WOMEN IN ARCHITECTURE

URBAN FABRICS AND DESIGN
Kathryn H. Anthony
ACSA Distinguished Professor

Currently in her 35th year here, Kathryn H. Anthony is the longest serving female faculty member in the history of the UIUC School of Architecture, the first woman to have served as Chair of the Design Program Faculty and as Chair of the Building Research Council. She holds a Ph.D. in architecture and a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of California at Berkeley.

She has received national awards from the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA), including the lifetime title of ACSA Distinguished Professor, and the ACSA Creative Achievement Award for her first book, Design Juries on Trial: The Renaissance of the Design Studio. She has also received the Achievement Award from the Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) and the Collaborative Achievement Award from the American Institute of Architects (AIA). She has authored 5 books and over 100 publications and served as an advocate and media spokesperson about diversity issues in design.

Srushti Nehete
Graduate Student | University of Illinois

Srushti Nehete is a second-year graduate student at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign. She is from Mumbai, India and got her Bachelor's in Architecture from the Academy of Architecture, University of Mumbai. Before starting graduate school at Illinois School of Architecture, she worked as an architect in Mumbai for two years.

She has a special interest in building performance and technology. She wants to work on projects that allow her to pursue research in the area of design technology. She is a trained Indian classical dancer and her favorite author is Jane Austen.

Look up her academic work on her website: www.srushtinehete.comwww.srushtinehete.com

Nubras Samayeen
Ph.D. Student | University of Illinois

Nubras Samayeen is an architect, urban designer and Ph.D. candidate in the joint program of Landscape Architecture and Architecture with a minor in Heritage. Her research focuses on modernist architect Louis Kahn's design works. She explores the relationship between architecture and landscape and investigates the construction of national identity through built-forms. Her interdisciplinary study probes into Western colonialism and modernism's instrumentality in homogenizing history, tradition, and culture across the globe.

In addition to her publications, she received numerous national-international design-awards including runners-up in Future Legacies Design Competition (2017), Canada and first prize in Designing Conflict (2010) in Zurich, Switzerland. Through her interdisciplinary research, she aims to create a nexus between design and history/theory to catalyze a transboundary approach to design education that affects the built-environment.

Shannon Fitzgerald
Graduate Student | University of Illinois

Shannon Fitzgerald is a second year graduate student who earned her bachelor's degree at the University of Illinois at Urbana - Champaign with a certificate in Leadership.

Her recent achievements include winning first place for the Archon Prize (Fall 2018), second place in the Chicago Women in Architecture Scholarship (Fall 2018), and first place in the Graduate Studio Design Excellence Awards (Spring 2018). She was selected to be a student for the 2019 Plym studio with Professor Dong Gong and traveled with the studio to China.

Her interest in traveling is rooted in her experience with the Barcelona Study Abroad program. This past summer, she spent time as a teaching assistant for Discover Architecture and currently works with Professor Brakkie as a teaching assistant for ARCH 172: Drawing and Modeling, helping undergraduates understand the basics of perceiving and documenting space.
Q: What is the reason you chose to pursue architecture/urban design?

A: I was exposed to architecture and urban design at a young age and always found it fascinating. My first visit to the Acropolis was at age 3. Architecture ran in my genes.

My father, Harry Antoniades Anthony (1922-2018) was a major influence on my life both personally and professionally. Born on an island, the youngest of five children, he lost his father at age 6 and grew up in poverty in war-torn Greece. He studied architecture and urbanism in Athens and received a life-changing fellowship for graduate study abroad in Paris, where he received his masters at L’École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts and his Ph.D. at the Sorbonne. After graduating he worked in Paris as an architect and planner with the world-renown architect, Le Corbusier.

My Dad later earned a second Ph.D. at Columbia University, where he served as professor and chair of the division of urban planning at Columbia University for many years. My family spent lots of time at his office at Avery Hall. As a little girl, I remember seeing architectural drawings and models posted throughout the corridors and exhibition spaces, along with the smell of fresh cork board. I was reminded of Avery Hall when I first visited our beautiful Architecture Building here during my job interview. Some of the brick paving patterns in and around our quad reminded me of the Columbia University campus.

Our family traveled to many architectural and urban design landmarks around the world, often accompanying
my Dad with his students on their study abroad courses. I remember visiting the then-new towns of Milton Keynes in the UK, and Vällingby and Farsta in Sweden, along with La Defense in Paris.

