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Malcolm Davis Architecture Evolves into MDa Studios

A new firm name and leadership reflects a new chapter for the award-winning residential architecture firm.



Tree House (Photo: Mariko Reed), Coastal Retreat (Photo: Joe Fletcher), Pacifica (Photo: Joe Fletcher)

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (September 9, 2025) – **Malcolm Davis Architecture**, the renowned Bay Area firm founded by acclaimed architect Malcolm Davis, is now **MDa Studios (MDa)**. This rebranding marks a new chapter for the firm, led by Principals Pat Blackburn and Elsa Brown, who will build upon Davis' legacy of innovative, sustainable and creative design while bringing in fresh perspectives and a commitment to compelling and collaborative design.

After more than three decades at the helm, Davis steps into a new phase of his professional journey. "With Elsa and Pat taking the lead, the time is now right for me to step away more fully," Davis reflects. He will continue to contribute to the studio in a consulting role, offering design input, advice and guidance.

Brown and Blackburn plan to lead an exciting evolution for MDa that they believe will reflect a natural progression for the firm. Blackburn, who has been with the firm since 2013, and Brown, since 2015, have been integral to the firm's growth. Together, the duo bring complementary skills—Blackburn offers a gift for design clarity and architectural precision, while Brown carries forward the institutional design knowledge of MDa with an intuitive and natural talent for recognizing the essence of a project.

"We see this as a mindful evolution, sticking to the principles that have always driven our work: thoughtful designs, strong indoor/outdoor connections, and a focus on natural light," Blackburn says.

MDa's future is built on a foundation of respect for the past. Davis' passion for design, natural light, and sustainable architecture has shaped the firm's ethos, and the Partners are committed to preserving these core principles.

"From new sustainable building techniques to innovative technologies, we are constantly looking for ways to reduce our environmental impact while creating timeless spaces," Blackburn explains. Brown continues, "We love what we are doing and want to maintain the essence of what Malcolm created."

Notably, MDa was included in the inaugural **Forbes America's Top 200 Residential Architects** list. The distinction acknowledges architectural firms with distinguished track records in their areas of expertise, who have demonstrated innovative leadership, significantly contributed to the advancement of residential architectural practice, and made valuable contributions to society. This honor not only supports the firm's efforts since inception, it encourages future achievements and goals for the next generation of leadership.



PAT BLACKBURN, Principal

Pat arrived in San Francisco in 2009, just two weeks after earning his Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Southern California. He has since made his home in the city's fog-laced Outer Sunset District, where he lives with his wife and young children. As a licensed Architect in California, Pat joined the firm in 2013 and has grown into his role as Principal, bringing over a decade of expertise in modern, custom residential design.

Guided by a meticulous eye for detail, Pat blends a refined understanding of building materials with a deep appreciation for natural light—elements that consistently define and elevate his work. His strengths extend beyond design, encompassing the ability to coordinate and collaborate fluidly with clients, contractors, and consultants to ensure every project moves from concept to completion with clarity and care.

Outside the office, Pat can often be found tackling renovations and additions to his own home, experimenting with woodworking projects, or surfing the brisk waves of Ocean Beach. Whether in the studio or on the water, his work and hobbies reflect the same commitment to craft, patience, and precision.



ELSA BROWN, Principal

Elsa, a Bay Area Native, has always loved a story. Whether the story highlights a person, a historic event, or a building, the narrative will serve to enlighten, clarify, and inform everyone who comes into contact with it in the past, present, and future. Elsa finds architecture to be a powerful narrative tool, it creates a dialogue between light and shadow, new and old, solid and void. While she loves the design opportunities offered by new construction projects, her passion for renovations, thoughtful reuse, and historic spaces shaped her as an architect; she strives to honor a building's past, while also helping to shape its future.

Elsa enjoys working closely with clients, the MDa design team, and consultants to weave together a unique and appealing composition of all of the team members and their experiences. She has a natural affinity, as a lover of stories, of sifting through the viewpoints and backstories to find and amplify the distinct essence of a project.

A strategic, clear thinker, perceptive listener and creative problem solver, Elsa has been a collaborative force at MDa Studios since she joined the team in 2015. In her free time, she can be found enjoying an urban hike across San Francisco with her partner and their dog, getting lost in a good book, and planning her next travel adventure.



MALCOLM DAVIS, Founding Principal

Malcolm Davis is a Bay Area native with an intimate understanding of regional building styles and climates. Educated at UC Berkeley, his strong appreciation for the craft of building goes hand in hand with thoughtful stewardship of resources. He takes pride in creative problem solving through simple, elegant solutions. Malcolm believes that, in large part, we are formed by the spaces we inhabit. Thus, he strives to create livable spaces that are simple, comfortable and contextually appropriate to their surroundings, as well as inspire and enrich our lives. Malcolm applies his deep understanding of borrowed light, the sequence of indoor to outdoor spaces, and the art of repurposing materials to all of his works.

Employing a timeless vocabulary and a curated palette, Malcolm's work over the last 35 years has earned multiple awards from The American Institute of Architects and has been recognized in *Dwell*, *Elle Décor*, *Sunset*, *California Home + Design*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *Wall Street Journal*.

ABOUT MDa Studios | www.mdarch.net | [@mdastudios](https://www.instagram.com/mdastudios)

MDa Studios (MDa) focuses on thoughtful, enduring residential design. Guided by a belief that architecture should be both highly responsive and quietly transformative, the studio approaches each project with equal parts rigor and imagination. Their work reflects a deep understanding of site, context, and the layered needs of those who inhabit it, resulting in buildings that aim to feel rooted, refined, and distinctly personal. Since 1991, the studio's innovative, sustainable, and creative approach has resulted in award-winning work throughout Northern California.

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