



Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation opens new headquarters - The Bev with “Emerging Leaders” program

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Manhattan, NY National women’s advocacy organization the Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation (BAAF) has opened The Bev, a new multiuse space and the foundation’s headquarters offices. The group’s new, women-focused community meeting spaces offer “a beacon for gender equity and innovation” dedicated to incubating firms, producing educational media, and hosting gatherings to advance and elevate women in their work lives, says BAAF executive director Cynthia Phifer Kracauer, who spearheaded the initiative.

Located at 424 West 33rd St., The Bev offers a newly appointed lounge, conference and meeting space, offices for the group’s foundation staff, and setups for BAAF’s board activities including virtual and in-person meetings. The Bev is sponsored by Brookfield Properties and located in the SOM-designed Manhattan West development. Both Brookfield and SOM are longtime supporters of the foundation. Angelica Baccon (SHoP) donated full design services for the interiors of the new multiuse headquarters for The Bev.

Created as a community hub for transformative partnerships, the new space serves as a dynamic

gathering and activity center driven by the Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation's leadership and influence. The Bev offers 2,000 s/f for various public and internal uses, as well as a new East Coast home base for women architects, engineers, construction (AEC) executives and allied professionals. This fresh nexus of activity already hosted BWAF's noted "Emerging Leaders" program and new interview recordings for its acclaimed audio documentary series, "New Angle: Voice". BWAF has also debuted its first exhibition, "Pioneering Women of American Architecture", at The Bev.

The Emerging Leaders 2024 program offers professional development tactics to accelerate young women's careers in architecture, engineering and design, and it builds on the BWAF mentorship program that began over five years ago. Attendees of the program's three sessions will gain relationships and insights by engaging with visionary female leaders in design, culture, and planning, who will share their experiences and strategies for success.

The final program on February 20 will offer ways to cultivate diligence with Mimi Raygorodetsky, a practice leader with Langan, the engineering and environmental consulting firm. With a portfolio of complex environmental remediation and redevelopment projects, Raygorodetsky crafts a talk on diligence to recall how the virtues of "relentless dedication to craft" are key to realizing positive outcomes.

"The influences and perceptions of women leaders serve as essential guides for young women invested in thriving careers in architecture, engineering, construction and more," says Cynthia Phifer Kracauer, AIA, executive director at BWAF. "Emerging Leaders brings female role models who accentuate BWAF's mission to support and cultivate women's contributions to these fields by encouraging their persistence, excellence, and creativity in their growing careers."

Beginning in December, with second and third sessions in January and February, the Emerging Leaders 2024 "Detours, Diligence, Dreams" program showcases female leaders expert on each of the three themes.

The program's initial presentation on dreams was on December 5 with the dynamic session leader Kristina Newman-Scott, an award-winning executive director of The Greene Space, a performance, arts and journalism venue, and recent president of Brooklyn's leading arts and media institution, BRIC.

Her talk on taking a germ of an idea into fruition will incorporate strategies gained from her experience as the first immigrant and first woman of color to serve as BRIC's president and one of the very few women of color to lead a major New York cultural institution.

On January 9, presenters Adrienne Hepler and Allison Robin, cofounders of the owner representation firm Envoie Project, which directs large-scale construction projects, shared their successes in project management, planning, teamwork, and development. Their ideas will help steer the session's attendees through career detours by embracing creativity and renewal that can lead to new and exciting opportunities.

“We are so excited about our new home, The Bev, which is so much more than just a physical place for our work,” said Angelica Baccon, AIA, a principal of SHoP Architects and chair of BWAF’s Board of Trustees. “It’s a vibrant hub designed to unite the BWAF community both physically and virtually, with versatile spaces to house our executive offices, meetings, a woman- owned firm incubator, educational offerings, and state-of-the-art media production, all fostering collaboration and innovation for our community of supporters throughout our metropolitan area and beyond.”

“The Bev stands as a symbol of the power inherent in collaboration,” says Michele O’Connor, PE, LEED AP, past chair of BWAF’s board and principal at the engineering firm Langan. “It is a testament to the boundless possibilities that arise when diverse talents and shared commitment come together. The dedication and expertise brought by these women have been instrumental in creating a space we are confident will help inspire and empower generations to come.”

Julia Murphy, AIA, partner at SOM and chair of the BWAF board’s nominating committee, said, “The Bev is a community space that firmly grounds the Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation at the center of urban life and nurtures our expanding cultural impact. This fast-paced, economical fitout has yielded a high-profile venue for multilayered stakeholder groups and a range of programs that promote vitality, equity, and community for women worldwide in the AEC and related fields.”

Full-time occupants of The Bev include the executive director, all communications and programming staff, as well as the publications and social media coordinator and the producer of the audio documentaries. The second-floor space has been provided with support by Brookfield Properties, whose executive vice president of design and construction, Sabrina Kanner, led the work and championed the inclusion of BWAF. Other collaborators and team members include JBB, Darby Construction, StickBulb, RavenHill Studio, Estiluz, and Crosby Street Studios, with select furnishings donated by WeWork.

According to Kracauer, the foundation has celebrated the opening of the new exhibition designed by Yay Brigade, Pioneering Women of American Architecture, a companion to the acclaimed online resource created by co-directors Mary McLeod and Victoria Rosner. In early December as well, BWAF hosted 12 promising women practitioners for its first Emerging Leaders session, the innovative professional development forum for select women between five and 10 years out of school.

“Along with our leadership meetings, The Bev will host upcoming events and programs, including our new video to debut on Beverly Willis’s amazing life, the New Angle: Voice wrap party, a Friends Program to welcome frequent visitors, and roundtables with leading journalists, feminists and experts on issues impacting women in the AEC fields,” said Kracauer.

BWAF will be hosting its own gatherings and talks, as well as lending its space to likeminded organizations for their events, too. An official housewarming and launch party will be held at The Bev in the early spring. In this way, BWAF is at the forefront of a cultural revolution, reshaping the narrative of women’s contributions in the built environment. Through award- winning exhibitions, websites, media, and programs, BWAF collaborates with museums, universities, professional

organizations, and other groups to propel women to leadership positions in the design and construction fields.

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