



Phifer Kracauer, executive director, to retire from Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation

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Cynthia Phifer Kracauer

Manhattan, NY Leading women's advocacy organization Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation (BAAF) has announced the planned retirement of architect and innovator Cynthia Phifer Kracauer AIA, the organization's executive director for the last seven years. An executive search is underway for a replacement, according to the foundation's executive committee, to continue leading the group to elevate women in architecture, engineering, construction, real estate and allied fields.

Known for her success in development and creating new programming as well as securing major federal and private grants for Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation, Kracauer conceived and created the documentary podcast series *New Angle: Voice*, starting in 2021 with its episode on Julia Morgan. Prior to heading BAAF, Kracauer served as managing director of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) New York Chapter, and she is credited with conceiving and developing New York's ARCHTOBER design and architecture festival.

"Leading the Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation is one of the most rewarding opportunities a woman can have, challenging the historically male-dominated construction world and the culture of the architectural profession, while elevating brilliant minds and serious talents represented by women around the world," said Kracauer, an architect as well as a creative institutional administrator who credits her board of trustees for the foundation's years of success and growth.

As executive director of Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation, Cynthia Phifer Kracauer led the group through the tumultuous years of the #MeToo Movement, the COVID pandemic, and the political outrages of backlash against women's rights and the Black Lives Matter movement. "As BAAF's influence has grown, we've been inspired as more organizations nationally have increased their dedication to equity, diversity, and inclusiveness of their firms," said Kracauer.

Founded in 2002 by the late Beverly Willis, FAIA, Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation is leading a cultural revolution in the building industry that acknowledges, cultivates and values women's contributions and achievements — past, present and future.

Michele O'Connor, chair of BAAF's board of trustees said, "Cynthia has not only been a visionary leader but also a mentor to many within our organization and beyond. Her legacy of mentorship and creative institutional leadership will be deeply missed, but her impact will continue to resonate. We wish Cynthia all the best in her well-deserved retirement."

Born in Norfolk, VA, and raised in Southern California, Kracauer moved east in the 1970s to become one of the early pioneers of co-education, graduating from Princeton University with both a magna cum laude distinction and a masters of architecture degree. She worked for Philip Johnson in the 1980s and taught at the University of Virginia, Princeton, and the New Jersey Institute of Technology. Rising to partner of the noted architecture firm Swanke Hayden Connell over 15 years, she led significant, award-winning works including a firefighter training center on Randalls Island and the copper spire atop the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church.

Midcareer, Kracauer changed paths to dedicate her energy and talents for over a decade as managing director of the AIA New York Chapter, overseeing the month-long Archtober festival of architecture and design, now in its 12th year. Her work helped advance the chapter's ambitious Center for Architecture into a vital cultural institution that creates a significant educational program for children and adults, supports the profession through the AIA, and brings architecture to the general public.

In 2016 she was named executive director of the Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation (BAAF), where she has developed new programming, attracted major sponsors and board members, and secured major grants from groups including the National Endowment for the Arts and the Graham Foundation. Kracauer worked to establish an online compendium, Pioneering Women of American Architecture, and secured a new headquarters in Manhattan for the organization, called The Bev, which will debut its first exhibition later this year.

"Now we are at the beginning of a completely new opportunity, and I have always believed that knowing when to say goodbye was a very important form of leadership," says Kracauer. "It's exciting to enable a timely succession that will fulfill our great promise, building upon 21 years of organizational achievement by Beverly Willis Architectural Foundation and our many dedicated supporters."

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