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Katz
Novoa
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Maximum Potential

Story by Joel Cornell Photos by Jonathan Katz, Chris Dorsch and Chip Steel

Through their vastly diverse portfolio and a one of a kind dedication to the ideals of their clients, KATZ NOVOA ARCHITECTS continue to deliver an expert approach to every project.



“One of the biggest issues in architecture, for us at least, is helping clients to maximize the value of their real estate through time tested advice,” said KATZ NOVOA Architects Managing Partner, Ileana Martin-Novoa. “This idea spreads across all sectors, all projects. It doesn’t matter if the client has a multi-million dollar budget for an industrial facility, or much smaller resources for a residential renovation; each client seeks the best returns in terms of value, efficiency and aesthetics.”

Born in Havana, Cuba, and raised between Puerto Rico, Spain and Venezuela, it’s quite an understatement to say that Martin-Novoa’s architectural background is varied. Alongside her partner and husband Jonathan B. Katz, the pair have established a uniquely inspired firm that works across the country, including projects in Puerto Rico.

After meeting in the course of their architectural studies at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Katz and Martin-Novoa worked together to eventually found KATZ NOVOA Architects in 1988. While many firms begin with their first projects in the residential market, KATZ NOVOA Architects held an initial focus on industrial projects. However, one of their residential renovations in Short Hills, NJ was widely heralded in the media, and the flood gates opened for them in the area of residential design.

KATZ NOVOA Architects provides the traditional scope of architectural services, but their involvement on many projects begins long before the preliminary design stages. Martin-Novoa

and Katz are frequently hired simply for their insight, vision and advice. Clients approach the firm seeking a new home, but are not always ready to delve into the project so quickly. Utilizing their extensive and diverse backgrounds, Martin-Novoa and Katz will tour sites for clients, explore the possibilities of a renovation, judge budgets and goals, and so on.

Having completed projects in New York, New Jersey, Vermont and Illinois, KATZ NOVOA Architects will go wherever their clients ask. Not long ago Martin-Novoa was asked by a high school friend to give her opinion on a site in Palmas del Mar, on Puerto Rico’s southeast coast. Eventually, the firm designed the client’s new home in the tropical resort. This has led to new endeavors, as the firm has recently been approached to undertake a commercial project in the capital of San Juan.

“We’re a boutique service-oriented firm,” Martin-Novoa says. “My partner and I are one hundred percent involved in every single aspect of our projects. We have a small staff to help us with the production of our documents, our books, etc. The rest of it, the entirety of the designs and the work, is performed by my partner and me.”

Utilizing such a unique and in depth approach to design, KATZ NOVOA Architects frequently sees clients return for all of their building related needs. A few years ago, a family from the town of Far Hills, N.J. hired the firm to design an extensive renovation on their house. Not long after the renovation was completed, the same clients returned to KATZ NOVOA Architects asking them to assess a nearby property where they wanted to build a new home.

OPPOSITE (TOP LEFT): Ski House, Stowe, Vt. Kitchen.

OPPOSITE (TOP RIGHT): Ski House, Stowe, Vt. Front yard and view of Great Room at dusk.

OPPOSITE (BOTTOM LEFT): Katz Novoa transformed the dilapidated 1970s house into the ideal vacation getaway.

OPPOSITE (BOTTOM RIGHT): Bedroom. In seeking to keep a singular unified aesthetic, Katz Novoa crafted every detail in the residence.

TOP LEFT: The Great Room is both stunning and comfortable.

TOP RIGHT: Built for more than just its beauty, the Stowe residence caters to the daily routines of its owners.

BOTTOM LEFT: In recognizing the possibilities of a connection between nature and home, Katz Novoa created a design that complements its surroundings.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Elegant, timeless and serene.



Private Residence, Mendham, N.J.
This stately English Manor House is
nestled on a secluded 24-acre plot of
land, in prestigious Somerset County.





TOP LEFT: Mendham Residence. The timeless kitchen is elegant and formal, yet practical and comfortable. Designed with great cooking and happy family celebrations in mind.

TOP RIGHT: Foyer and staircase. The home comprises six bedroom suites, each with its own bathroom, plus an apartment over the garage.

BOTTOM LEFT: The Mendham Residence takes advantage of natural light at every turn, and is a perfect blend of traditional aesthetics and modern living.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Elegant Billiard Room with bar and fireplace.

OPPOSITE (TOP): View of the estate from the south. The property includes water features, rolling grass areas and vistas into the valley.

OPPOSITE (BOTTOM LEFT): A six car garage, plus two upper garage bays were designed as part of the estate to house the clients' antique car collection.

OPPOSITE (BOTTOM RIGHT): The stairways outside are as attractive and elegant as the ones on the interior. The house was designed with maximum ease of use in mind.

The 23-acre site required an unusual amount of pre-planning; a stream that runs directly through the property made it necessary to procure permits from New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection; the site's topography dictated the location of the swimming pool to be in the front yard, necessitating a variance from Mendham's Zoning Board of Appeals.

KATZ NOVOA Architects led their clients throughout the entirety of the planning process, including helping the clients procure the necessary permits and variances and coordinate with various consultants. "The design itself was incredibly detailed," Martin-Novoa said, "and the construction documents were extensive and quite complex. The clients had a very specific idea of what they wanted: a traditional English Manor style home, entirely clad in stone with slate roofs, and we worked tirelessly to create our clients' dream retirement estate."

"Additionally, the clients sought a very energy efficient home, so every component of the building, from the insulation, to windows, appliances and the geothermal HVAC system was specified with energy conservation in mind." Orienting the house strategically on the property was a challenge due to the structure's size and proportions, along with the topography and the unique views on the site. "Once the initial layout was complete, everything just fell into place. The clients knew what they wanted; having worked with them before, we knew it too."

In the picturesque town of Stowe, Vt., KATZ NOVOA Architects was brought on to renovate an old house in rather

terrible shape. What's more, the building was aesthetically bland and nondescript. "This was a house that could have sat on any property anywhere in the country, really," Martin-Novoa said. "The clients wanted a home that was evocative of vernacular Vermont architecture. With that in mind, we got inspiration from the red barns that are traditional in the area."

The house itself was owned by two families. "So we had to reorganize the existing spaces very efficiently and create areas that would make the house big enough for the two families to share it together comfortably."

Furthermore, the Stowe house was very poorly insulated; this made it far too hot in the summer, and far too cold in the winter. Drawing on their extensive experience in energy-efficient design the architects created a comfortable interior environment for all seasons. As well, they specified sustainable materials and finishes to reduce the building's life-cycle costs.

Having greatly expanded the scope of their portfolio, KATZ NOVOA Architects will certainly continue to deliver an expert approach to each project regardless of size. As the projects come to fruition, however, the firm is gladly being led by their clients into other sectors, including more commercial and industrial work. ALT