

The Interior Life

By Judith Hulka

A sacred place

Unless you're a hermit, you probably have public and private space in your home even if you didn't consciously consider it in your interior design.

In my home, I think of public space as a place where I'm willing to be communal, and can relax with others from in and outside the household, share

and self-centered. It's a place where I recognize myself and where I'm always comfortable being me. Although I may be alone there, I'm not lonely. Even if someone else is there, I can be alone with my thoughts. Serene. Even if it's noisy there, I'm peaceful. Even doing nothing there feels productive. It's private space where I am my own best friend. It's a

place where I go for what some people call "the sacrament of the present moment."

Everyone craves this type of relationship with space and many people find it, even if by accident, not design. The old Barca lounge chair that no one but Dad could sit on is one stereotypical example. Another is when we give our newly narcissistic teenager her own bedroom that is separate from younger siblings. In fact, so many children today have so little home-grown experience sharing space that colleges are building single dorm rooms to meet the new demand for privacy and discomfort with roommates. And, adults who can afford their own kind



Tish Key's 20 years in interior design, eight of which have been in The City, where small, challenging spaces in old houses abound, turned this tiny, dark, windowless space into a gem by bringing outdoor images indoors, playing with light, and adding sensuality. Reflections from the star-like chandelier dance off the mother of pearl tile and space-expanding mirror that washes the otherwise neutral walls. A gigantic fuchsia peony almost pops out of the framed print and an antelope pattern paws the wool carpet. A perfectly proportioned bamboo tray table and chair add function. The hand-embroidered linens from Haute Home are graced by a cashmere throw and silk pillow from Sue Fisher King, both located on Sacramento Street, and add touchable luxury to Jeremy Lewis' massage table. Tish both lives and works in Cow Hollow and can be found at www.tishkey.com. (Photo by Rusty Reniers)

meals, participate in activities, or work side by side, even if no one says a word or makes any effort to be sociable. It's shared space and, to me, sharing space requires mutual respect. I have to be aware of others when I'm in shared space.

My sacred place is any space in my home where I focus totally on myself. It's a place that I've consciously designed primarily for myself. It's a place where it's okay not to share, but to be selfish

of separateness have bathrooms with "his" and "her" sinks.

While it may be easier to carve your own niche out of a 10,000-square-foot home in Pacific Heights than a studio apartment in North Beach, creating your own sacred place is more about you than the size of your home. More space might help, but it's not necessary to meet the goal of a place in your home that pleasures only you. The most important requirement is that the space is dedicated to you ... and that others respect that. Whatever you do there, feel there, or go there for must be sacrosanct, personal and important to your peace of mind.

Working from her studio offices on Union Street, Interior Designer Tish Key created just such a space when she designed a massage room in a Presidio Heights house on the north side of The City for this past spring's Decorator Showcase. No matter that the third-floor space had been a humble, windowless, small storage room. She imagined the pleasure of having a sacred space and wanted every one of us who saw it to believe that we can each have one of our own.

Judith is a free-lance journalist who has contributed to national publications including Traditional Home, Time, California Homes and other mass media. She specializes in communications projects that cover design, travel and the creative arts.