

MARCH 2011

LUXURY HOME

quarterly

WILD WEST

American Desert Homes

CHEN + SUCHART STUDIO
brings refined living to rugged terrain

+ A PEEK INSIDE Shanna Bender's
mod-chic living space and home office



PRAIRIE-STYLE MEETS ARTS & CRAFTS

For this Wilmette, IL, home, Morgante Wilson Architects combined the spaciousness of Prairie style with the refined finishes of the Arts & Crafts style to create a contemporary classic. Generous stone massings ground the light-wood exterior (above) and contribute to the ongoing indoor-outdoor dialogue that enlivens the home. Inside, the foyer (right) is delineated with birch, maple, oak, and cherry structural elements, flooring, paneling, detailing, and accents. From the foyer, you can see the living room, dining room, main hallway, and curving grand staircase. The artful use of wood joins these spaces into a unified whole despite the separate functions they serve.



Morgante Wilson Architects

THOUGHTFUL ARCHITECTURE AND INNOVATIVE DESIGN

by Julie Edwards

Located in Evanston, Illinois, Morgante Wilson Architects was founded in 1994 when Morgante joined the practice previously established by Fred Wilson in 1987. Under Wilson's direction, the firm won numerous prestigious awards including the American Institute of Architect's (AIA) Chicago Chapter Interiors Award. In joining the firm, Morgante introduced interior- and furniture-design competencies and helped further the company's notable achievements, including being named one of *Chicago Magazine's* Top 25 architecture firms.

Offering architecture and interior design services primarily for the high-end residential market, Morgante Wilson will work anywhere in the country and has designed primary and secondary residences in Utah, Colorado, New York and Washington D.C., among other places. However, many of the firm's

projects are located in the city of Chicago, predominantly within the North Shore area.

Now in its third decade, the firm's commitment to its community, its profession, civic improvement, and academic endeavors is unwavering. "We believe in being a thoughtful architectural practice where innovative design and client needs meet," Morgante says. "Our residential and commercial work expresses client wishes while reflecting architecture's vast possibilities.

"Trust is the best building foundation, and the firm's hallmark is clients who are actively involved in the creative process," she says. "Morgante Wilson, with a network of trusted partners, is committed to interpreting faithfully each client's functional prerequisites and stylistic dreams, from initial client meeting through ribbon cutting."

Top Architectural Elements of the Wilmette Home

1. **Siding:** The horizontal cedar siding with a natural-looking stain pays homage to the mature trees on-site;
2. **Railing:** The curved stair railing—thoughtfully designed with a combination of cherry wood, maple wood, and copper pipe—provides additional warmth via color and texture in the home's interior;
3. **Indiana limestone:** A massive stone wall on the exterior of the house contrasts with the cedar siding and acts as a pier, which grounds the home to the site. Additionally, the combination of wood and stone throughout the house reflects the natural setting;
4. **Windows:** Abundant windows create a visual connection between the interior and exterior spaces;
5. **Kitchen cabinetry:** Custom cherry cabinets were designed to continue the home's theme of natural materials in a light and airy setting.

“Our firm’s projects are a direct result of a process that engages our clients in an energetic, ongoing exchange of ideas.”

ELISSA MORGANTE, AIA

Wilson says that the firm specializes in crafting inspiring homes and views its role as that of an interpreter of its client’s unique preferences. One of the firm’s inspired residential projects is the Wilmette Residence, a new home constructed in an established suburb north of Chicago that combines natural elements of wood, stone, and light in a modern, urban setting.

“Generous and well-detailed use of wood flooring, ceiling panels, mouldings, railings, and window frames contributed to the commanding presence the owners wanted for this project,” Morgante says. “The extensive interior and exterior wood detailing also enhanced the owner’s desire to relate with the mature trees and landscaping on the lot and in the neighborhood.”

Morgante says the owner’s deference to a contemporary Craftsman style allowed for the creation of expansive living areas. “As with many Craftsman-style homes built at the turn of the century, this contemporary home uses the inherent properties of wood to promote a natural feeling in an interior environment,” she says. “The combination of wood and stone throughout the house recalls natural settings and carries occupants away from the urban environment.”

From the front entrance, the home is an explosion of birch, maple, oak, and cherry structural elements: flooring, paneling, detailing, and accents. The artful use of wood joins the living spaces into a unified whole despite the separate functions they serve. Standout features include a three-story curved staircase in the rectilinear foyer, and a two-story window wall in the sitting room, which almost eliminates the separation between indoor and outdoor spaces.

Looking to the future, Morgante Wilson is further strengthening its green-building knowledge to incorporate new green creative technologies to its designs. In fact, the firm is working on completing the first Gold LEED-certified residence in Glenview, Illinois. “We’ve expanded our knowledge to offer ecologically friendly building options and high-quality, cost-effective, and energy-efficient choices for client consideration,” Wilson says. “A central conviction within the practice is that architecture should not merely reflect nature but work in harmony with it.” ■



LENGTHY LUMBER
Bruce Roadcap Architecture designed this addition to a modest single-story bungalow in the historic Woodland Heights community in Houston, TX.

Bruce Roadcap Architecture

A RAW AND HONEST APPROACH TO DESIGN EXPOSES HIDDEN TREASURES

by *Tricia Despres*

With over 25 years of experience, Bruce Roadcap, founder of Houston-based Bruce Roadcap Architecture, has worked on a number of large residential and industrial projects and has been recognized nationally as an award-winning architect. Yet despite all of his bigger accomplishments,

it’s often the little pieces of each individual project that continue to inspire him.

“I remember a project where there was a little tree that I became a staunch supporter of,” Roadcap says. “It’s often these little, single elements that I