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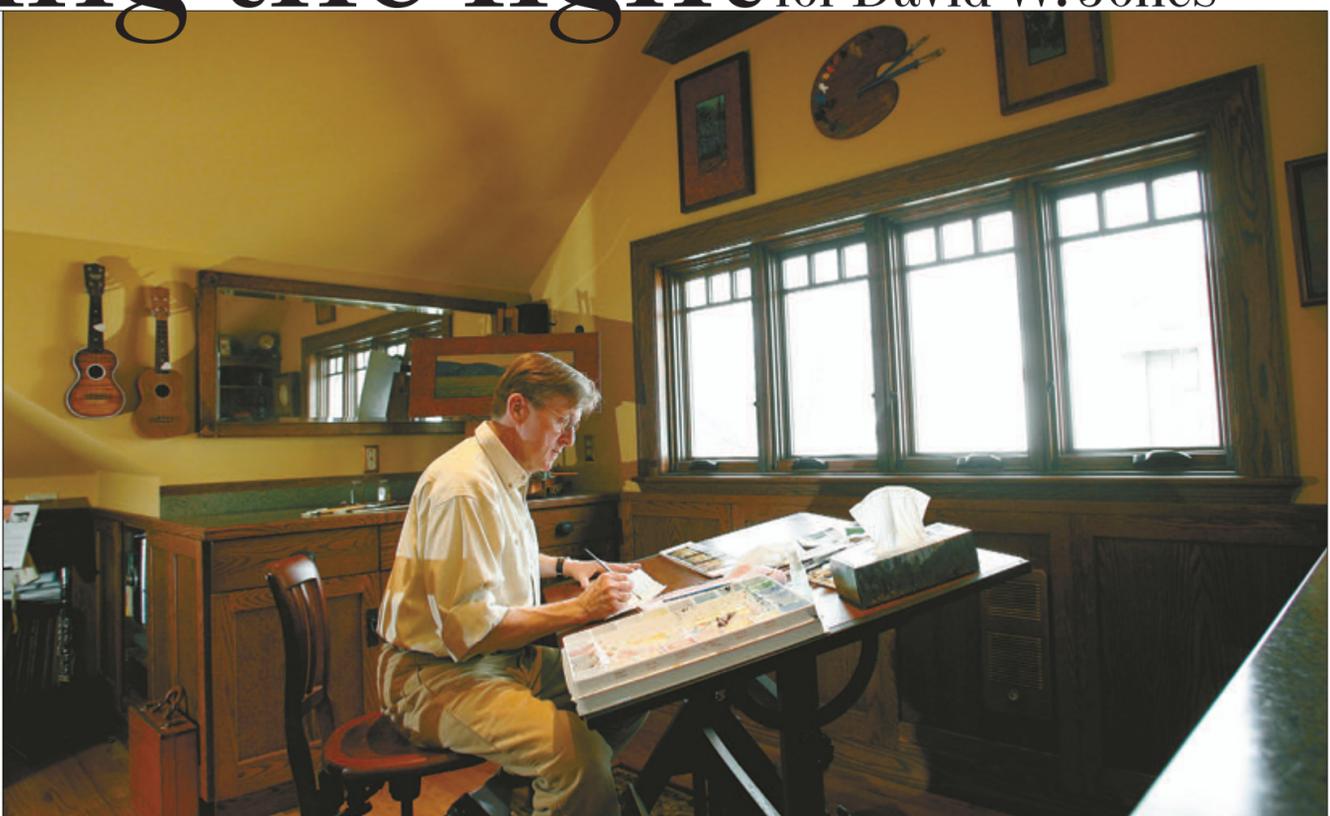


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# HOMES • RESALE & RENTAL

Editor: Sheila Brady, 613-596-3709 • sbrady@thecitizen.canwest.com

## Creating the light for David W. Jones



PHOTOS BY ROD MACIVOR, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

### ARCHITECT'S ADVICE ON DESIGNING A SMART WORK SPACE

**Jeff Skinner** is a busy guy, working as an architect with Vancouver's **Busby Perkins + Will** and a principal in the **S2 Designs**, a firm focusing on residential design work. Over the years, he has thought a lot about how to successfully design a home office that is both beautiful and eminently practical. Here are his ideas:

- 1. Be clear.** Before embarking on creating a design, think about what you want to do in the space and what you want the space to do for you. Translate those ideas into a list to discuss with your architect or design professional.
- 2. Consult a professional.** Though it sounds self-serving coming from the mouth of an architect, Mr. Skinner offers a very practical rationale for this suggestion. "Architects and design professionals are trained to recognize opportunities that might not appear as opportunities to a layperson." He offers the example of the knee wall space in David W. Jones' studio. That would have remained wasted space, but for Mr. Skinner's design to translate it into useful storage space.
- 3. Remember — God is in the details.** Mr. Skinner quotes the German-born architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe to stress the importance of spending the time and energy necessary to get the details right. "The more time you spend at it, the more cohesive and coherent the space will be. Take the time to digest conversations between you and your architect." You could have the space for a long time, a few extra hours working out the details will result in a space that serves your every purpose.
- 4. Be a good listener.** As the design and building process proceeds, unexpected situations will arise. This is the time to listen to your architect, plumber, electrician, whomever — they have the expert skills and solutions.
- 5. Don't let a desire for efficiency rule the day.** OK, you're building a work space and you want it to work. But don't forget your home studio or office should "speak the same language as the rest of your home," explains Mr. Skinner. "Think about the overall design. There should be bridges between both the exterior and interior of your home and your work space. Otherwise, you'll be stuck with an awkward, intrusive misfit bolted onto your home. Not too pretty.

