

Architects translate a dream



The Tower residence in West Chester was designed by Paul Macht Architects of Rydal.

At the touch of a few buttons, a CD-ROM can produce a design. But it will lack the stroke of a human hand.

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Architects are the people who take the dreams we sketch on cocktail napkins and the backs of envelopes and turn them into living space.

And although technology has promised us that we can design our dream houses by sliding a CD-ROM into a computer, pressing a few buttons, and clicking a mouse; nothing will replace the human touch an architect brings to the process.

That isn't to say that napkins and computer programs aren't useful, especially in helping customers get their needs across to designers so that everyone is speaking the same language.

In fact, more and more architects are using computer-aided design in their work. It saves time and money for both architect and client, reducing repetition without sacrificing quality.

But there is too much involved in designing and building a house to simply relegate the process to a \$45 home-computer program. And nothing underscores that point better than this year's Home Showcase Exhibit of the American Institute of Architects' (AIA) Philadelphia chapter, which ends its 13-day run today from noon to 6 p.m. at the Plaza at King of Prussia.

Representatives of participating architectural firms will be present to talk to visitors interested in designing a house or needing help with a renovation project.

The display highlights commissioned works by AIA members for clients here and in other areas of the country. They include single-family houses, townhouses, and multifamily residential construction, both renovations and construction.

According to the AIA, most of the projects represent new designs and reflect varying personal tastes, as well as the ability to complement the surrounding neighborhood.

What do architects bring to the design process that computer programs cannot?

One is creativity. Home design is more than assembling a set of rooms. You need to have an understanding of how people use their space. In

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Photo by BETTY HALKIN

The River Guest House in North East, Md., by Peter Zimmerman Architects of Berwyn.



A new residence in Palm Beach, Fla., is by Peter Zimmerman Architects.