I was always fascinated by spaces and places and especially how everyday people experienced them—for better or for worse.

Q: Where are the places you have travelled for work or other professional related activities?

A: I’ve been fortunate to travel widely both for work and for pleasure. So far I’ve been to 25 countries, including 10 trips to Greece, 6 trips to Italy, including 5 visits to Venice, and 2 trips to China. I’ve also visited just about all of our 50 states, except for Alaska and South Dakota.

Here’s the full list to date: Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Russia, Scotland, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine.

I visited Russia when it was still the USSR. That trip inspired one of my very first publications, "Public and Private Space in Soviet Cities" in Landscape (23:2, 1979), which I wrote while a Berkeley graduate student 40 years ago!

My most recent overseas travels were to Germany in 2018 to attend the wedding of our German exchange students (2016-17) Nora Hilpert and Lars Huhnken, in Nuremberg. It was a fairy-tale wedding in a beautiful centuries-old historic church, a magical experience. I loved meeting all their family and friends who hosted us there. I also had the pleasure to get together with Max Zorn, another of our German exchange students (2017-18), and Scott Rongbo Hu, UIUC M. Arch. (2015). All 4 are now students at The Technical University in Munich, which I also had a chance to visit. It was very special to meet them all the way across the globe.

In 2017 I traveled to China where I was an invited keynote speaker at the Environment-Behavior Research Association (EBRA) at Chongqing University in Chongqing, and an invited lecturer at Shanghai Jiguang Polytechnic College and Tongji University in Shanghai.

I’ve never been to Barcelona but have taught several of our Spanish exchange students so I do hope to visit there someday soon.

Q: What skill (or set of skills) has served you best in your architectural career?

A: Carving out a special niche for myself with an expertise in environment and behavior, social and behavioral factors in design, and gender issues in design. I love to write and have honed my skills as an author, researcher, design critic, and advocate providing a unique voice for those who voices would otherwise remain unheard.

Over the years I’ve spent a good deal of energy developing new seminars here at Illinois that we had not offered before, covering topics such as Gender and Race in Contemporary Architecture; Entrepreneurship in Design; and Architecture, Cinema, Environment and Behavior. Teaching each of these seminars has prompted me to research and write more about these issues.

I also enjoy architectural photography and have had my work exhibited at venues in Chicago and Champaign-Urbana.

Q: What is your opinion on the present-day urban fabric?

A: I love places where you can walk easily from point A to point B, with lots to see and do in between. I’d much rather spend my time on foot than in a car. And it’s one reason why I love Chicago.

I enjoy dense urban environments where you can walk for hours and hours and not even realize how far you’ve gone. I love bike paths completely separated from vehicular traffic that provide a safe way to navigate cities. I’ve biked the Chicago Lakefront Trail many times and find it one of the city’s greatest amenities. Some of my other favorite bike trails are along the Seawall at Stanley Park in Vancouver BC, and along Mission Bay and Coronado in San Diego. Biking provides a unique sensory experience in the urban environment, plus you get to feel the breeze.

I wish that our American cities and towns were safer places for women and children, and that we could circulate alone freely at any hour of the day or night as is the case in many cities abroad. In Tokyo I was amazed to see young children in their school uniforms riding the subway by themselves. I could never imagine that happening here.

Public transit envy is something I often sense when traveling abroad, especially after riding the high-speed trains of China, Japan, and Europe, and the sleek, safe subway systems of cities such as Seoul, South Korea. I can’t help but compare these with our antiquated Amtrak trains that take us to Chicago and spend a good part of the trip traveling backwards rather than forwards, and with Chicago’s El where so many CTA stations aren’t even accessible for people with disabilities or parents with strollers.

Q: How have you been able to contribute to the connection from the individual pieces to the larger elements of a city?

A: My writings address issues at different environmental scales—from the micro to the macro, from the design of children’s toys and product packaging, the design of...
toilets and public restrooms, to the design of buildings, neighborhoods, and cities. In Defined by Design, I analyze how the design of products, places and spaces either helps or hinders our health. The power of design is immense, but most people don’t realize it.

As a member of our Health and Well-Being faculty, I believe these are important concerns—sometimes life and death issues—that merit special attention.

