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LUXURY HOME

quarterly

THE
KITCHEN &
BATH ISSUE

SLEEK NEW BATHROOM FIXTURES
— *and the creative minds behind them*

+ A PEEK INSIDE THE KITCHENS
& BATHS OF DESIGN-SAVVY PROS

WILLSON RESIDENCE

This Washington, DC, home features a study with cabinetry by Atrium Interiors (atrium-interiors.com) and a view of the Kennedy Center.



Ponte Mellor Architects, Ltd.

FOCUSING ON HIGHLY CONTEXTUAL DESIGNS
FOR BOTH URBAN AND SUBURBAN PROJECTS

by Julie Edwards

When it comes to residential architecture, the staff members of Ponte Mellor Architects, Ltd. (PMA) prefer to think of themselves as “lifestyle consultants,” says operations manager Brad Mellor, AIA, LEED AP. “We come to know our clients very well, and endeavor to synthesize our understanding and manifest it as an architectural plan. Our goal is to do this so well that the completed house feels like an extension of our clients’ lifestyle.”

And PMA is well known for achieving—and surpassing—its goals. Founded in 2002 by Mellor and design director Rui Ponte, AIA, LEED AP, the award-winning firm is based in Bethesda, Maryland, and offers architecture, design, and construction-management services for retail, base-building and corporate interiors, and multifamily and single-family residential projects.

Before establishing PMA, Mellor was at Gensler in Washington, DC, where he ran the entertainment, retail, and graphics studio, designing stores, hotels,

restaurants, and casinos—both nationally and internationally. “However, I was motivated to found PMA with Ponte by the desire to become more closely connected to our local community through involvement in local commercial work and residential practice,” he adds.

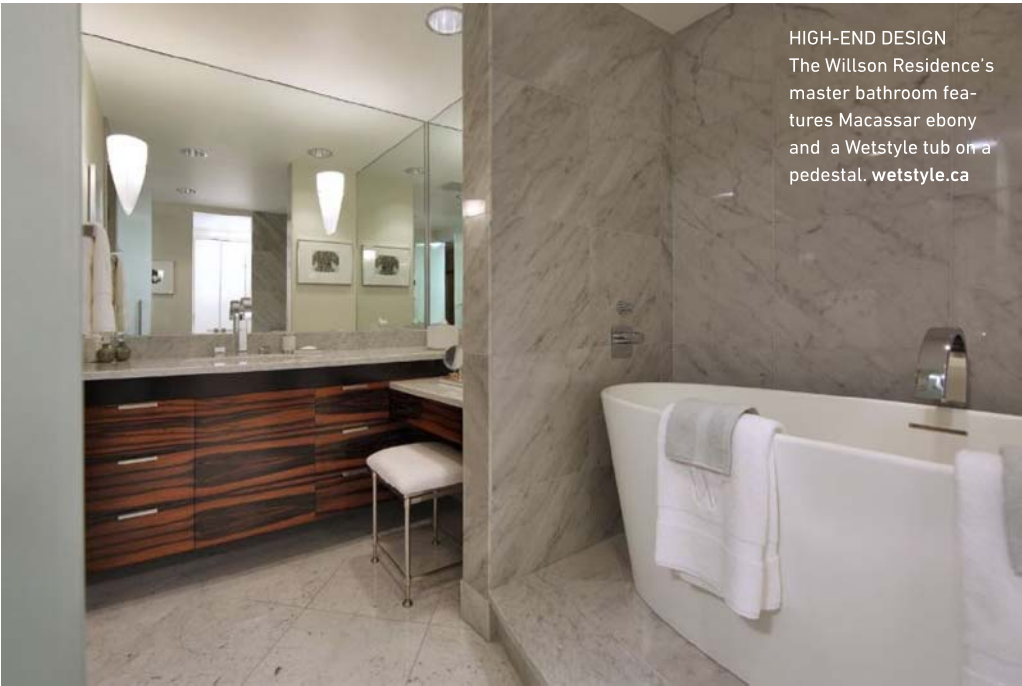
Mellor believes PMA’s success is due, in part, to the way the cofounders’ individual experiences complement each other in the project design and delivery process. “[Ponte’s] dedication to design detailing, perfect proportions, and knowledge of architectural styles, combined with my large-firm experience in the process and organization of project delivery, allows us to deliver significant value throughout our spectrum of project types,” he says.

Though the firm practices both commercial and residential architecture, the residential practice is centered in the Washington, DC, metro area, with significant work in Maryland and Virginia, as well. And though the firm also has designed houses in

New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Florida, Colorado, Texas, and Portugal, Mellor says, “PMA’s primary residential work focuses on upscale urban and older established suburban locations where we design in-fill home projects, usually working in highly contextual settings where the project must be compatible with an existing fabric of the neighborhood.”

One of PMA’s notable projects is the Willson Residence, a home located in the famous Watergate building—a landmark structure that has defined urban luxury living in Washington, DC, for more than 40 years. “When the owners decided to combine two apartments in this unique curved building, they requested that we honor their desire for an open, contemporary design while also providing a unique setting for their museum-quality collection of modern and traditional art,” Mellor says.

The project scope consisted of a complete gut and rebuild of the interior of the apartment,



HIGH-END DESIGN
The Willson Residence's master bathroom features Macassar ebony and a Wetstyle tub on a pedestal. wetstyle.ca



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including the living/dining space, modernized kitchen, study, guest bedroom, and master suite with his-and-hers bathrooms and dressing spaces. The visitor reception spaces are linked to the private master suite via a rotunda signifying the passage between the two areas and serving as an intimate display zone for family black-and-white photography.

The majority of the finishes in the apartment have been rendered in a monochrome white, serving as a backdrop for the owner's art collection and the magnificent views of the Potomac River and Kennedy Center. The cabinetry in Macassar ebony—a wood with horizontal striping and red tones providing punches of drama—provides a themed accent throughout the home since it is used in the kitchen, study, and bedrooms.

"Many would consider interior architectural work at the Watergate a designer's dream; however, manipulating spaces within the constraints of an older building's mechanical and electrical infrastructure presents numerous challenges," Mellor says. "In the end, however, the Willson Residence has a sophistication that supports a truly modern lifestyle while maintaining the classic sensibility of the Watergate's original European Modernist design." Even more impressive, PMA has received half a dozen additional design commissions at the Watergate as a direct result of other owners' experiences in seeing the Willson Residence.

Another distinctive project for the firm was the renovation of Mellor's own residence, which

has served as a touchstone for PMA to illustrate its modern home design sensibilities. Evoking a warm, welcoming, modern style using many natural materials, "the objective of the renovation and master suite addition was to substantially increase and modernize the space available," Mellor says. "Site positioning was a key consideration—the addition succeeds in maximizing natural light and woodland views through a carefully planned 45-degree orientation to the existing main house. This positioning opens views from the existing house to the rear and forms an outdoor living space next to the addition."

A unique aspect to PMA is its work with its sister company, Estoril Construction, Inc., which provides construction services within the Washington, DC, metro area. "Estoril Construction, Inc. allows us to deliver a complete design-build service for those clients who prefer a one-stop solution to their building requirements," Mellor says. "In addition, in partnering with Estoril, we're able to deliver a level of detailed budgeting accuracy to clients. We've been able to achieve a track record of plus or minus 10 percent accuracy from preliminary budget through built project, and cost control is a key to client satisfaction."

Mellor notes that while the firm has made some adjustments in the past few years, PMA has had "staying power" due to the diversity of its project types. "Our tried-and-true strategy of cultivating referrals from satisfied clients also has proven to be the best way to provide a stream of new business," he concludes. ■



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