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CLASSIC ARCHITECTURE IN A MODERN WORLD

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HILAND HALL TURNER

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A graduate of Cornell University and a third-generation architect, Hiland Hall Turner is trusted by his clients to deliver the finest aesthetic results for their projects. His firm's philosophy is to design structures that integrate into their surroundings, meet and surpass the client's lifestyle needs, and offer functional beauty that engages the onlooker on all levels. Deeply familiar with classical architecture, he shares with us four examples of his magnificent work: a 17th-century barn structure combined with a modern addition; a majestic spiral staircase; a sprawling Mediterranean-style residence; and an avian-inspired modern home in Nova Scotia that is both invigorated by the landscape and made using elements of it.

"All architects are storytellers to some degree," Hiland says in describing the first house, a modern addition to a historic 17th-century barn that is built partially in stucco, partially in stone—and is entirely intriguing. The first time he arrived at the site and saw the barn, Hiland knew instantly how to execute the design. He took apart the old stone barn inside and used the original timber to increase the height of the barn. The modern addition is a steel-and-glass structure, with a terrace that serves as a plinth or base, and a narrow rectangular window that both bonds and marks a separation between the 17th-century barn style and the modern-style structure. The modern style emphasizes form while minimizing ornamentation.

Hiland discusses the union of the



two different buildings. “The two styles are blended together to create a holistic composition,” he says. “It’s a complete juxtaposition between the modern style, with windows from floor to ceiling with a simple exterior, and the historic barn-like structure.” The current homeowner who was born on the property represents the modern side, while the client’s ancestors represent the historic barn side, thus combining the stories of generations.

Architectural evidence suggests that homes dating back more than 4,000 years featured archaic stairs. Still a primary feature in homes today, of course, stairs provide the essential pathway to another plane of living. This sumptuous spiral staircase Hiland showcases is from a home his firm designed in Spring Lake, NJ. “The expression of the detail is so simple,” Hiland explains. “It has an oval handrail that’s just one continuous flow.” The awe-inspiring stairs are an example of how a seemingly simple form can be difficult to execute to perfection.

The second home Hiland shares with us is “principally a classic Mediterranean villa, with Italianicity overtones, as opposed to Spanish Mediterranean,” he says. “We were attempting to use the language of earlier Mediterranean Italian villas, which I was fortunate to experience while living in Italy.” This beautifully designed, timeless home was built on a complex site, with Hiland and his team expertly managing challenges along the way. “There is a curved balcony for a breakfast nook made of limestone,” he notes, “and there are some very classical features, such as the Doric pilasters holding up the hand-railing.”

What are some important elements of Mediterranean Italian style? “Rusticated stone, with limestone generally used, as in our example here,” he says. “Some of the detailing you see with the windows are a combination of a square and a circle shape, plus clay roofs made with natural materials, and the highest quality of wood trimmings.” Has this style changed over the years? Hiland explains that adherence to artistic detail and quality can vary greatly. “Like anything else, it runs the gamut stylistically,” he says. “Some architects do it

very well, while others’ reproductions don’t look quite as elegant.” What else makes this home a delight for the senses? The music of the water fountain downstairs has been thoughtfully conducted to the upstairs by the use of master building engineering,

inviting visitors to follow the temptation of sensual water sounds.

The third home Hiland features is far inland in Nova Scotia, nestled on a lake. This modern home was inspired by the shape of birds in flight above the picturesque northern wilderness they inhabit. “This ergonomic effect represents the beautiful herons and waterfowl—Anseriformes—that live on the lake all year round,” Hiland says of the wing-like structures that draw one’s eyes to the side and upwards. “It’s done with a unique handling of the timbers and struts placed onto a steel platform,” he explains. To complete the incredible form, he also employed cedar trees that were on the property, and a stone plinth to base the home. The final result is a piece of art that’s integrated with the environment.

Award-winning architect Hiland Hall Turner’s body of work spans an impressive spectrum, and includes residential work, churches, commercial projects and even complex equestrian compounds. His vast experience and artistic expertise make him the go-to architect for restoring delicately conserved historic buildings. A member of the National Green Council, the National Historic Trust and other professional organizations, Hiland and his firm are often entrusted with visionary projects.

Resource:

Architect
 Hiland Hall Turner Architects
 Hiland Hall Turner
 126 Oldwick Road
 Whitehouse Station, NJ 08889
 908.696.0072
 hbta.com