**Q:** What past professional work have you worked on/completed relative to urban design?

**A:** Most of my career has been devoted to teaching, researching, and writing, so while I am not a practicing architect, that is the career path that most of my former students have chosen. So I like to believe that my teaching has had an impact on the designs that they create, no matter what scale, and that they remember to take the needs of many different types of people into account in every project that they do.

My design for the recent addition to my 1924 vintage Dutch Colonial home in Urbana took several years to create because I took great pains to both relate to and enhance the surrounding historic residential neighborhood. I collaborated with Rob Natke of UrbanWorks Ltd. in Chicago on its architectural design and with Tom Leow on its construction. Our 21st century octagon is reminiscent of our local round barns and glows like a lantern by night. It received an award from our local Preservation and Conservation Association (PACA).

**Q:** What is your experience as a woman in the field of architecture? How has this shaped your view of the future of the field? Has this also shaped your design and aspirations for professional work?

**A:** When I first arrived at our School of Architecture, I was the only woman on our faculty. Everyone knew who I was because I stood out in the crowd. It wasn’t always easy being the sole ambassador of the female species, but I tried my best to turn it to my advantage. I’m pleased to have more women colleagues join our faculty today, and I’d still like to see even more.

Some of my own experiences and those of other female colleagues—both in academic and in the profession—in a field dominated by men prompted some of my scholarly research and advocacy work. I wanted to see how widespread, if at all, were some of the challenges we faced. I’ve been a longtime member of Chicago Women in Architecture, an organization
that has proven extremely valuable both personally and professionally, and inspired my research on Designing for Diversity.

I was invited to serve on campus in leadership positions on gender issues, where I always tried to achieve some tangible, visible results. I served as Chair of the Chancellor’s Committee on the Status of Women (2002-04), and as Co-Chair of the Provost’s Gender Equity Council (2009-11). Under my administration, along with my committee members, I spearheaded a movement to incorporate gender equity issues into the design review process for new buildings and major renovations on campus. I also led an effort to analyze the campus building stock and create more gender-friendly public restrooms across campus.

During my term co-chairing the Provost’s Gender Equity Council I led a team to design, develop, construct, and implement a Universal Design Podium that provides a gender-friendly, accessible experience allowing speakers ranging from 4’2” to 7’6” to change its height with the press of a button. Ten such podiums were constructed and are on campus today. You can see one of them in Foellinger Auditorium at our School of Architecture Commencement ceremony.

Q: In the US, the NAAB reported 41% of architecture graduates that were women. However, out of all AIA members, only 21.7% are female. Could you please offer your opinion on why there is a drop-off in number of female architects becoming license, from those who have completed college?

A: My second book, Designing for Diversity: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Architectural Profession, was one of the first publications to address that issue. It goes into lots of detail so I’ll simply refer you to it here. Others have written about these issues in the meantime, and although the situation has improved somewhat, many challenges faced decades ago by women architects that I describe in my book are still true today.

Q: Have you experienced professional programs that push for more equality for women in the profession? If so, what has been done?

A: In my seminar, Architecture/Gender & Women’s Studies 424, we routinely visit the Chicago offices of underrepresented architects – both women architects and architects of color. Last fall we all participated in the National Organization for Minority Architects (NOMA) Convention in Chicago – a fantastic experience! Colleagues who own and manage these offices are pro-active in creating fair and welcoming environments for all. Others can learn a great deal to learn from them.

In Designing for Diversity, I describe specific pro-active strategies that architectural schools, offices, and professional organizations can use to promote fairness for all employees.

Q: What was one of the highlights of the past year?

A: Last fall I celebrated a professional milestone – “33.3 – A Third of a Century Teaching Illinois Architects.” Through my old course rosters, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other networks, I tracked down many of my former students and hosted a reunion for them at the beautiful new headquarters of the Chicago Architecture Center right along the Chicago River.

Six of my former students, UIUC alumni Aparna Bapu, Marina Panos Berrones, James McKay, Sharon Samuels, Annie Sit, and Joshua Welch, each representing different eras from the 1980’s to the present, spoke about their experiences in my courses at the UIUC and how they influenced their careers. Several Chicago friends, retired faculty, and current students joined us as well – altogether about 100 people in attendance, a special opportunity for new and old friends to meet and greet each other.