



DREAM HOMES

GREATER PHILADELPHIA

SHOWCASING GREATER PHILADELPHIA'S FINEST ARCHITECTS



INTRODUCTION

Within these pages awaits a compilation of dream residences designed and built by leading architects from the greater Philadelphia area. Stunning contemporary condos on the rise in Center City, refined traditional homes of the historic Main Line, and charming farmhouses of Bucks and Chester Counties reflect the area's diverse architectural heritage and local designers' capacity for creativity, originality, and in many cases, environmental sensitivity.

Philadelphia is a wonderful example of a city where the historic character is both context and inspiration. The region's architects incorporate new construction, historic preservation, respectful remodels, and Green design into projects that range from ultra-modern to ultra-conservative. Whatever your personal style or design preference, you'll see an example in *Dream Homes of Greater Philadelphia*, and you'll find an architect with whom you can relate.

Working with an architect allows you to transform an ordinary space into one that nurtures your soul, or allows you to create a new home in which you can live life at its best. By listening to your words and thoughts, an architect will bring your dreams to reality with incredible detail and functionality. Innovative use of light, space, color, and materials are evident in all of the projects pictured.

Dream Homes offers a rare glimpse into what has made each Philadelphia-area architect or firm successful and unique. You'll read about their passions and perceptions, and what they bring to each client relationship. Through the elegant and professional photos, you'll see the results of our local architects' imaginations and their clients' dreams brought to life.

Warmest regards,

Kathryn Newell

Kathryn Newell

Senior Associate Publisher





Wesley Wei

Wesley Wei Architects

Recognized internationally as one of the most significant American residential architects practicing today, Wesley Wei, FAIA, has received more than 30 design awards and is a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. His work is an artful blend of modern forms and natural materials. Quick to downplay any “style” in his designs, Wei is clearly influenced by mid-century modern masters such as Alvar Aalto, Louis Kahn, and Carlo Scarpa. The latter’s innovative use of materials during the second half of the 20th century has served as inspiration for Wei’s own creativity with materials and structure.

Utilizing simple, elegant architectural forms, Wei’s work expresses a modern purity. It never aims, and rarely appears, to be trendy. His residential projects coexist in harmony with the landscapes in which they are set. The architect selects indigenous materials or those widely used in the project region. Conscious of the environment, Wei employs renewable, recycled materials where possible, including bamboo and



Above: Media House: detail of exterior—primary materials are white cedar siding, stucco and lead-coated copper.
Photograph by © Catherine Tighe Photographer

Facing Page: Media House: addition facing koi pond—circa 17th-century stone farmhouse at right.
Photograph by © Catherine Tighe Photographer



cork, as well as locally produced materials. "I like my work to be sympathetic with the environment," he explains.

In practice since 1987, Wesley Wei Architects has designed custom residences in Philadelphia and throughout the region. Affordable houses, schools, and community centers for non-profit organizations comprise the remainder of the firm's portfolio, including the Folk Arts and Cultural Treasures (FACT) Charter School for grades K-8 in Philadelphia's Chinatown. A devotion to small projects allows each of the staff members to



focus attention on thoughtful and refined detailing. As the pedagogue of a relatively young staff, Wei encourages design exploration and guides both the design projects and the architectural curiosity of his employees.

Teaching has always played an important role in Wei's professional life. From 1981 until 1987, he taught at his alma mater, Pennsylvania State University. He has since served as a professor at the Rhode Island School of Design and The University of the Arts. Today, he is a Professor of Practice at the University of Pennsylvania. He encourages students to investigate the craft of architecture, through material model-building and full-scale detail



constructions. In an age of computer drafting, Wei also encourages the ability to construct drawings by hand. The importance of visualization and creation are very important to Wei's architecture, and are evident in his

Above Left: Media House: gallery and stair detail with bedroom 'floating' platform above.
 Photograph by © Catherine Tighe Photographer

Above Middle: Media House: bedroom window with 'mask' at right.
 Photograph by © Catherine Tighe Photographer

Above Right: Media House: casework detail.
 Photograph by © Catherine Tighe Photographer

Facing Page: Media House: gallery—natural cleft slate floor with corten steel interior wall surface.
 Photograph by © Catherine Tighe Photographer





office, where staff members and Wei have participated in the construction and finishing of numerous projects.

Wei earned an undergraduate architecture degree from Pennsylvania State University and a Master of Architecture degree from the University of Pennsylvania, both with honors. In 1994, he was the recipient of the American Academy in Rome's Visiting Architect Fellowship co-sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trust.

He and his work have been published in *Progressive Architecture*, *Elle Décor*, *House Beautiful*, *BUCKS*, and *Philadelphia* magazines. Projects have also been included in the books *Creating the New American Townhouse*, *Whereabouts: New Architecture with Local Identities*, *Architecture Now*, *House: American Houses for the New Century*, *New American Town Houses*, and *New American Apartments*. Wei's Media House is the only residential project—and one of only two projects by a Philadelphia architect—to be recognized in the internationally-acclaimed *Phaidon Atlas of Contemporary World Architecture* in 2004. Awards have included the 2003 American Architecture Award from the Chicago Athenaeum, a 2002 AIA Gold Medal, and a 2004 Pennsylvania AIA Honor Award, among many others. The design for a house in Media, Pennsylvania, earned a coveted Record House commendation from *Architectural Record* magazine in 2001.

According to Wei, "A good project is an important collaboration between three parties—the client, the architect, and the contractor." He believes all three must work together through the entire design and construction process in order to achieve a wonderful result. Whereas many architects hand their completed drawings over to a contractor, Wei's firm involves contractors early



Top Right: Easton House: view of second floor sitting room and fireplace casework.
Photograph by © Catherine Tighe Photographer

Bottom Right: Easton House: view of stair, table-landing and hanging fireplace.
Photograph by © Catherine Tighe Photographer

Facing Page: Media House: detail of sink and passage between addition and farmhouse gallery.
Photograph by © Catherine Tighe Photographer



on, encouraging discourse about how designs will be built. Active client involvement ensures spaces that are personally connected on an intimate level.

Wei's award-winning work and years of teaching reflect his attitude towards architecture. He is committed to the integrity of forms, materials, and the landscape, yet is nevertheless stretching the boundaries of what is possible within the discipline. An interest in structures and tectonics is evident through innovative ways materials are connected and the serene forms of his spaces. Most



importantly, the designs of Wesley Wei Architects transcend style and time, creating work that is a testament to the beliefs of the architect while promoting innovations in expression.

Above Left: Easton House: view from garden.
 Photograph by © Catherine Tighe Photographer

Above Right: Easton House: view of stair slot down to first floor.
 Photograph by © Catherine Tighe Photographer

Facing Page Left: Easton House: detail of façade—cedar, brick and lead-coated copper.
 Photograph by © Catherine Tighe Photographer

Facing Page Right: Loft House: bath detail.
 Photograph by © Catherine Tighe Photographer