

# EAST COAST HOME+DESIGN

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# AMANDA MARTOCCHIO

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**G**ood design is all about balance. Just as in other forms of design, balance in architecture is achieved when there is an aesthetically pleasing integration of elements. Architectural design is unique, however, in that it must also solve functional needs.

The role of the architect is to balance functional requirements with aesthetic considerations to enhance people's lives and generate a sense of comfort and well-being.

We balance the conceptual ideas that underpin our designs with the details and materials that support them and bring them to life. In our designs for buildings and spaces, we balance what is appreciated and relevant now with what is timeless and durable for the future.

When developing a site strategy to support our building designs, we seek to establish a balance between making new design interventions in a site, while preserving what is inherently beautiful and

meaningful about it. We are always balancing the cost of certain design decisions with their relative contribution to the overall design. Our clients do not have unlimited budgets, so we are making value judgments all the time, identifying what is most important in a design solution.

I would call "balance" a design principle. For me, balance is independent of style, and has been a component of design thinking since humans have thought creatively about their environment. Vitruvius, the ancient Roman architect, believed that buildings should be designed applying a balance of *firmitas* (strength), *utilitas* (functionality) and *venustas* (beauty).

Even though the materials and the methods of construction may differ vastly, balance is an ingredient in all good architecture, from New England's vernacular dwellings to Philip Johnson's Glass House. Formal balance has historically been thought to be symmetrical, especially for monumental or civic buildings. Meanwhile,



# Balance



informal balance—that is, asymmetrical or partially symmetrical—has been used as an organizing principle in buildings of the Arts and Crafts period, or in Case Study Houses of the mid-century. Our work consists of both symmetrical and asymmetrical elements, which we believe add interest when combined.

We believe that listening to our clients regarding their needs and dreams is the starting place. Once we understand their goals, we seek to study the context of the project—whether a remodel, addition or new home—and evaluate, with them, what is important about the original conditions that should be preserved, responded

to or even celebrated.

We design environments to enrich people's lives. We believe that beauty is the result of design solutions that emerge from authentic conversations with our clients, an understanding of the context, a commitment to ideas, and a love of materials and craft.

Providing personal attention and applying nearly 30 years of experience, we help our clients stretch their imaginations to realize their dreams. We feel honored to be entrusted as architect and designer with what is often their most personal asset, their home.