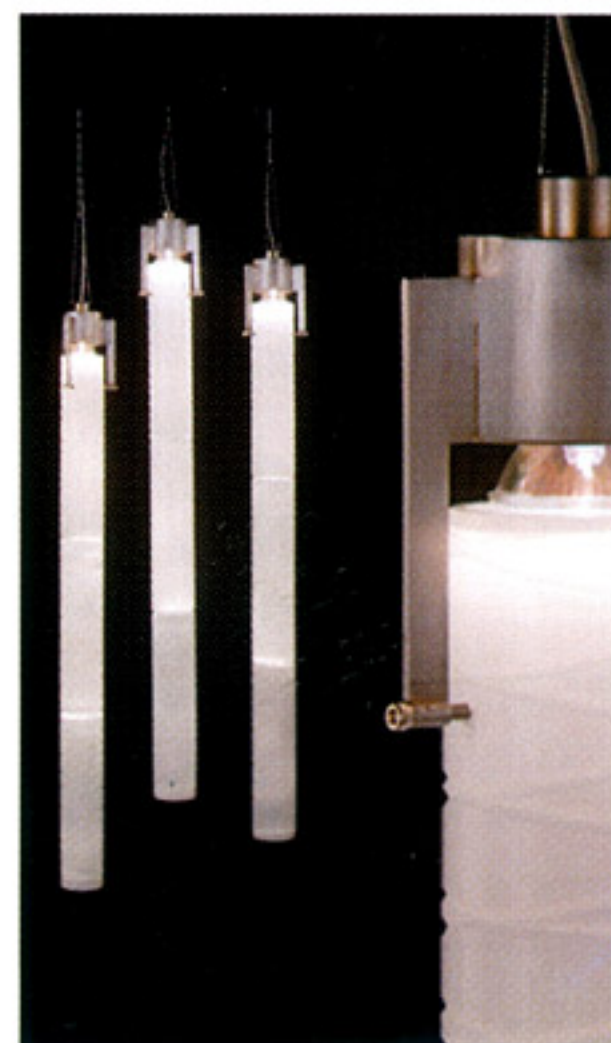
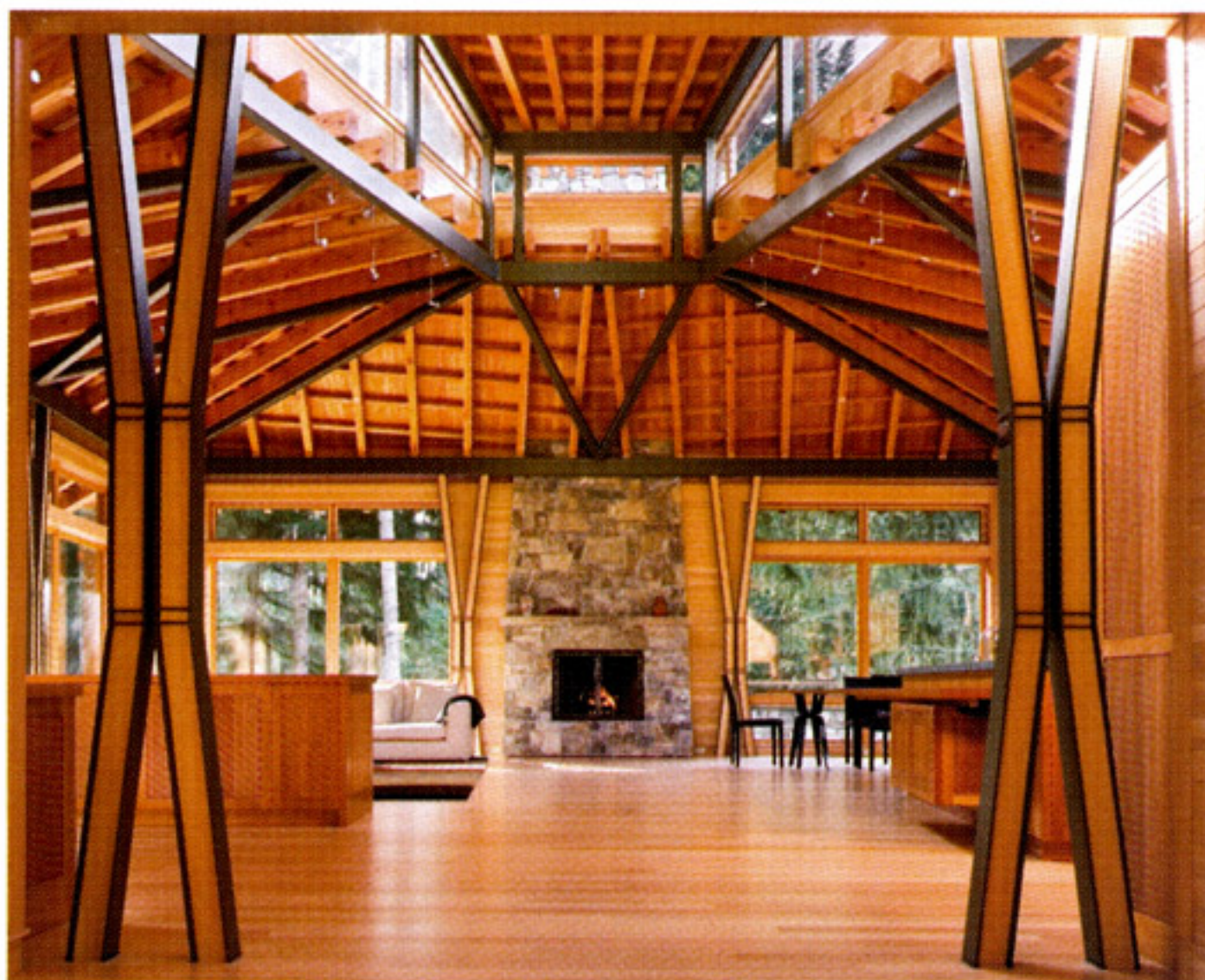
Making the most of natural light is of utmost importance in the Scandinavian regions of the world—and also in the American Northwest—and Finne has very distinct ideas about how that should be achieved in today's homes. "Skylights are the worst thing you can install in a home," he says with conviction. "It just puts a hole in a roof; the light is harsh, and it bleaches out everything underneath it. They generally leak. I prefer high clerestory windows. The light is warmer and softer, and the placement still offers plenty of privacy." ■

Christine Holm is a writer with more than 20 years' experience. She is convinced of the importance of clerestory windows and hopes to add one to her home soon.

All images on this page courtesy of Benjamin Benschneider

▲ Finne designs homes of all sizes, large and small.

◀ Natural materials and clerestory windows illuminate this home.



FURNITURE

"Furniture is interesting," Nils Finne remarks. "I think it's one aspect that distinguishes my firm from others." His studies with influential Danish designer Tage Frid at the Rhode Island School of Design sparked Finne's interest in furniture design. "We create custom high-end design. We go well beyond the typical scope of furniture, lighting, and hardware design into the realm of what I broadly call 'custom fabrications.'" The simple and elegant Troms cylinder lighting, above, is a best seller.



Crafted Modernism

What Nils Finne calls "crafted modernism" is one of the most "underlooked factors in sustainability."

"If you don't create something with enduring beauty," he believes, "all of the green materials won't make a bit of difference." The first order of business? Build well.