### Architect and artist collaborated on a third-floor art studio that combines precious light with a practical use of space

*"If I were asked to say what is at once the most important production of art and the thing most to be longed for, I should answer 'A beautiful house.'"*

—William Morris

BY SUSAN LIGHTSTONE

**D**avid W. Jones is one of Canada's foremost landscape painters. Over the years, he has found favour with art collectors for his classical renditions of sun-drenched fields, stunning blue horizons, and brilliant snowy hillsides — many depicting scenes only a few miles from his Ottawa home. Yet until recently, those light-filled works were created in a dark, small studio sandwiched in the third storey of his Civic Hospital home.

That was then. This is now. With the creative collaboration of Vancouver-based architect Jeff Skinner, Mr. Jones transformed a cramped, dingy studio into an efficient yet romantic space with three distinct, practical functions: a painting/work area, a display/storage space, and a business office. The result? A studio that allows Mr. Jones to work, yet indulges his artistic sensibilities.

The home he shares with his wife Catrina Tapley and their two sons was built in the early 1900s, in the tradition of an English cot-

tage. With its leaded glass windows and dark burnished wood floors, the house is a perfect backdrop for the couple's extensive collection of Mission-style furniture, with its strong, solid lines and deep, rich colours.

Mission-style furniture is closely associated with American designer Gustav Stickley, who in the early 1900s promoted simple, comfortable furniture intended to provide Americans with "material surroundings conducive to plain living and high thinking." In his work, Stickley was profoundly influenced by the ideals of William Morris, the leader of the Arts and Crafts movement in England.

Morris, like Stickley, was committed to "revive a sense of beauty in home life, to restore dignity of art to ordinary household decoration." Not surprising really, that the ideas of Morris and Stickley would resonate with this Ottawa artist.

Mr. Skinner recalls his early conversations with Mr. Jones about renovating the home studio: "He really wanted to respect the character of the house and its tradition — from the perspective of both the exterior and interior. But he was also focused on what he needed as an artist to work functionally in that space. He really needed light and space."

*"All rooms ought to look as if they were lived in, and to have, so to say, a friendly welcome ready for the incomer."*

—William Morris

Climbing the narrow stairs to enter the new studio, the first impression is entry into a space that literally glows. Of course, the artist is a master of colour so he carefully chose the deep gold of the walls to give his space a jewel-like tone. But, the oversized dormer that Mr. Skinner placed in the north wall provides the juice that energizes the space.

The new windows not only give him a bird's-eye view of the rooftops and treetops of his neighbourhood, but the north light is essential to his work.

"North light is prized by artists," he explains. With its consistent, indirect light, an artist can paint all day in light that doesn't change. Mr. Skinner designed a north-facing

dormer of four windows, as big as the city building code would permit.

That dormer, in the middle of the room, dictated the placement of Mr. Jones' painting table, a simple antique oak trestle drafting table, set perpendicularly to the window. Next to the work table is a sink for washing brushes and a small refrigerator. Mr. Jones works in oils. To keep them workable, not dry, the oils must be kept cool. Everything is neatly at hand.

*"Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful."*

—William Morris

At one end of the room, the roof is pitched steeply, making for a sloping ceiling. Here's where Mr. Skinner and Mr. Jones placed the storage/inventory/display area. Mr. Skinner found extra storage space in the knee walls. Every space in this area is utilized. The top of a map drawer serves as the space where he mats, frames and wraps his works. Lighting is built into the cabinetry, so that clients can carefully examine smaller works. One large wall over the stairs has been left purposely bare. This is the space he uses to display larger works for visiting clients.

At the other end of the room is the business end, a spot fitted up with a computer, a filing cabinet, and bookcases. This is also where Mr. Jones indulges his love of music. Tucked under the eaves is a lusciously comfortable leather chair, sitting beside his collection of LPs and 78s. One detail Mr. Jones did not overlook was the incorporation of a great sound system.

Throughout the space, Mr. Skinner worked at raising the ceiling "to make the space feel expanded," he explains. All the cabinetry and woodwork in the studio stays true to the Arts and Crafts ideal. Mr. Jones credits Lindsay Nicol of Ottawa's Crossford Construction for keeping the lines of the room simple and uncluttered.

It is a room that William Morris would be proud to call his own.

See **David W. Jones's** work at [www.davidwjones.ca](http://www.davidwjones.ca).

**SUSAN LIGHTSTONE** is an Ottawa writer.



**David W. Jones, top, paints by the window in the new third-storey studio of his Civic Hospital home. The lofty studio doubles as the landscape painter's work area and a display space for a collection of his oil paintings.**

