

Architect Ben Maguire:

from INSPIRATION to CREATION



BY SARAH FINEGOLD, PHOTOS BY JOHN NAGG, BEN MAGUIRE

Today's Pittsburgh is a city of opportunity. It is dynamic, diverse, and full of creative, passionate young professionals helping the city of bridges to build and grow each day. One of these people is Ben Maguire, a Pittsburgh area native and accomplished local architect.

Growing up in White Oak, PA, Maguire remembers having always been a builder of sorts; whether it was Legos® and blocks, or treehouses and forts, he spent his time creating and designing. His skill at design, as well as drawing and analytical thinking, made his choice of career path seem like a no-brainer. He enrolled in the rigorous and challenging architecture program at Carnegie Mellon University. He recalls it being the first time he learned how to truly think and create. "Up to that point, school was all about retention, learning facts and reciting them for your next test. Architectural problem solving is very open-ended and subjective, so the 'solutions' to architectural problems couldn't be found in a book, you had to create them - and often from a blank page."

After finishing his studies, Maguire dedicated himself to meaningful progress in Pittsburgh neighborhoods. His first development project, the G-Lofts in Lawrenceville,

was an opportunity for him to utilize a wide range of skills, both creatively and in the context of business and management. In addition to designing, he also handled the entitlements from the city, arranged the finances, bought and sold property, and hired his own contractors. Maguire wanted to create, from scratch, truly dynamic spaces that were memorable and unique. Working with very narrow lots, he utilized height and light exposure to design open spaces. "The houses are only 18' wide," said Maguire, reflecting on this project. "In order to make them feel bigger, I cut a hole right through the middle of the house that leads all the way up to the roof, where there are skylights. The staircase wraps around this central atrium space, which is flooded with natural light. I decided to finish off this multi-level atrium/staircase with a rooftop deck that has dynamite views toward downtown Pittsburgh." This project stands as one of the most rewarding ventures of his active career.

As far as style is concerned, Maguire places a strong emphasis on open plan living and strong outdoor connections when working residentially. He aims to create spaces that rely on a logical scale, proportion, and flow. Style can be groomed and adjusted once the "bones" are just right. He is also a proponent of keeping things simple. "It's a process of refining or editing down to the essence of what the project should be. Finding the piece that every project has, which is the soul of the project... Maybe it's a killer view out toward the city, or a unique staircase, or a show-stopping kitchen. My goal is to find that specific aspect and then strip away the elements that hide or interfere with that experience. It's about exemplifying the positives and downplaying the negatives."

Maguire continues to be creatively inspired day-by-day. Whether considering the ingenuity of the baffling land use on the cliffs of the Amalfi coast, or—a true Pittsburgher—letting the harmony and inventiveness of Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater capture his imagination, the cogs in his mind are constantly turning. And what is his ideal project? "That's easy!" says Maguire. "I've always wanted to design my own house." www.benjaminmaguire.com



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