



2022 Women in Construction: Helen Herrick, MBH Architects

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Name: Helen Herrick

Title: AIA, Studio Director of New York Office

Company Name: MBH Architects

What was your greatest professional achievement or most notable project in the last 12 months?

I am thrilled that the new Bucherer (formerly Tourneau) flagship store opened on 57th and Madison last fall. We had a great team from our New York and California offices and we built a great partnership with the client, the contractor, project management company and dozens of consultants.

Starting out in the construction business, who or what empowered you?

In my 20s, I was often the only woman at the table. I had a great role model in an eccentric and self-assured University of Washington Architecture professor named Astra Zarina. She encouraged all the women in our class to lead, not take the easy road, and push for our ideas. I've also had the benefit of supportive managers (both men and women) throughout my career. I was recently on a jobsite where the PM, superintendent, construction manager and architect were all women. The best part was that it no longer seemed especially noteworthy. We've come a long way.

Why should women consider a career in construction?

Career opportunities and impact. For women, the industry offers a diversity of roles that allows growth and career pivots—from architecture and engineering firms to internal client teams, construction management, owner's representatives, project management companies and more. As for impact, we get to shape how thousands or even millions of people experience the built environment. Very few industries give you the chance to build a meaningful legacy that will far outlive your career.

Who within your own firm has helped you succeed within the construction industry?

Although I have only been with MBH for a few years, I have known MBH for decades from my client days. I knew several of my current colleagues before starting and we already had years of trust to build on once I joined the firm.

What advice would you offer to other women getting into the construction industry?

Go for it and keep curious—great opportunities can present themselves in many different ways. There are so many different roles and opportunities within the industry: firm work, public entities, client side. The buildings and spaces we create are used by everyone so we need an ever-more diverse set of people and ideas contributing to their design and construction.

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