



Where I Work: Duan Tran of KAA Design

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Posted by Caroline Williamson



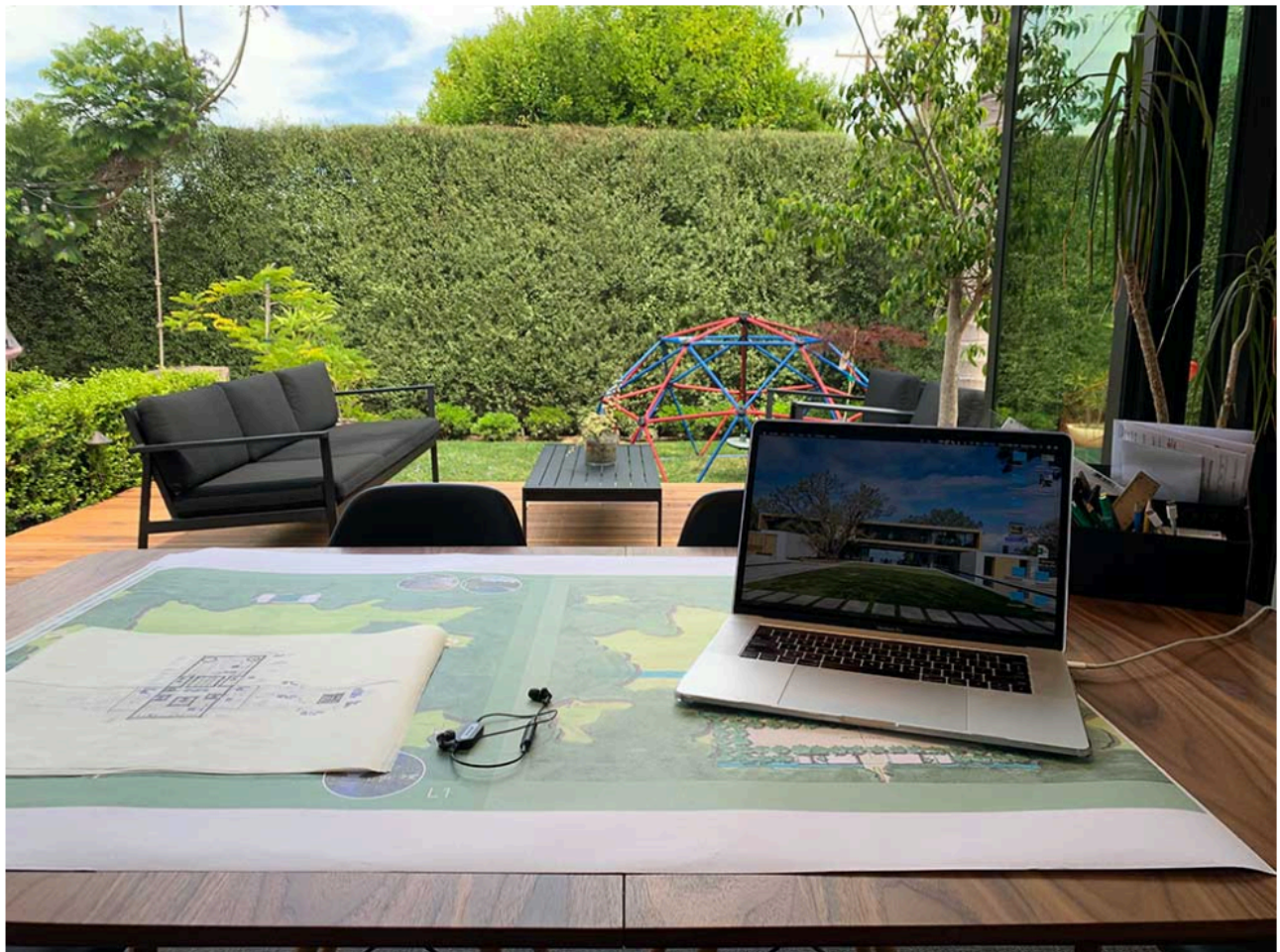
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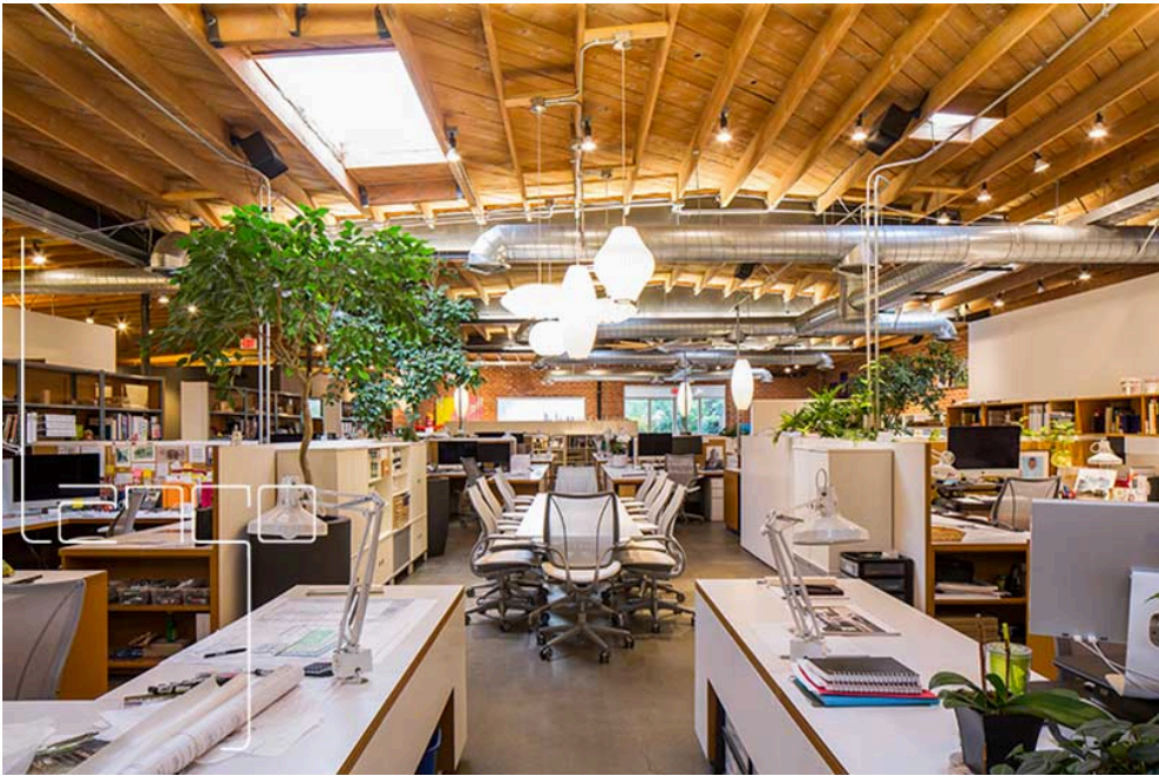
Main



