

hiding place

Hiding places offer a crucial respite from an open, collaborative environment.

The more extroverted the work space, the more you need these spots of passive, dark yin amid the swaths of hyperactive, brightly lit yang. Few offices have legitimate hiding places; if your space lacks one, people will go elsewhere to find it.

What makes a good hiding place?

At the d.school, we created a space we call “Booth Noir” as a response to the need for a place to get away. Deconstructing Booth Noir reveals critical characteristics of any good hiding place:

It’s different.

It stands in stark contrast to the rest of the space and offers a needed break.

It’s immovable.

The furniture in the room is fixed to the floor and walls. There are no decisions to be made, nothing to arrange but your own posture.

It’s beyond low-tech—it’s no tech.

Outlets, switches, and data jacks are hidden from view.

It’s tiny: 8’ x 8’.

Small scale encourages feelings of coziness & security.

It’s dark, yet warm.

It’s devoid of the bright colors that streak walls in other spaces. Current codes often require high-efficiency lighting fixtures (generally fluorescents). Rebel by installing an incandescent floor lamp. This helps—a lot!

It’s laid back.

A large bench inside encourages—even requires—reclining and relaxing

It’s hidden.

It’s tucked away in a corner on the ground floor. The only reason to go there is to go there; it’s not on the way to anywhere else.

It smells good—or, at least, different.

The furniture is made from fragrant cedar. The distinctive aroma heightens the other senses.

It requires a ritual to enter.

A sign on the door handle asks visitors to remove their shoes. The simple gesture of taking off your shoes breaks your routine—and the cedar fragrance does a good job of masking foot odor.



photo: Neah Webb

start

Choose a metaphor for your relaxation space: spa, yoga studio, bedroom, Zen garden, etc. Identify some of the properties that make this metaphorical space relaxing—a place to lie down, soft music, natural light—and use them as inspirations in implementing your own hiding place with available resources or some inexpensive purchases (e.g., throw rugs, incandescent lamps). Avoid items that don’t wear well like dainty pillows or superplush fabrics. If the space is enjoyed often, spend a little more money to make it sing.

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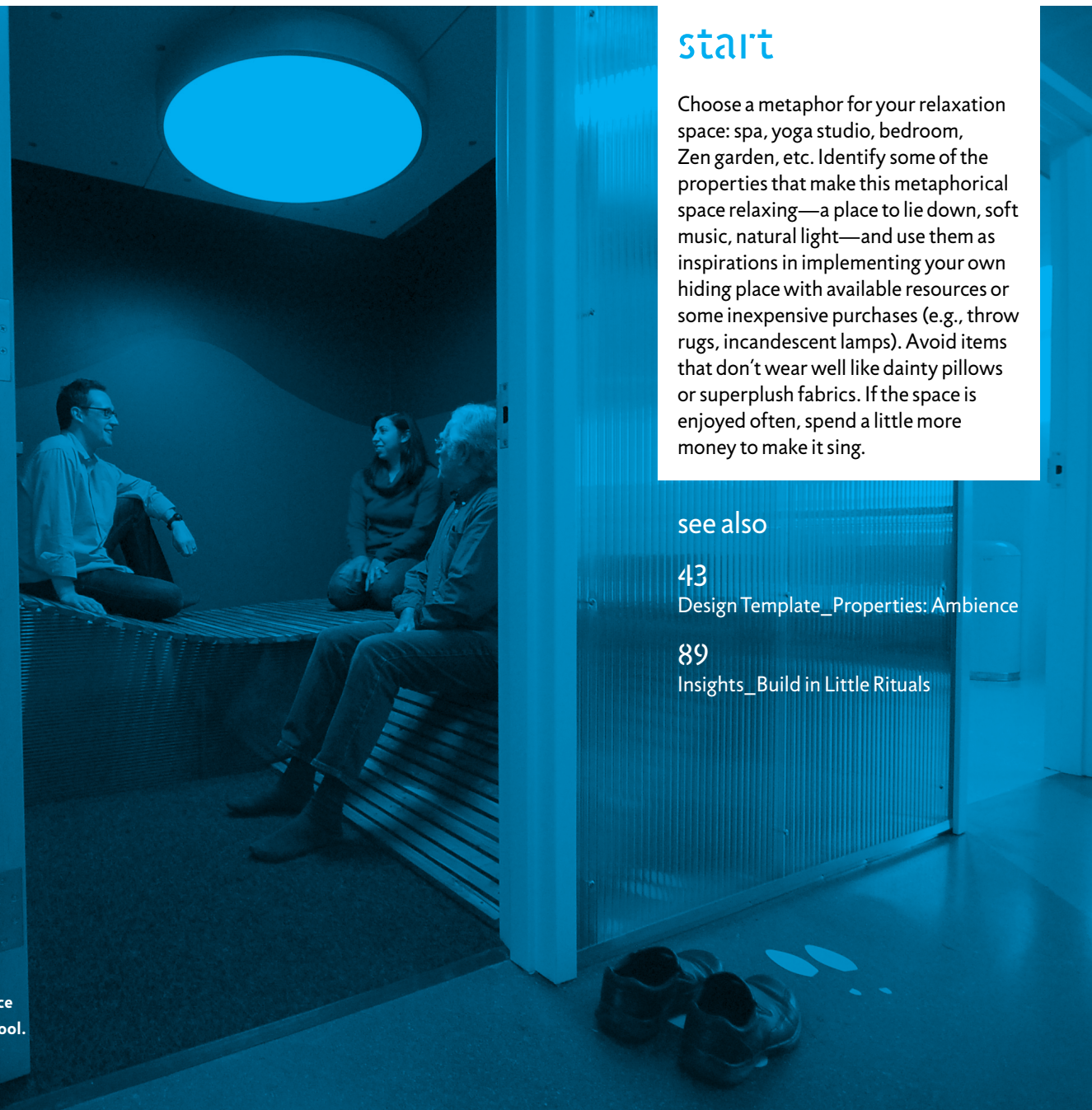


photo: Natalie Glaziel

Booth Noir:
a hiding place
at the d.school.