

UPPER WEST SIDE BROWNSTONE

The rear of this New York City townhome (this page and opposite page) was expanded to accomodate a new bulthaup kitchen system (bulthaup.com).





PLATT DANA ARCHITECTS

*Combining classic and modern design to
meet clients' needs*

Story by Christopher Cussat

Photos by Karen Cipolla



If partnership is the seamless blending of two complementary forces, then it is perhaps no more evident than in Platt Dana Architects (PDA) and in the personal and working relationship between founding principals Kate Platt, AIA, and Hope Dana, AIA.

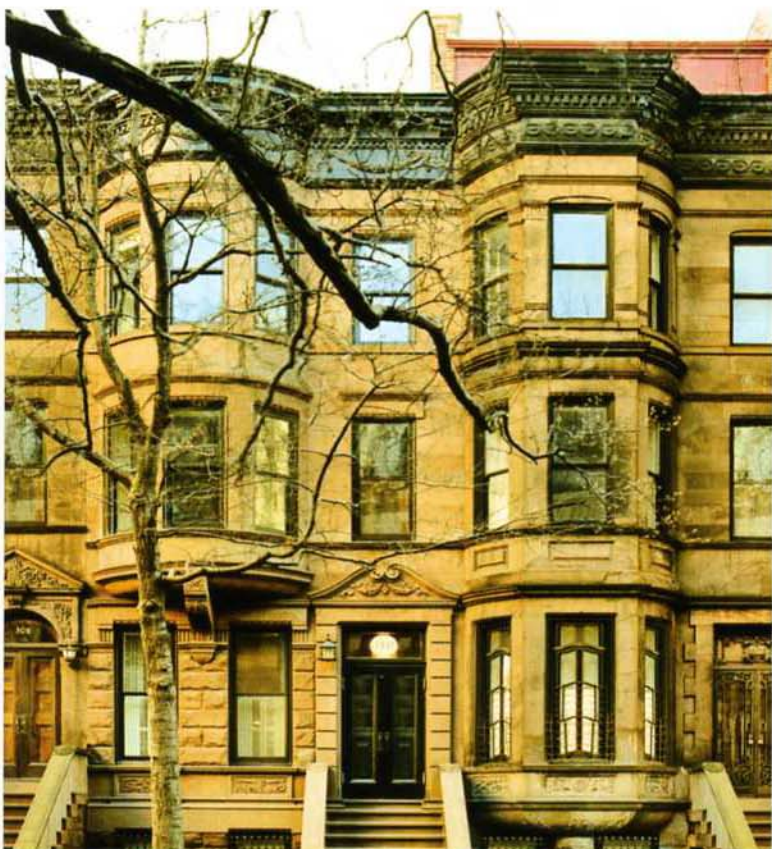
The duo met in the late 1980s at Skidmore Owings and Merrill in New York. "We became fast friends, and after working side by side for about two years, we went our separate ways," Platt recalls. "I left for graduate school at the University of Virginia and Hope went to the office of I.M. Pei."

But time, college, marriage, kids, and life in general could not suppress their friendship or the eventual destiny of PDA. Ten years later, the two found themselves back in New York City as busy sole proprietors. "Over coffee one morning, as we were catching up and sharing stories, we realized that we should and could combine forces," Dana says. From the simple, instinctual assumption that sharing staff, office space, and ideas would make their lives more profitable and enjoyable, the friends began PDA.

Today, Platt and Dana describe PDA as "an approachable architecture firm," which is to say that they bring their clients into the whole process. "We encourage client participation throughout the process, and we love being challenged by our clients," Platt says. "Because our lifestyles fit with a lot of our clients' lifestyles, we're able to target specific design ideas that will help them." Dana adds, "One thing we often try to do is consider the way



Kate Platt, AIA, and Hope Dana, AIA.



Brownstone Renovation

Upper West Side, New York, NY

DESCRIPTION

When the clients purchased this property, it had been "chopped up" into several rental units, so the project consisted of removing several bathrooms and kitchens and starting new. The heating/cooling, electrical, and lighting systems, along with some structural modifications, were completed within the house, and a fifth floor was added. The rear façades of the building's first and second floors were also expanded, making the rear spaces deeper than what they were originally.

CHALLENGES

Narrowness: Because it was a very narrow house, completing the AC, heat, and AV ductwork was very challenging in such a tight space.

NEW AMENITIES

- An elevator
- Fireplaces on every floor
- A German-designed bulthaup kitchen system (bulthaup.com)

Pre-War Apartment Renovation

Riverside Drive, New York, NY

DESCRIPTION

This project required removing everything from three separate apartments in order to re-plan the spaces into one large, family apartment. Central air is among the brand-new amenities added to the 3,700-square-foot apartment.

CHALLENGES

Storage: Even though this was an enormous, old building, the way the rooms were laid out did not provide enough room for storage. The clients had many things they wanted to store, so a lot of planning and organization was required to make sure that all of their belongings fit into the apartment.

