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Helena van Vliet Architect LLC  
Restorative Biophilic Design

## Nature-Inspired Architecture

I am often asked *What is your design style?* I can not answer this question with a name of an architectural style you may be familiar with: *Arts and Crafts* or *Federal*, for instance.

That's because **biophilic design** is not a style, it is a design process.

The biophilic design process connects people with nature in a built environment, which brings spaces to life by emphasizing nature's resourcefulness, intrinsic patterns and their importance to our well-being.

In biophilic spaces, we become acutely aware of the dynamic light, sounds, forms and textures found in nature. As a result we are less stressed and experience measurable restorative and neurologically nourishing benefits.

It has been proven time and again that buildings and places designed with biophilic patterns improve our physiological and psychological health and restore our well being. Biophilic spaces are profoundly restful and relaxing...It's almost like taking a vacation without having to pack a bag.



*Helena van Vliet project.*

## **Architecture Plays a Critical Role in our Lives**

Here's more evidence of biophilia's healing attributes: [Stephen Kellert](#), who has spent most of his life studying how human experience is affected by biophilic elements explains that people “learn better, work more comfortably, and recuperate more successfully in buildings that echo the environment in which the human species evolved.”



*Helena van Vliet project.*

## **On Creating Sanctuaries**

So, when pressed to give details about my specific design "style," I usually explain that I build spaces with purpose and places with meaning. In fact, I think of the spaces I design as sanctuaries...lyrical designs that shape an atmosphere of feeling well, profoundly alive and connected to nature.

Quite simply, I connect people with place through sensory and emotional experience.



*Helena van Vliet project.*

## **Biophilic Design Elements**

Here are examples of the elements of biophilic design I incorporate into built spaces. In upcoming newsletters, I will detail how I weave these elements into my work:

- connecting living spaces/walls, plant life with sensory gardens and views
- establishing fluid connections between outer and inner spaces
- incorporating dynamic natural light, fresh air and moving water
- allowing for natural ventilation as the primary source of cooling
- connecting with nature's forms, textures, sounds and hierarchies of scale
- engaging curiosity, imagination and a sense of discovery
- combining local, repurposed and non-toxic materials

[Learn More](#)



Helena van Vliet photos.

## Nature-Inspired News

[The Incredible Science Behind How Nature Solves Every Engineering Problem](#)

[A Student's Bed-Size Shelter in the Arizona Desert](#)

[Earth's Most Stunning Natural Fractal Patterns](#)

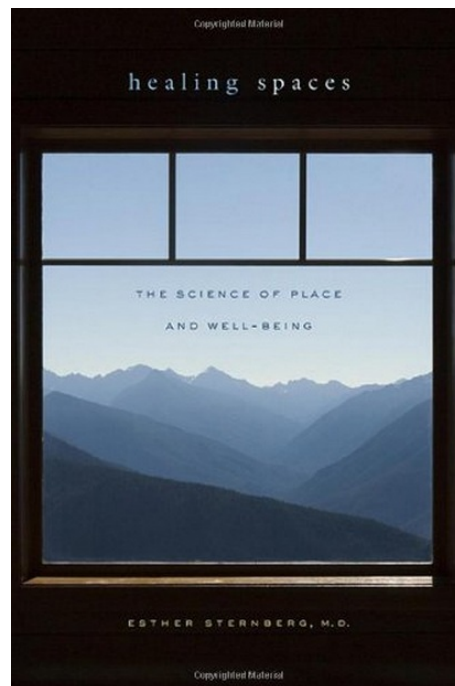
## Recommended Reading

[Healing Spaces: The Science of Place and Well-being](#)

by Esther M. Sternberg, M.D.

### *From Publishers Weekly:*

Even the ancients understood that some places had healing powers. But in the late 20th century, scientists began to study how space affects both mental and physical health for good and ill. NIH researcher Sternberg (*The Balance Within*) thoroughly chronicles research on the neural pathways that connect our sensory perception of our environment with our ability to heal.



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Learn more about **Building Places that Re-Connect with the Natural World**. For Land Planning, Architecture and Collaborative Design, please [email me](#) or call me at: 610.935.3230 for more information.

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