🕒 VIEW PHOTO GALLERY

As with many people around the world, KAA Design partner Duan Tran had to carve out a workspace at home during the ongoing pandemic. Luckily the licensed architect, husband, and father of three, designed an addition to his Culver City, California home last year that added much needed space, and now, a spot for Tran to work. The dining room setup gives him the space during the day to spread out and work while easily transitioning to dinnertime in the evenings. The space is filled with natural light, especially when the folding door system is open, making it perfect for detailed work, at the same time as keeping an eye on his children playing outside. For this month's Where I Work during quarantine times, we visit Duan Tran at home to see how and where he's getting his work done.





KAA Design office

How long have you been in this space? Where did you work before that? If you could change something about your workspace, what would it be?

123 days... but who's counting! Our workplace office is a dynamic and creative work environment with great energy. I tremendously miss the energy of being in that high energy environment with all of our talented team doing great things together.



Is there an office pet?

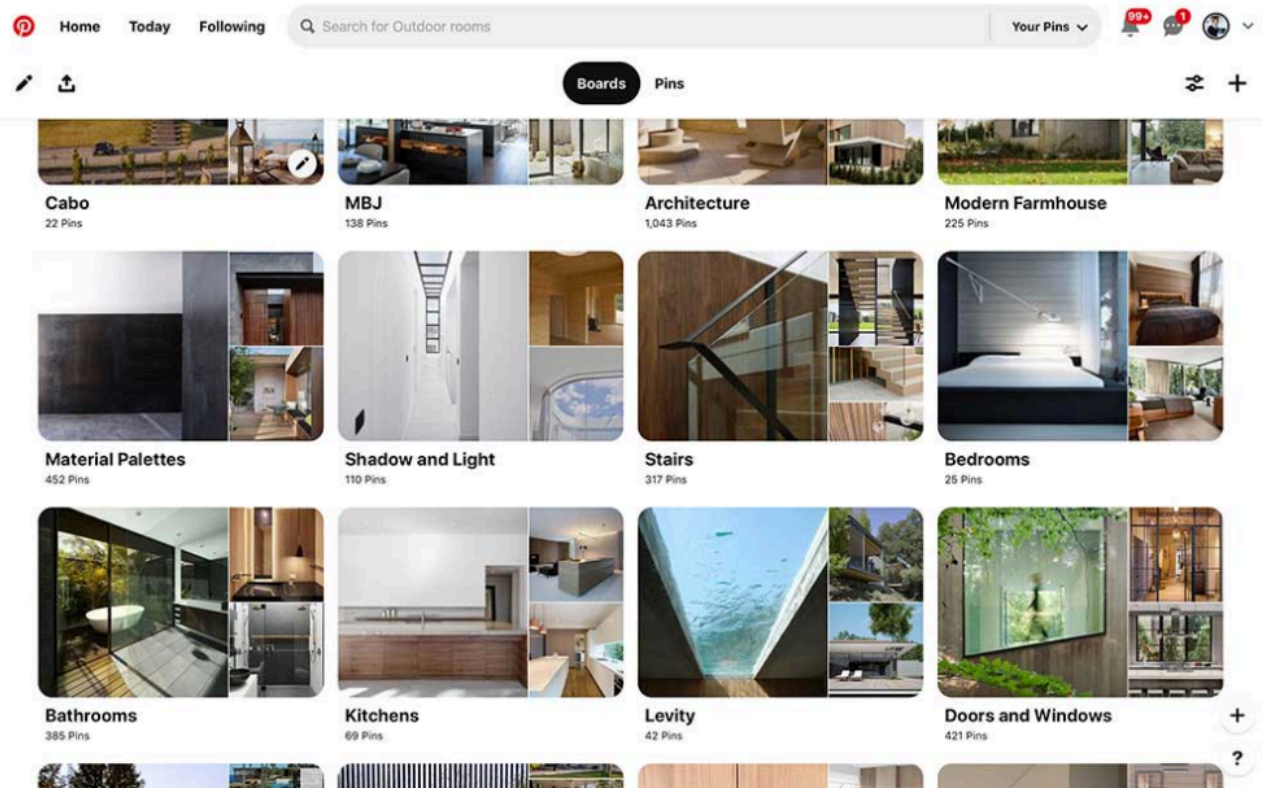
Absolutely, where would we be without Fox and Pepper?!

Do you require music in the background? If so, who are some favorites?

I love music. John Mayer, Maroon 5, Kendrick Lamar, and Post Malone are a few favorites that I find myself humming a tune to during the day!

How do you record ideas?

Email. I have a thousand draft emails in my mailbox that I use to collect ideas and thoughts. Since I always have my phone, it's easy to type in something quick everywhere and anywhere.



Do you have an inspiration board? What's on it right now?

Given our work from home environment, I've been more focused on creating inspiration boards on both Pinterest and Instagram. I love the mobility of it all and my ability to add or call up an inspiration image anywhere I go.

What is your typical work style?

I'm fairly regimented in my work style. Given all of the touches that I need to have with clients, team members and other colleagues, I find myself a slave to my daily calendar to ensure I cover all of my bases during the workday. For focused design time, I love working late at night when it's quiet and just me. I must say I have seen the sunrise from time to time when I find myself in my happy place, inspiration wise.



What is your creative process and/or creative workflow like? Does it change every project or do you keep it the same?

Great question. I would have to describe it as consistent, linear and layered. I'm very iterative in how I approach design. It usually starts with a big idea, or an unforgettable design image that I love, then I run it through a series of iterative studies that allow me to edit away and find the purest essence of a project or concept.



What kind of art/design/objects might you have scattered about the space?

What started off as child's play with my LEGO collection has continued on to influence and entertain me to this day. I'm especially fond of the Lego "Architecture" series that has scaled replicas of many of the world's iconic skylines and buildings. The best thing honestly is that it gives me an opportunity to bond with my daughters and engage in something I am passionate about.



