

When did you enter the architecture field, and what made her want to be an architect:

- For most of her life, her mom told her that she should be an architect - so, like most, she decided to go to college to study art and art history. However, while at college, she was introduced to architecture and ended up taking a summer program at Harvard's architecture school, where she discovered her love for the program and field. After college, she applied to graduate schools where she completed a master of architecture and an MBA at the same time, and since graduating in 2019, she has been an architect.

What barriers or obstacles of being a woman in architecture have you experienced?

- Melinda believes that most barriers surrounding being a woman in architecture start early, for most people who are senior in architecture firms tend to be men. Similarly, one main obstacle, that she has found, of working in such firms is the barrier surrounding the assumption that having children makes women less productive. While hers and several other firms have become more supportive of having kids, there are a lot of firms that are tough on a work-life balance. Moreover, another barrier that she experiences is being a woman on construction sites, for she finds it challenging to speak on authority in front of construction teams composed of mainly men who only want to listen to men.

What percentage of her firm is made up of women?

- She has been keeping track of the percentage, which is just around 41% at the moment.

In what ways, do you think, companies can take steps to increase the number of women in architecture firms and bigger companies?

- Melinda thinks that companies are becoming more flexible with women who have families while increasing the number of women working in firms, and she points to the fact that in Connecticut, reforms along the lines of these were successful. She also thinks that companies should be mindful of who they are hiring and what support they offer to women working in a male-dominated fields.

How do you think the industry would benefit from having more women?

- Melinda thinks that the larger the diversity of opinions, the better designs come to be - the more points of view you have, the better the ideas and the better the ability to push architecture into new places

What types of mentorships/internships are offered to women who are interested in joining their company?

- Each year, their architecture firm accepts two summer interns, and while these positions aren't geared toward a specific gender, they often have at least one female. Additionally, they allow interns, who are interested, to continue working through the rest of the year. When new architects enter the firm, her firm provides mentorships to everyone in order to support people's professional goals and development.

What are the biggest misconceptions about being a woman working in architecture?

- Melinda believes that the biggest misconception lies around the fact that women tend to get pushed into management roles in architecture firms because of the stereotype that women are better at taking care of people-related problems and management responsibilities rather than technical problems. Because of this misconception, she and many firms tend to see a lot more women in management roles than in design roles.

What is the best advice you can offer young females looking for futures in architecture?

- Melinda mainly encourages young females looking to enter architecture to advocate for themselves; she encourages younger people to reach out and ask a lot of questions.

What do you like to do when you aren't working?

- Melinda loves to cook, bake, and travel back to visit her family in Miami. Similarly, now that she has a baby, she loves to spend her free-time taking walks with her family.