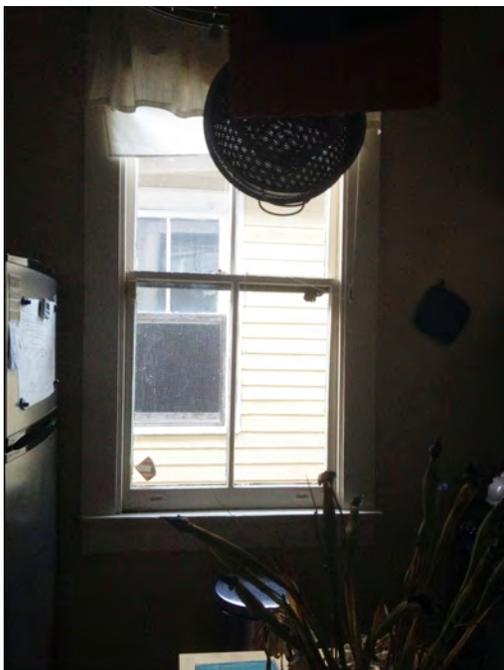


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Travel Essay Assignment
June 30, 2013

In New Orleans, the shotgun and shotgun double are a common style of house. These long, narrow houses fill up most of their long, narrow lots, so that the houses tend to sit very close to their neighboring houses, with just a thin strip of sidewalk separating them. I live in a shotgun double and my neighbors on either side are about six feet away from my house. These close quarters present several challenges where natural light and privacy are concerned. A dilemma I have encountered in trying to light my home is that the way to bring the maximum amount of daylight in is to open the curtains completely. But, as is illustrated in the photographs below, the windows in my house look directly into the windows of my neighbors' houses. In addition, the views out are monotonous, showing only the side of my neighbor's house, with no view of the sky or trees, creating a claustrophobic atmosphere. While visiting Japan I was curious to see ways in which architecture addressed privacy, natural lighting, and creating a sense of spaciousness in a dense setting.



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In Kyoto, we visited the museum of the home and studio of sculptor Kawai Kanjiro. Here I saw several elegant solutions to the problems I was trying to solve in New Orleans. With a variety of window types and treatments each room was given a unique quality of light, and every view was intentionally framed. Outlined below, and illustrated with photographs, are examples of the window typologies that addressed these issues:

How to bring light into the building while blocking certain views to maintain privacy?

How to highlight other views that give the home a sense of spaciousness that might not be expected in such a dense, urban setting?



This image, taken inside the main living room of Kanjiro's home shows a number of the window typologies that are present throughout the site. Here we see the large picture window, which provides an unobstructed view out to the courtyard. This window

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is flanked with frosted windows that provide light, but no view. They help to frame the view seen through the picture window. To the right is a window that is frosted at the top and bottom, but that has a clear section in the middle, which provides an intentional view out. As seen here, this is a view that would privilege someone seated nearby, which is contrasted with the picture window that provides a view for anyone in the room, regardless of their position.



Upstairs, in one of the bedrooms, the same treatment is used, where the middle horizontal panel is left clear, and the top and bottom panels are frosted off. As is depicted here, the frosted sections help to block the view of the rooftops of the surrounding houses. This photo demonstrates that the house is situated in a dense neighborhood, but by strategically placing the windows and framing intentional views the experience is that the house is much more secluded. For a seated viewer, the framed view is of the sky, though as you stand up you are able to see the neighboring buildings.

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This next picture shows the mechanics of how these treatments can be layered and altered by sliding the panels open or closed, partially or completely, to curate the desired view or quality of light. These two planes of glass provide the opportunity for a customizable window. This was significant to me because the New Orleans equivalent of this would be a curtain or a shade, but in Kanjiro's studio the "curtain" is actually part of the architecture. The forethought and understanding in how a window is used struck me as very insightful and considerate.

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In several windows and openings of the house I noticed unique applications of screening techniques. Particularly impressive to me was the use of the bamboo shade seen in this photo. The bamboo shade is a familiar window accessory, and in fact I have these hanging in my home. The difference is that in my home the shade hangs on the inside of the window and lays relatively flush to the wall. In Kanjiro's home the shade is hung outside of the window and attached to the eave of the roof. By separating the shade from the window a zone is created, light and air are allowed to travel between the wall and the shade while maintaining privacy within the home. This application of the shade also forced me to pay attention to the relationship between inside and outside.

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Similarly, I was intrigued by the way a sense of enclosure was created without the use of walls. In this special moment in the complex, at the transition of the fully enclosed hallway from the house to the more open rooms of his studio, a partial curtain is used. This long-fringed curtain creates a sense of separation between inside and outside, but it allows one to experience the light and breeze. It is an intermediary space, and the experience is that of being both indoors and outdoors at once.



I found that the solutions in place at Kawai Kanjiro's museum were all ideas that could, with some alteration, be implemented in my own home. Because Kyoto and New Orleans both exist in the humid subtropical climate it is essential to encourage airflow,

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and their geographic locations provide for ample daylight that should be taken advantage of. I noticed that by acknowledging the relationship between the occupant inside and the view outside the home was made to feel more spacious and well lit without being too bright. These are ideas that I plan to reiterate in my own home and designs.