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Architect Cathy Purple Cherry Designs a Project of a Lifetime
Creating the Grandeur of a Generational Family Compound



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Architect Cathy Purple Cherry Designs a Project of Lifetime Creating the Grandeur of a Generational Family Compound

Approximately six years ago, I was approached by a client who was ready to design and build his lifelong dream of a multi-structure estate. Since his early 20's, David Williams had dreamt of creating an exceptional homestead in which family, friends, and colleagues could gather for holidays, celebrations, summits, and reunions for generations to come. The ensuing design journey we undertook together became what I refer to as the "project of a lifetime."

While the ten-structure estate will be published in a national architecture magazine this fall, I am delighted to share with you a preview of the residence, key insights into the design process, and the unique aspects that make this a truly incomparable family retreat.

I would be remiss if I didn't point out that David knows a thing or two about building from the ground up. In 1988 at the age of 25, he acquired digital marketing firm Merkle, becoming its 24th employee. Under David's leadership,





the company has grown to more than 9,600 employees in the US, Europe and Asia, including offices in downtown Charlottesville. Throughout his 32 years as CEO, he never wavered from his dream of creating a treasured generational family compound, spending years collecting inspiration images and curating artwork and accessories for the future home.

Needless to say, David was fantastically involved in each step of the design process.

He had a very specific vision for each structure and for the estate as a whole, yet also trusted the project team to implement what we thought was best—the perfect formula for a stunningly beautiful and functional design.

The culmination of these five years of design and construction is an extraordinary estate that uniquely combines quiet sophistication and unapologetic romanticism. The residence, located on more than 150 acres

of land in Maryland's idyllic Eastern Shore, encompasses 44,000 square feet of luxury... the epitome of grandeur in the form of a private sanctuary. Stunning gardens and dramatic water views wrap around its ten structures, which are thoughtfully positioned on a stunning point of land located on the Chester River in Centerville, MD.

During the entire journey, the Purple Cherry Architects team focused on both the largest and smallest of details. From general

use and broad vision to microscopic trim and tile details, lighting and color effects, furniture and accessory selections, and final furniture placement for move-in, the joy of the journey was the ongoing opportunities continuously given to the design team by this incredible client to focus on all kinds of creative possibilities.

Early in the design process, we also engaged the services of Campion Hruby Landscape Architects, a longtime consultant to the firm. Principal Kevin Campion developed a master site plan that detailed beautiful landscaping and hardscaping details for each structure, space, and garden. The approach to the estate winds through meticulously manicured farmlands, and just before arriving at the main house, guests are greeted by twelve black sheep grazing in a dedicated pasture complete with a custom stone sheep shed.

Upon arrival, the estate's remaining structures—all built by custom homebuilder GYC Group Ltd—are made apparent: main house, guest house, timber-frame entertaining barn, carriage house, automobile barn, pool house, boat house, pottery studio and conservatory. To ensure cohesion and consistency, the design of most of the buildings happened concurrently. Only the boat-house, pottery studio and Hartley Botanic





conservatory came later. Exquisite exterior architectural detailing and materials were intentionally incorporated throughout the estate, including eyebrow dormers, sunlit cupolas, handmade Cushwa oversized brick, custom shutters, and white cedar shake and tin-coated copper roofs, collectively creating a truly magical haven.

The main home itself exudes a strong sense of scale. Yet, it never feels overwhelming due to the extensive custom millwork incorporated throughout the interior. The home presents a number of amazing spaces, including a 40-foot long Chicago brick barrel-vaulted dining room with wine

cellar and tasting room, 60-foot long waterfront covered porch, two floating stairs with three-story custom chandeliers, hunt room with Chicago brick floor and wood shelves supported by custom steel straps, two-story bar with Douglas fir trusses and hidden door to lower level wine cellar, billiards room with surrounding custom drink rail and curved beaded ceiling, stunning office with surrounding custom shelves all painted in a deep rich monochromatic color, prep kitchen with wood-fired pizza oven, library with extensively detailed arched built-ins, and large kitchen with custom pot rack, coffee station, beverage area and custom

six-foot stainless sink, in addition to eight ensuite bedrooms and two children's bunk rooms.

The modern farmhouse guest cottage tucked off to one side serves as an unforgettable waterfront retreat by offering three ensuite bedrooms with balconies, full kitchen with custom zinc island and antique pendants, living room with sleek glass-shelved beverage niche, staircase with open three-inch solid wood treads and Hinckley boat cleats with rope railing, and an expansive waterfront screened porch. It nods to the architectural design of the main house while also introducing fun nautical and industrial influences.

The carriage house, which is as practical as it is beautiful, includes a potting shed with custom concrete sink, hunt and fish room, and bike/gator garage. This is a particularly stunning accessory structure due to its dramatic use of symmetry, deep gable rooflines, and cupolas.

The 50-foot long pottery studio was designed with two flanking lofts accessed by ships' ladders, providing two-person sleeping quarters on each end. The ground floor provides long work benches for pottery, painting and general artistic ventures desired by the owner or visitors. The fun flared-roof boathouse provides storage for paddle boards, kayaks, fishing rods, life jackets and other water elements desired for Chesapeake Bay outings. The Conservatory stands like a jewel on the landscape provid-



ing opportunities for growing year-round vegetables and other organic plants.

The last two structures were designed to provide an array of entertainment options for both intimate and large-scale gatherings. The incredible pool house, located adjacent to the pool's shallow sun shelf, includes a covered space with bar, lounge, dining, grilling and pizza making areas, a ping pong deck, a changing room/laundry space, and a full bathroom. Sliding barn doors on each side allow the interior spaces to be fully open to the outside or enclosed for protection from the elements. The large windowed cupola floods natural light into the interior core of this curved ceiling magnificent structure.

The large timber-framed party barn with indoor basketball court, built by B&D Builders, boasts a 38-foot clear span of heavy-timber scissor-style trusses. The structure incorporates cypress board-and-batten siding, natural stone on the gables, six shed dormers, and a large open timber-frame custom cupola for wonderful natural light and ventilation. The barn banks into the natural hillside, providing a lower storage area for a car collection.

Purple Cherry Architects was fortunate to also provide all interior design and



furnishings services for the estate including custom millwork, tile patterns, trim details, light and plumbing fixtures, colors, wallpaper selections, furnishings, bedding and some accessories. The owners further supplemented each structure's furnishings with an abundance of their own antique and vintage pieces, sculpture, and most significantly, fine art. The resulting refuge is a true labor of love—designed and built

with meticulous planning and attention to detail over the span of five years.

The truth is that while I have called this journey the project of a lifetime, I look forward to designing many more generational family compounds. I cannot think of a more gratifying endeavor than to help create beautiful and meaningful sanctuaries for families to gather in for decades to come.



Born and raised in Virginia, **Cathy Purple Cherry** ultimately landed in Annapolis where she grew a large architectural firm specializing in high-end custom homes and estates. A talented architect, visionary, and three-dimensional thinker, Cathy is able to marry clients' dreams with the reality of the built environment. While Cathy revels in the intricate design opportunities presented by high-end residential architecture, she is equally passionate about her philanthropic efforts and her work serving the special needs community through the firm's Purposeful Architecture studio. An award-winning residential architecture and interior design firm specializing in exceptional homes and luxurious estates throughout the East Coast from Plymouth, MA to Warm Springs, VA, Cathy has grown her team two-fold in the past three years. Purple Cherry Architects truly loves the journey of bringing together their clients with stunning pieces of property where they can build the home of their dreams.

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