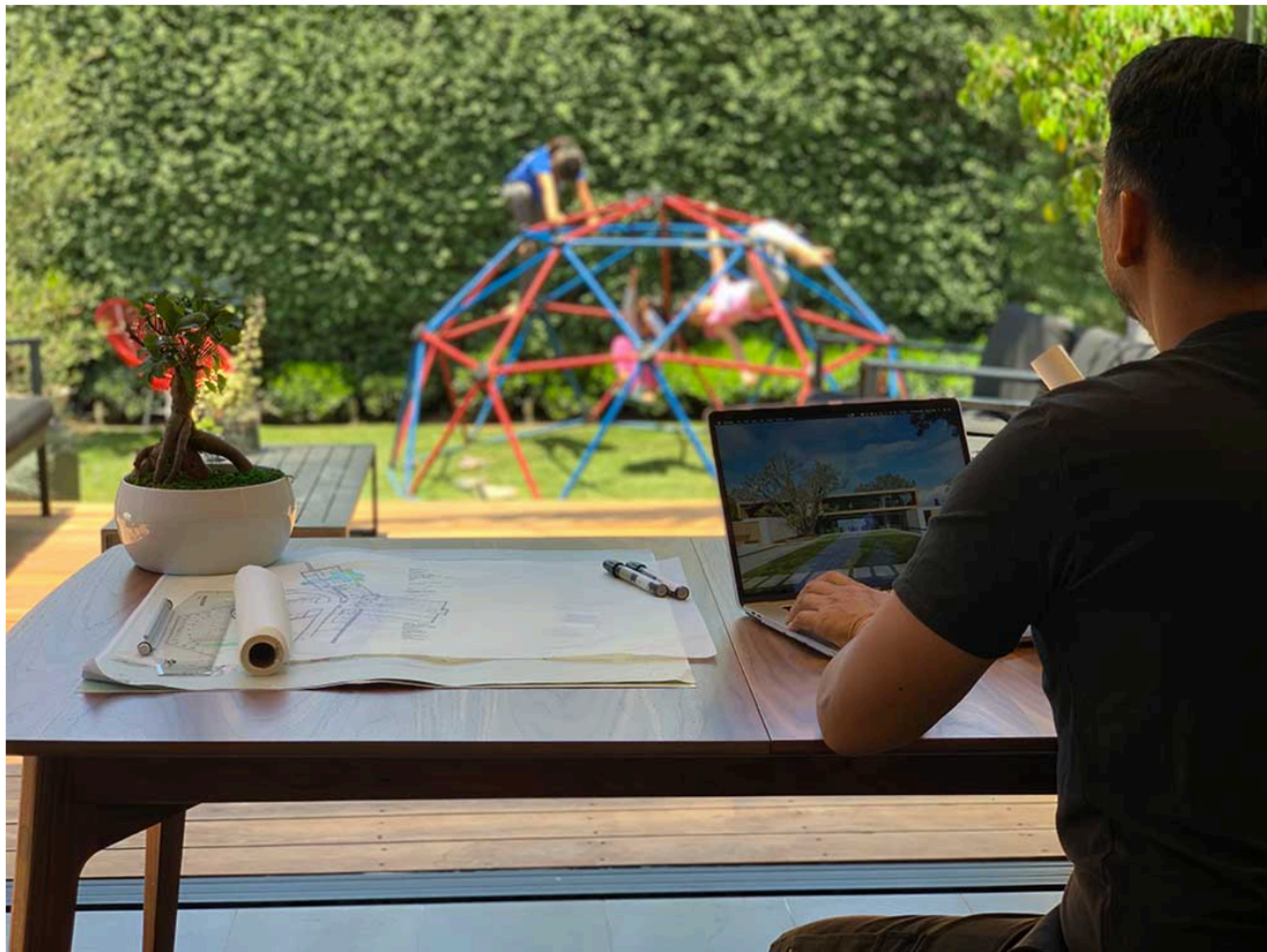
What tool(s) do you most enjoy using in the design process?

We utilize a 3D BIM platform called ArchiCAD that allows us to explore design concepts three-dimensionally, fluidly, and very early on. It's been quite the game-changer for us, not only internally, but also externally with our clients, because we can present design in a way that is much less technical and beyond 2D.



Let's talk about how you're wired. Tell us about your tech arsenal/devices.

I'm completely wired into my iPhone which allows me to access email, people, drawings, and quite honestly anything else that I could ever need during the day. Our needing to work more remotely has further pushed my dependence on devices like this.



What's on your desk right now?

We are finishing up an exciting design concept for a private residential compound in Dubai. Beyond that, keeping a watchful eye on my kids is always top of mind.



Is there a favorite project/piece you've worked on?

We recently completed a project in Southern California that I'm personally very proud of. Situated on a 2.5-acre hilltop property, we designed a very unique site-specific private residence that hovers overtop the existing hillside while framing amazing indoor-outdoor views of the Pacific Ocean beyond.

Tell us about a current project you're working on. What was the inspiration behind it?

Our latest project in Dubai was an exciting exploration into how we could modify the landscape and grading to achieve some unique opportunities for natural light to infiltrate and play with the architectural form of the residence below grade. We were inspired by the Antinori Winery in Italy, as well as Tadao Ando's Benesse House in Japan.

Do you have anything in your home that you've designed/created?

My current work from home workspace. We fortuitously took on the challenge of doing an addition to our existing home last year to give our family of five more living space and to thoughtfully connect to the rear yard. It's been quite the godsend to have this space given recent circumstances.