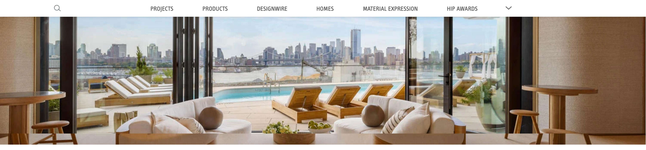

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Words: Athena Waligore

10 Questions With... Christie Ward And Staver Gray Of Ward + Gray

Ward + Gray principals Christie Ward and Staver Gray. Photography by John Daniel Powers.

Ward + Gray is a design firm based in New York City, with projects spanning the United States and internationally. Interior designers Christie Ward and Staver Gray lead the studio, which also has offices in Miami and London. Working collaboratively, the design duo emphasizes client relationships, a thoughtful sense of place, coherent material choices, and layered interiors. Their residential and hospitality projects typically include a significant research process.

Recently completed projects include amenity spaces for the Williamsburg Wharf in Brooklyn; Wildflower Farms, an Auberge Resort in the Catskills; the historic Bellevue Hotel in Philadelphia; Australia's 1 Hotel Melbourne; Hotel Perle in New Orleans; and The Sanderling Resort in the Outer Banks, North Carolina.

"We are drawn to spaces that feel collected, lived-in, and authentic to their place, an approach that shaped our earliest projects and continues to guide our work today," principal Christie Ward explains.

Interior Design spoke with Ward + Gray to learn about their design approach, recent projects, and their hopes for the years to come.

WARD + GRAY COFOUNDERS SHARE HOW THEIR FIRM CAME TO BE, DESIGN INSIGHTS, AND MORE

ID: How did you initially start your firm?

Ward + Gray(Christie Ward): We first met while studying at Parsons School of Design in New York. We actually worked on our thesis there together and later both went on to the design team at Soho House. We collaborated on several projects there over the years and have always loved getting each other's thoughts on every space we touch from the very start. It was a natural progression to continue working together as co-founders at Ward + Gray.

ID: What was the starting ethos for Ward + Gray?

Ward + Gray(Staver Gray): We're drawn to interiors that feel deeply personal, spaces that reflect the spirit of a place or the story of the client behind them. For every project, we immerse ourselves in research, whether that means uncovering local history or finding inspiration in books and archival references. No two projects are ever alike, yet each shares a common sensibility: layered, often incorporating a lot of color and pattern, and completely unique.

Wildflower Farms, Upstate New York. Photography by Read McKendree.

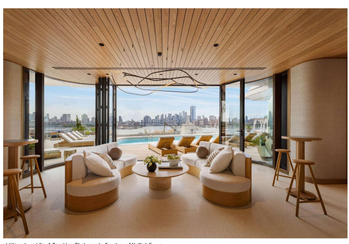
ID: What was your very first project?

W+G (CW): Before founding Ward + Gray, we each worked at a range of design firms, but our first true Ward + Gray project was Wildflower Farms, the Auberge resort in Upstate New York. The design concept grew out of countless visits to the region and its surrounding towns, where we explored local homes and vintage stores to stay deeply rooted in the character of the place. We were also deeply inspired by the landscape that envelops the property, this immersive, research-driven approach became foundational to our process and continues to inform our work today.

ID: You recently completed residential amenity spaces for the Williamsburg Wharf in Brooklyn. In what way did the waterfront location influence the design?

W+G (CW): We wanted the amenity spaces to feel coastal—without feeling too nautical as you're still within a city. We pulled from more coastal textures such as natural linens and solid woods to feel more natural and down to earth, but stuck with neutral color tones to relate it back to the city.

W+G (SG): For us, the waterfront setting evokes a sense of calm and wellbeing. The materials were chosen to feel natural and grounding. Nothing feels too sleek or synthetic; even the architecture and furniture shapes use curves to soften their forms, reinforcing an overall feeling of serenity.



Williamsburg Wharf, Brooklyn. Photography Courtesy of Naftali Group.