Central AC: Adding central air in a Landmarked Building is tricky—there are historic-building characteristics that must be taken into consideration. For example, cooling condensing units need to be positioned on the outside face of the building to receive fresh air. So when cutting through an original brick wall, space that can be cut is limited. In New York City, the Landmarks Preservation Commission does not often allow the condenser grill to be visible.

Windows: All of the windows were replaced with higher-quality insulated-glass windows for energy efficiency, as well as to create unity throughout the apartment. Due to the high winds coming off the Hudson River, the window-to-brick fastening detail needed special attention.





KITCHEN STORAGE

PDA designed space for as much storage as possible in this apartment, including this dining area adjacent to the kitchen, where nearby floor-to-ceiling cabinetry stores the homeowners' belongings.



SUBTLE HUES

The soft color scheme for this New York City kitchen is pulled together by the Moroccan mosaic-tile backsplash.

HISTORIC YET MODERN
PDA blended historic and modern features in this entry hall, located in the firm's Upper West Side apartment project.



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KATE PLATT, PRINCIPAL

we organize and run our own lives, and implement that into the design for our clients.” The firm’s work primarily consists of residential renovations for families, and no two projects are ever quite the same.

PDA’s competitiveness is a result of the professional diversity that Platt and Dana bring to the firm. For example, Dana grew up in a Scandinavian-styled modern home where good design was always discussed and debated. Dana’s design influence is simple, clean, and modern. Platt has wider-ranging eclectic tastes, but when it comes to applying a mixture of design ideas into the firm’s work, she is careful to keep a level head. Together, this close-knit team offers its clients the best of traditional aesthetics, as well groundbreaking, innovative design.

In the realm of architectural firms, partnerships consisting of two women are rare. But according to Platt and Dana, this rarity actually gives them and PDA a competitive advantage. “We lead complicated lives that are similar to our clients’ lives,” Platt says. “As a result, we are able to understand what’s in our clients’ heads, anticipate their needs, and synthesize it through design.” Dana adds, “I think it’s also a result of the questions we ask when we set out on the design process. By sitting down and spending time with our clients, we can anticipate their needs, fully understand their lifestyles, and give them what they want.”

The partners’ comforting and approachable demeanors are also something that people are drawn to. “Most clients come into the renovation/construction process with many preconceived

“By sitting down and spending time with our clients, we can anticipate their needs, fully understand their lifestyles, and give them what they want.” HOPE DANA, PRINCIPAL





Single-Family Home in New England

Norfolk, CT

DESCRIPTION

The clients purchased the town eyesore, a 1970s center-hall Colonial with difficult proportions. PDA renovated the house by removing an unfortunate low-ceilinged "Florida room" off the back of the house and adding correctly proportioned windows throughout the house. The wooden floorboards were replaced with cherry floors. The flooring base and door casings were replaced throughout the house. The only things that remain from the original house are the foundation, some wood-framing members, and the roof pitch.

AMENITIES

Pavilion: PDA added an outdoor pavilion to the back of the house, featuring an outdoor fireplace.

Windows: The new, larger windows allow better views of the surrounding landscape.

CHALLENGE

Making profound changes while being budget conscious.

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COLONIAL TIES

Having lived in the New England area for several decades, both Kate Platt and Hope Dana embrace colonial design, as evidenced in this Norfolk, VA home project (above and opposite page).

notions of how alienating it can be," Dana says. "We immediately dispel those fears."

Both Platt and Dana do not believe in a magic formula for success. Their experience has taught them that perseverance as well as believing in themselves and in each other have propelled them a long way. "We don't think there ever is a roadmap for life or for starting and running a business," Platt says. "We just went for it and worked hard." Dana also recognizes the positive influence and productive benefits of working with one's friend. "We were fortunate that we had each other to run decisions by," she says. Platt agrees, adding, "We allow each other to do our best, and together we make many small decisions everyday that pertain to how we talk to our clients and interact with our employees."

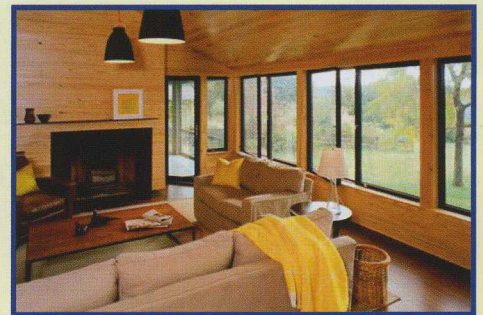
This idea of constructive collaboration—both between Platt and Dana, as well as among PDA and its staff and clients—is the trait that has helped PDA to stand out as one of the newest and brightest architectural entities in the Northeast. "We enjoy a collaborative problem-solving process within the office, and truly enjoy creatively interacting with our staff," Dana says. Platt agrees, saying, "The collaboration with our inspiring and demanding clients always keeps things interesting and moving forward." ■

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