

Architect to Watch

Katherine Hogan

Katherine Hogan spent the first few years of her career at a non-profit that provided design services to small, low-income rural communities. In 2008, she joined Raleigh, North Carolina-based Tonic Design + Tonic Construction, which recently received a Small Projects Practitioners award from the AIA for its pavilion at the North Carolina Museum of Art. Hogan, an associate AIA member and a LEED AP, is a partner at Tonic, alongside firm founder Vincent Petrarca. She spoke to *gb&d* about the benefits of being a builder and how she plans to keep pushing the industry forward.

Interview by Erin Brereton

How did your early work in your career help prepare you for your position at Tonic?

I worked for **Will Bruder + Partners** in Phoenix for a summer and got to go back full-time when I first graduated, which was a very wonderful experience. One of his descriptors of his work is that he always tries to find the extraordinary in the ordinary—to look at a material and try to use it differently and to examine space and context, which were all really good messages. I did a fellowship after that, where I worked in year increments on particular projects. A lot of the work was to further socially conscious design. I've done some really interesting projects and got to understand the client as not just someone who comes to you with a significant amount of money—the client is any person who needs a building.

You've been with Tonic Design since 2008. How did you come to specialize in residential and small-scale commercial projects?

Once you do a few, you get better and better at them, but it also lends itself to the design-construction aspect of our firm. We have a pretty intimate relationship with our clients and can execute both.

How has the industry changed since you started?

There's a lot more software and technology. We're always trying to stay connected with how people are making things and standard building practices.

Did you face any challenges being a woman in a traditionally male-dominated profession?

Not really—in school and other offices, I always just tried not to think that way. We're not only design; we also do construction, which is probably even more of a male-dominated industry. But my perspective was that everybody confronts his or her own challenges, and people think of people in different ways. I just didn't want to focus on that.

What types of projects interest you the most?

I definitely enjoy residential projects. We have a lot of great clients here who are trying to do something unique. We're always trying to do different things that reach out further into the architectural community and develop the construction-design method of our practice, not just from the business or results perspective, but to achieve really good design.

Have any recent projects presented you with unique personal or professional opportunities?

We recently did a project at the **North**

Carolina Museum of Art that was a really significant public project for us. People visit the Lowe's Pavilion outdoor classroom every day, get married there, take photographs and play music there—it's a larger audience. We wanted to stay involved in the museum, so I applied to join the Contemporaries Board. Last year, I was asked to be on the advisory board at **Syracuse University**. I was really excited about that; I felt it was a great way to stay connected to the School of Architecture.

What differentiates Tonic Design in the marketplace?

Sometimes, the best opportunities are on the jobsite, not when you're doing the drawing, but when you're there, standing in place, rearranging cabinets, or seeing that a window should be shifted to frame a particular tree. It's really hard to count on just the drawing phase. A lot of architects we admire really enjoy the process of being able to craft on-site. However, when the typical contractor is asked to do a lot of those things, the owner starts to incur change orders. Because we work with a design-build model, we can have a dialogue between the designer and contractor to make projects even better. *gb&d*

