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# LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE MAGAZINE

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## MADE GOOD

GGN at the Gates Foundation

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### DETROIT'S NEXT LIFE

It's almost like starting over

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### THE TAR SANDS END RUN

Keystone XL or not, the oil is moving

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### DRASTIC CHANGE ON THE FRONT RANGE

Adapting to pestilence, flood, and fire

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## WOMEN (AND MEN) NEED TO KNOW

A friend of a friend I met recently told me she'd earned a master's degree in architecture from a great university on the East Coast and practiced architecture for a short time. Now she is working for an aviation contractor in quality control, and making more money than she had been in architecture. She loves it. I said, so, you are part of that diaspora of women who finish an architecture degree but ultimately wind up not practicing architecture. "Yeah," she replied. "Is that...a thing?"

It is. This conversation happened in September, a few weeks before the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture released a report titled *Where Are the Women?* Compiled by Lian Chikako Chang, the ACSA's director of research and information, the report uses statistics to show the stark decline from the number of women who enroll as architecture students to the number subsequently employed in architecture, on through their status as licensed practitioners, architecture firm principals, and top prize winners in the profession.

Some basic figures: 43 percent of architecture students are women; about that same percentage earn degrees, take the registration exam, and report hours for the internship requirement. The American Institute of Architects says that 15 percent of its licensed members are women. Seventeen percent of AIA members who are firm principals are women. In 140 U.S. architecture schools, women make up 27 percent of program heads. (The full report is at [www.acsa-arch.org](http://www.acsa-arch.org).)

Many women in architecture are aware of this phenomenon. People have been talking about it for years. In early 2013, the conversation reached a boil when Denise Scott Brown, who was not included as cohonoree on her husband Robert Venturi's 1991 Pritzker Prize, told an interviewer that she was owed "not a Pritzker Prize but a Pritzker inclusion ceremony" because she can claim equal authorship for the work of the couple's firm. After a huge petition drive, the 2013 Pritzker jury, to its credit, considered including Scott Brown retroactively but declined to do so. That made sense—going forward, who would want to take part in a jury whose decision can be amended years or decades later? More important, it's more effective to let this sexist episode remain as a bruise on the prize for all to remember. This year, the AIA awarded its highest prize, the Gold Medal, first awarded in 1907, posthumously

to its first woman recipient, Julia Morgan (1872–1957). She is certainly worthy, though she would no doubt have enjoyed the prize more while she was still alive.

All of this has led to the question of how women are faring by comparison in landscape architecture. The picture seems somewhat better than in architecture, though some data is in need of updating, refining, or simply discovering. The most recent numbers from the Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board (LAAB) are from 2004; at that time they showed women as 38 percent of bachelor or master's degree recipients; anecdotally, I gather they are closer to half now. Ron Leighton, Honorary ASLA, the outgoing administrator of LAAB, says the board is working on generating newer data. A somewhat more solid index comes from the Council of Landscape Architecture Registration Boards, which requires prospective candidates for the licensing exam to provide a prefix to create a record and finds 49 percent of candidates are female. Currently, 35.5 percent of ASLA members are women (a fair leap from 20 percent in 1990). And 40 percent of academic program heads are women, according to a list I have of all programs. Four of 44 ASLA Medal honorees have been women; two out of 12 ASLA Design Medal recipients are women (including this year's recipient, Andrea Cochran, FASLA). Of 12 winners of the Landscape Architecture Firm Award, the first, Jones & Jones, was partly woman-owned, and this year's recipient, Oehme van Sweden & Associates, has two female principals out of three.

What we don't quite know are the percentage of landscape architecture firms run by women, the percentage of women versus men who hold a license to practice, and, not least, what women in the profession earn compared to men. Stephanie Rolley, FASLA, a professor and department head at Kansas State University, who in January becomes the new head of LAAB, told me she believes gender data is one of several areas in which landscape architecture can use a better information bank. Looking at the ACSA study, she said, "We should be developing this information, because we've got a better story to tell."



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