



2020 Ones to Watch: Gustavo Rodriguez, FXCollaborative

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Name: Gustavo Rodriguez

Company: FXCollaborative

Title: Partner

Education: M.S. Design Technology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; B.Arch., Universidad Nacional Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Dominican Republic

Which project, deal, or transaction was the “game-changer” in the advancement of your career?

In 2006 I started working at FXCollaborative as job captain for the SAP Americas Headquarters expansion, our first LEED platinum building. I worked closely with the project architect to address the challenges of such a complex building and with the design partner to tackle the open design issues. I saw each task as a design opportunity, and took on more of the design responsibility to the point that by the end of the project, I was senior designer. It showed me that it is imperative to seize growth opportunities when they come. I've been design lead in every project since.

What led you to your current profession?

I decided to become an architect at a young age. I was playing with Legos and asked my dad, “Who says how buildings are going to be?” His response of “an architect” set me on this path. I recognize how much the experiences I had growing up in the Dominican Republic, surrounded by tropical modernism and playing with Legos, shaped me as a designer. It instilled in me a fluid understanding of the relationship between the natural and built environments and a deep appreciation for tectonics; concepts that shape my approach to designing with contextual sensitivity and attention to detail.

What can our political leaders do to increase equality in the workplace?

Focus on education. There is a well-documented lack of diversity in our profession. Minorities are either not exposed to architecture or don't see it as a viable career path, probably because there is a very narrow definition in our culture about what it means to be an architect and the skills needed. Investing in education will allow more diverse people to enter the profession, but we as leaders of the profession need to make room for those new experiences and voices (and those of the historically underrepresented women in the profession) to be active parts of our firm culture.

What do you like most about your job?

I am really energized by the collaborative nature of our profession. I love coming together as a team

of designers, clients, and consultants to create an innovative solution to the world of constraints that each project faces. It is about creating a space where people are encouraged to participate, having the empathy to understand all positions, and then sorting the feedback through our design process and ideas.

Who or what inspires you?

I was asked this same question in a NYREJ profile in 2009 and the answer is still the same. I am inspired by designers who actually manage to get great architecture built. I'll amend that to say that it is not only getting it built, but also that it has a positive impact (be it urban, environmental, or social) and that it enriches those who interact with it. We are living in transformative times and we need to embrace the power of design to make a better, more just world.

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