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ELLE Decor

**EXCELLENCE
IN DESIGN:
D.C. METRO**



Photo by Jennifer Hughes

CAPITAL WONDERS

TRANSFORMING THE MUNDANE INTO THE MIGHTY
IS VW AND CATHERINE FOWLKES' FORTE.

When Washington, D.C., natives VW and Catherine Fowlkes felt the calling to return to their hometown and open an architecture firm, Fowlkes Studio, they were aware of the need for the city's residential revival, one that would see historic properties honored and elevated by refreshed designs.

"We want to create architecture that reflects its time, site, and owner, thereby endowing historic buildings with a new chapter of their identity," says VW. A love for collaboration with skilled craftsmen, designs that transform existing spaces in meaningful ways, and finished projects that tell their owners' stories has led to subtle and refined projects throughout the area and elsewhere on the East Coast.

In addition to exploring the particularities of a client's wants, the architects become intimately familiar with a property's nuances to better understand how they may craft a spatially sensitive and relevant project. "Washington has an incredibly rich housing stock with varied conditions,



FROM TOP: An open staircase allows light to flood into the darkest part of the house and facilitates open spaces that flow together. Clean lines and materials characterize the kitchen's aesthetic, from the elongated windows to the juxtaposition of stainless steel and bleached walnut. A front addition breathes life into the home's facade, creating a welcoming porch and a new connection with the neighborhood.



Photo by Jennifer Hughes

including row houses, apartments, and neighborhoods with rolling lawns," Catherine notes, pointing to the district's multifaceted challenges with historic preservation and tight quarters as illustrations of riddles they routinely parse. "Once we recognize a constraint, we can turn it around and see what the opportunities might be," she adds.

Fowlkes Studio's holistic approach to each project conjures finished products that harbor their own soul, a reflection of the architects' commitment to process. "That means being open to changing our approach and to ideas from all sources," VW explains. "The more you bleed for a project, the more satisfaction it brings when it's complete."

202-758-5518 | fowlkesstudio.com