

ARCHITECT OF SUCCESS

AGA SOKOLOW, FOUNDER OF ONE OF **DELAWARE'S** FEW **WOMAN-OWNED** ARCHITECTURE FIRMS, IS **REDEFINING** WHAT IT MEANS TO **FEEL AT HOME**.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARIA DEFORREST

There wasn't a single moment when Aga Sokolow, AIA, realized she would become an architect—but there were signs early on.

"I was always moving furniture around in my bedroom, looking for that perfect [arrangement]," she says, reflecting on her childhood in Poland. "It's like I knew intuitively that the environment I created for myself would affect the way I felt."

She also remembers being captivated by one of her mother's design books. "It had these beautiful line drawings—interiors, exteriors, landscapes. I must have been 6 years old, flipping through those pages and being absolutely fascinated."

Sokolow first came to the United States as an au pair, later returning to pursue a university degree. For decades, she made her mark at respected firms throughout the mid-Atlantic, like VSBA and Bernardon, before launching her own practice, Sokolow Architects—one of only a few woman-owned firms in Delaware—two and a half years ago.

Focusing exclusively on residential design in the First State and Pennsylvania, Sokolow leads a team of three architects, with a mission to "create a canvas for everyday life."

"My philosophy is to practice architecture in a way that makes my clients



Since founding her eponymous architecture firm in 2023, Aga Sokolow has acquired 18 residential projects in Delaware and Pennsylvania—nine of which have been completed. Her practice will soon launch a semi-custom branch for clients seeking design-forward homes.

trust me as their adviser," she says. "It's a partnership, and it's very personal—a well-designed house should be like a well-tailored garment."

Since launching her practice, Sokolow has taken on a wide range of projects that

reflect both her technical expertise and creative adaptability. She specializes in high-hazard zones—areas identified as being at risk for a natural disaster, such as flooding—as well as coastal construction, serving discerning clients in Delaware's

elite beach communities. But the architect is careful not to limit the scope of her work. Currently, her team is reimagining a home renovation in north Wilmington and designing an addition for an 1880s Victorian in Media, Pennsylvania.

Since its inception, Sokolow Architects has undertaken 18 projects, nine of which have been completed. Several coastal projects were design-build collaborations with Marnie Custom Homes (MCH)—a partnership that began during Sokolow’s tenure at Bernardon. Others followed the traditional project-delivery method, where a client hires an architect first and then selects a builder under a separate contract. Sokolow also collaborates closely with Dewson Construction Co. and frequently brings in Pilottown Engineering to address structural challenges on complex coastal projects.

“I think that collaboration, trust, mutual respect, and open communication between the architect, the builder, and the engineers [lead to] the best projects—and the best experiences for the clients,” Sokolow notes. She adds that these teams share a responsibility to be “thought leaders, problem identifiers, and solution seekers,” working to create structures that are as beautiful as they are functional and resilient—especially in a shifting climate.

One South Bethany home, boasting 180-degree ocean views but constrained by strict zoning and environmental regulations, presented an unusual challenge. The owners wanted to maximize the modest footprint by adding a swimming pool to the dune-facing deck.

The complication: dune-preservation rules that prohibited any ground disturbance. The solution: a cantilevered deck that extended beyond the building footprint.

Another notable renovation, completed with Bolt Builders, required careful

exteriors and completely made over the house by adding shingle-style elements and dormers, changing the scale and proportion of the front porch columns and replacing all the window sashes,” Sokolow explains. The team extended the decks

on the bay-facing side and connected a reimagined screened porch to a new, narrow swimming pool. “It transformed the entire experience and how the first floor of the house connects to the outside.”

Sokolow says she always looks for ways to connect indoors and out. “Biophilic principles are always at the core of my design intentions, so studying the surroundings comes first,” she says. Influenced by her travels and Central and Western European roots, the architect says she feels inspired by how the built environment affects the human experience but is not motivated by any one specific style. “I can find all architectural expression interesting, beautiful, questionable, or intriguing.”

As her firm grows, Sokolow is expanding her offerings with a semi-custom design branch—ideal for clients who seek resilient, design-forward homes but don’t want to commission a fully custom project.

“The space you are in is everything—the light, volumes, textures, sight lines,” she says. “It can elevate you or depress you. It can

energize you or relax you to retreat and rest. Every project, of any scale, is a deliberate study of movement through space.”

For more information, visit sokolowarchitects.com. **DT**



Sokolow and Justin Olewack, president of Bolt Builders, in front of the Rehoboth Beach home they renovated.

attention to detail. The owners sought to transition the home’s colonial style to better reflect the coastal aesthetic of the neighborhood and the broader context of Rehoboth Beach. “We carefully studied the