



## 2021 Women in Building Services: Jessica Sheridan, Mancini Duffy

June 22, 2021 - Spotlights

Name: Jessica Sheridan

Title: Principal

Company Name: Mancini Duffy

Real estate associations or organizations that you are currently a member of:

American Institute of Architects  
At-Large Director, AIA Board of Directors  
Committee for Climate Action and Design Excellence  
Members' Voice Task Force  
AIA New York State Post-Covid Unified Task Force

In the past year, what project, transaction or accomplishment are you most proud of?

This past year has been one of introspection for me, as it has been for many of us. As we retreated into our homes the absence of connectivity has significantly impacted our mental health. As a result, I found a renewed passion for my work as an architect. Spaces within the built environment can either empower or disenfranchise individuals and communities. I feel the gravity behind the responsibility in being part of this profession. I also feel pride in my work, and I have found a focus and clarity in that social responsibility.

How do you contribute to your community or profession?

I am currently an at-large director on the AIA Board of Directors. Our priorities center on climate action and social equity, which have ripple effects on many scales. We have rolled out a climate action plan, a design excellence framework focused on sustainability, and equity guidelines that individual professionals and firms can use both in their practice and in their projects. We are working with the Biden administration, as well as will legislators on a national, state, and local level to advocate for carbon emissions reduction, address the affordable housing crisis, and support disaster recovery and community resilience. We are fostering thought leadership through knowledge

communities internationally. And we are working with allied organizations to encourage students to enter our profession to improve the world.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

I decided I wanted to be an architect when I was ten years old. My best friend in middle school and I had a plan to open “In and Out S&S Architecture,” a full-service interiors and architectural design firm. Outside of fleeting interests in professions such as psychology, dance, and art history, my focus and inspiration always was rooted in architecture.

What led you to your current profession?

I love how architecture is both pragmatic and artistic. The design of a space is emotional, scientific, and creative. Every individual interacts with architecture every day, whether they are aware or not. As a result, architects shape the built environment. They are responsible to create space that makes the public feel a sense of belonging. Buildings are also one of the main contributors of carbon emissions. Therefore, architects have a duty to examine and evaluate buildings in a way that can help reduce the impacts of climate change. I am proud to be part of a profession that impacts how people experience life. I aspire to bring positivity to that experience.

Who was/is your mentor and how did s/he influence/help you in your career?

Early in my career I worked as a research assistant at Perkins Eastman for a book on K-12 educational facilities. The editor was Stephen Kliment. Years later Steve called me out of the blue to ask if I would consider the editor-in-chief position for the AIA New York Chapter’s online magazine. I’m not sure why I left an impression on him, but Steve advocated for me to get the job over others with much more experience. His confidence in my abilities far surpassed my own, and I am forever grateful for his mentorship and encouragement. I was the editor-in-chief for six years and gained leadership and management skills that are invaluable to me today.

What trends will dominate your industry in the coming months?

COVID-19 has brought to light the need for flexibility and adaptation in a way that is relatively new to architecture—at least on a broad scale. Whether it’s modifying apartments to comfortably work from home, building temporary structures to help restaurants stay afloat, or adapting alternative care sites to supplement hospitals, buildings traditionally do not adapt easily.

Because my work largely focuses on building retrofits and repositioning—which considers new uses for existing spaces by definition—I believe that we must build in a way to help anticipate future unpredictable events.

What books or social media influencers would you recommend to other women?

Neri Oxman’s work in Material Ecology is ground-breaking and inspirational. Her pursuit of

interrelationships among nature, technology, and construction will lead to new ways of thinking about architecture, design, the built environment, and beyond in ways that haven't yet been conceptualized in our industry.

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