

RIGHT AT HOME

Partners by Design

WRITTEN BY NICK BRANDI
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He's a renowned architect; she's an acclaimed interior designer. Together, they're Rene Mueller & Leslie Richardson, and they're ready to go to work for you



Rene Mueller and
Leslie Richardson
Rene Robert Mueller RA



Rene Mueller and Leslie Richardson arrived on the Delmarva Peninsula as something of an anomaly. He's a celebrated, prize-winning architect from Zurich, Switzerland. She's an acclaimed interior designer who's appeared on TV and in print. Together, they are the husband-wife tandem behind Rene Robert Mueller, R.A., a NY-based architectural firm that has now hung a shingle on the Eastern Shore.

"Leslie was born and raised at the beach, so it was inevitable that our second home would be by the ocean," said Rene, who is both a member of and has served as a juror for the American Institute of Architects (AIA). "After a very short time in Ocean City we found the place we were looking for, and the rest just followed from that."

Having studied architecture and engineering at Abend Technikum Zürich, Rene arrived here with a diverse portfolio. His designs and new constructions include not only commercial and institutional structures, such as restaurants, offices, hotels, churches and museums, but also single-family and multifamily residences. In fact, the wooded retreat he designed and built in Croton-on-Hudson, NY, won the prestigious AIA Honor Award in 2009.

But Rene says those formative years at university taught him more than just the aesthetic and structural challenges intrinsic to new construction. They also exposed him to the differentiated skills of renovation and restoration.

"While I was earning my bachelor's degree, I had the opportunity to work with the esteemed architectural and historical preservation/restoration firm of German

& Stulz in Zurich," Rene said. "It was with them that I'd participated in the restoration of Zurich's landmark St. Peter's Cathedral. I found that to be an invaluable experience, transformative in many ways."

One such way is that renovations and restorations have come to represent a significant portion of the couple's work. It's a fact that would prove especially useful in the region they've adopted as their second home.

"After Leslie and I became familiar with Ocean City and the surrounding area, we realized that a lot of the work needed here involved renovation rather than new construction," said Rene, whose chief architectural influences include Le Corbusier, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright. "Once we realized that, we also knew it meant we'd have many fun and challenging projects to work on here." ➔

Armed with those classic influences and training, Mueller – who is LEED AP accredited by the US Green Building Council – says he and Richardson approach each new job with the goal of marrying traditional Swiss precision with American innovation. While he concentrates on the structural elements, Leslie conceptualizes the lighting scheme, built-ins and other custom millwork design before turning her attention to the fixtures, finishes, furnishings, fabrics and décor.

“I regard Leslie’s design sensibilities to be the pièce de résistance of my architectural concepts,” said Rene of his spouse, who’s worked with worldwide media outlets like *CNN International*, *Bloomberg Business*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Barron’s*. “She was a student of architecture and architectural history, as well as art and design, and those lifelong passions have translated into skills related to proportion and color that have ultimately had a synergistic effect on my designs. I truly believe there is no one who can complement, and even enhance, my work with the seamless harmony that Leslie can. I am quite fortunate to have her as a partner in both my life and my career.”

Mueller and Richardson are currently wrapping up a mid-size residential gut renovation in midtown Ocean City before commencing work on a four-bedroom home project, also in OC. 🌊



RENE ROBERT MUELLER, R.A.

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