ID: The 1 Hotel Melbourne is also along a river, and it's undeniably a luxury hotel. Can you tell us about the design choices there?

W+G (CW): We pulled a lot of inspiration from the location of the 1 Hotel Melbourne—situated right on the Yarra River. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Yarra River was Melbourne's industrial backbone. There were factories, tanneries, mills, shipyards, and warehouses that lined its banks. We wanted the materials we pulled in for the furniture and lighting we designed for those spaces to reflect that industrial feel, with aged woods and patinated metals.

W+G (SG): One way we translated the site's industrial heritage into the interiors was through texture. Nubby linen fabrics, raw edges on stone and wood, and crackled ceramics bring a sense of industrial materiality in an elevated and refined way.

ID: You've worked throughout the U.S., always striving to capture the character of the surrounding location. Can you tell us more about that approach?

W+G (CW): We want every project we design to feel inherently right and deeply authentic to the city it inhabits. We look closely at the surrounding context to shape the spirit of each hotel or home, drawing inspiration from the character, culture, and rhythm of its location. From there, we identify the historical elements worth carrying forward, whether rooted in the building itself or the broader history of the city, and allow those narratives to inform the design. By grounding our work in place and history, we aim to create spaces that feel considered, timeless, and genuinely connected to where they belong.

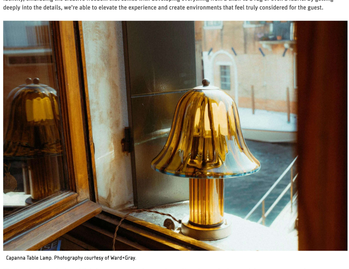
Residence in Los Angeles. Photography by Michael Clifford.

ID: Can you tell us how you work with clients on residential projects?

W+G (SG): It may sound obvious, but we place real value on visiting the site or existing home and meeting the client before beginning design. Residential work is deeply personal, and there's so much to be gained from physically walking a space and understanding how someone lives and expresses their style. Stepping out of the digital realm and into a tactile experience allows us to better sense the direction the project naturally wants to take.

ID: What's your approach to custom furnishings in your interiors work?

W+G (CW): We approach custom pieces with the same research-driven mindset as our interiors, drawing from local context, historical references, and material traditions to inform form, shape, and finish. We often turn to custom design to give a space its own distinct identity, embracing the creative freedom that comes with developing everything from a chair to a rug or even a fabric. By getting deeply into the details, we're able to elevate the experience and create environments that feel truly considered for the guest.



Caparra Table Lamp. Photography courtesy of Ward+Gray.

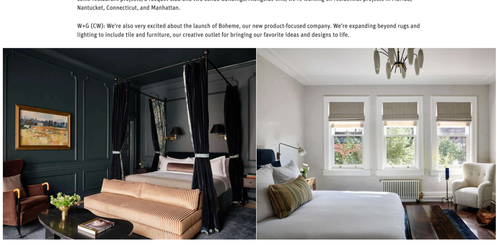
ID: You also have designed lighting, rugs, and other products. How do you fit that work into your process?

W+G (SG): Designing custom pieces is central to our design philosophy. It allows us to play with color, scale, and materiality for furniture and decor in tandem with architectural details rather than treating them as separate, sequential phases of design. We often design architectural elements around furniture and decor, for example, a backsplash that curves to follow a mirror being developed at the same time. This integrated approach results in interiors that feel highly considered, cohesive, and rich in detail.

ID: What are you currently working on?

W+G (SG): We're staying very busy with several hospitality projects, including a hotel in Montauk, a members' club in Florida, plus some restaurant projects, a racquet club and two condo buildings. Alongside this, we're working on residential projects in Florida, Nantucket, Connecticut, and Manhattan.

W+G (CW): We're also very excited about the launch of Boheme, our new product-focused company. We're expanding beyond rugs and lighting to include tile and furniture, our creative outlet for bringing our favorite ideas and designs to life.



The Bellevue Hotel, Philadelphia. Photography by Read McKendree.