

# Pauli & Uribe Architects

| Produced By Natalie King

*For centuries, the art of drawing conditioned both the perception and conception of the art of architecture. In the design process there can be no technological substitute for that direct, organic, mind-to-hand connection which has served artists and architects so well in the past. The computer, while a useful aid, will never replace the pencil as the designers most powerful tool.*

**L**aunched in the spring of 2007 by Monika Zofia Pauli and Juan Guillermo Uribe Rubio, Pauli & Uribe Architects LLC provides design and consulting services for residential projects of every size and description, from bathroom and kitchen renovations to new construction. While working primarily in the Boston area, Pauli & Uribe has been involved in projects as far afield as France, Costa Rica and Jackson, Wyoming. Monika and Juan bring their own special talents to bear on each job they undertake.

With more than twenty years of experience as an architect in Boston's historic Beacon Hill and Back Bay districts, Monika is well-versed in the language of traditional design and is especially sensitive to the sometimes complex historical and artistic aspects of working with period buildings.

When appropriate, Juan employs a more modern and cutting edge approach based on his earlier architectural experience in Columbia. Pauli & Uribe strives to approach each new project with enthusiasm, creativity and the utmost professionalism.

The firm is currently involved with designing facilities for charitable organizations and museums, such as the BiNA Equestrian Center, currently sited in Wellesley, and the Larz Anderson Auto Museum in Brookline. They are contributing their services for the future BiNA facility, which will offer an integrated therapeutic program utilizing Equine Assisted Activities & Therapies (EAAT), as well as a Life Skills Program and Creative & Complimentary Therapies for people with cognitive, physical, psychological and developmental disabilities. The firm is also involved in fundraising for the Friends of the Public Garden by creating artwork, which will be sold by the group.

In Boston, Juan worked with Monika and James McNeely at McNeely & Pauli Architects for the last six years prior to joining Monika at Pauli & Uribe Architects LLC. There he designed and managed residential projects - ranging from several hundred thousand dollars to 10 million dollars, from design, bidding and negotiation phases to completion. His projects include a number of historic townhouses in Louisburg Square and on Mount Vernon Street, as well as the Ritz Carlton House Condominiums, Millennium Place Towers and a residence at One Commonwealth Avenue.

Monika first began her studies in fine arts and architectural history while at Wheaton College. She later attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, where she received a Masters Degree in Architecture, earning a prize for her thesis examining the potential of planning and historic preservation to foster an urban revival in Troy, New York. She carried these interests into her professional life rehabilitating dilapidated houses in the historic center of Albany



Images of the Chateau courtesy of Pauli & Uribe Architects.

and later working on numerous historical renovations and urban infill projects in the Boston area. In addition to dozens of residential projects requiring review by the Beacon Hill Architectural Commission, Monika designed and supervised the construction of a new 40,000-square-foot facility for Suffolk University, which includes an underground basketball court.

Monika is an architect who used abundant hand drawings throughout her career. Beyond

renderings of proposed architectural projects, she has in recent years broadened her artwork to include illustrations for children's books, views of Boston and historic sites, and custom views for her clients showing homes and beloved animals. She began showing her work at events such as the Liberty Hotel Art Exhibit series.

Farther afield, she involved Pauli & Uribe in architectural and interior design services in the on-going renovation of her family's ruined





17th-century chateau near Toulouse, France. She participated in hand restoration of antique original finishes, applying her hands-on experience gained restoring her family's historic homes in America. She also collaborated with her mother, a professional artist trained in Poland, on painting decorative Renaissance style murals in the chateau.

#### *The Story behind the Chateau Restoration*

More than a decade ago, Monika Pauli and her family purchased a semi-ruinous portion

of a chateau originally built in the 14th century by the powerful Archbishop of Auch, in Gascony. A "fortified chateau," it featured a 43-meter-high Gothic tower or "donjon," one of the tallest in France, and a two-story block built around a central courtyard. The donjon has survived virtually unaltered and has been a museum owned by the French government since 1860. The lower quadrangle fell into such disrepair by the 1660s that it was largely taken down and partially rebuilt using many

of the original materials. It has remained little changed since that time. The Chateau de Bas-soues, as it is known, is one of 1,000 chateaux listed in the *Guide des Chateaux des France* (2005). When Monika and her family first saw the chateau in 1996, the portion they were later to buy had been unoccupied for nearly half a century. One room was being used as a stable. Mattresses remaining on the upper floor were still stuffed with straw. Plumbing and electricity had never been installed.



The stair and some of the woodwork clearly dated from the late 18th or early 19th centuries, but otherwise little had changed from the 1600s. Even in rural France such a survival can only be described as miraculous. Monika's husband, Bill, a historian and an architect himself, also saw the potential of the place and exclaimed "Buy it!" Then, just as quickly, he reversed himself, saying "Don't listen to me! It's that restoration bug biting again!" The Paulis didn't listen. They were completely enchanted by the hidden beauty of this place and undeterred by the eeriness. The mysterious owner was sought out, a price was obtained, and a deal was made. After the sale, local contractors were brought in to take a look. They all declared the place beyond salvation. This did not deter the new owners. They did not want the kind of wholesale "modernization" advocated by the contractors.

They had seen too many properties in the region--two, three, or even six hundred years old--which had been ruined by such an approach. The challenge was to make this decrepit habitation a comfortable living place while preserving its ancient character.

The Paulis decided that they would have to do most of the work themselves. They had already restored several 19th-century houses in America, but this project would prove to be tougher and more challenging than anything they had tackled before. Nevertheless, the aesthetic results were surprisingly immediate, as each element emerged from the accumulated dust and grime of centuries. Monika's firm devised overall plans minimizing any alterations to partition locations, openings, and original surfaces and materials. Being a registered historical monument, no new exterior openings were allowed, even if it meant opening up a 1660s window which had been sealed in the 1820s. The window openings that did remain, glassless and stuffed with cardboard, retained traces of the original leaded glass casements. Custom made replacements were ordered from a firm specializing in this particular product. Once again, the windows looked out on verdant fields with, on clear days, the snow-capped Pyrenees in the distance. Sunlight filled the rooms. Today, the only obvious modern intrusions are the white wall-mounted radiators. While the time-consuming work of installing the conveniences of contemporary life was proceeding, the more enjoyable process of restoring and finishing the ancient wall and ceiling surfaces was started by Monika during her brief visits and Monika's mother, an artist who began her career in Poland in the 60s. Evidence of original decorative wall painting simulating rustication was discovered in the corner turret, and was painstakingly restored. Elsewhere, Renaissance-style paintings were applied to various surfaces, all intended to evoke ages past and toned to look as if they had always been there. Some antique furniture was brought over from America, while other pieces were bought at local antique shows and "brocante" shops. A 19th-century French grandfather's clock of "onion" shape was found to fit exactly the ghostly shadow of such a clock which remained on the plaster wall of the kitchen. Visitors say it's as if it had come back home. Although the process of restoration and decoration will probably never be finished, pieces keep falling into place, often quite accidentally, creating a unique and exciting home where the owners and their guests feel the warmth and the kind of awe which comes from direct contact with the past. The peaceful and friendly ambience of the unspoiled little "bastide," or fortified town, where the chateau is located, adds to the magical atmosphere. While digging beneath the stone floor to install wiring in the room just off the entry, a pair of 17th-century leather overshoes were discovered. They had been deliberately placed there before the floor was laid, apparently for luck. ❖



Images of the Chateau courtesy of Pauli & Uribe Architects.

