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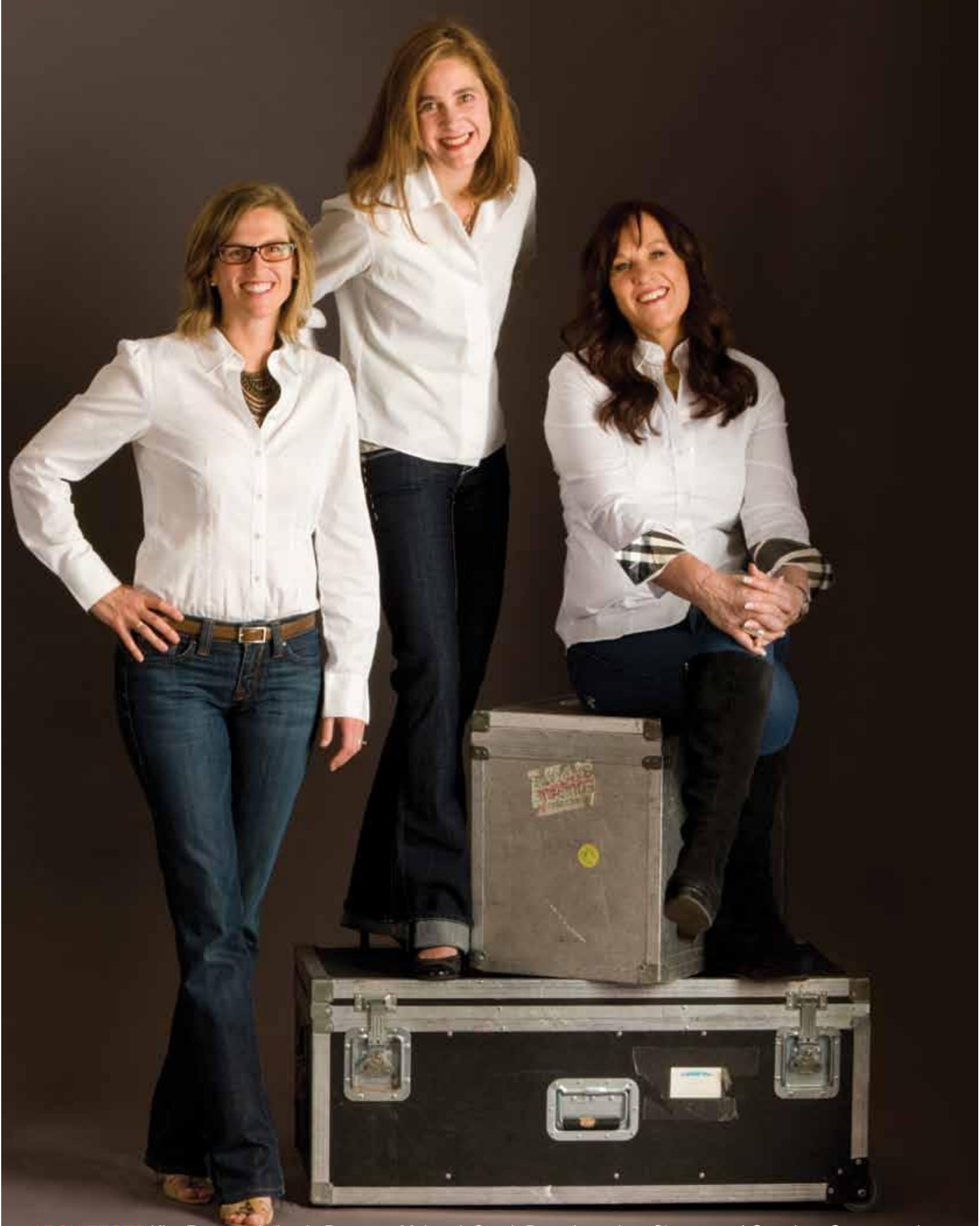


DESIGNING WOMEN



*aspen
architects*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID O. MARLOW • FROM LEFT TO RIGHT



ARCHITECTS Kim Raymond, Jamie Brewster McLeod, Sarah Broughton, Lea Sisson, and Gretchen Greenwood

In Aspen's highly selective and innovative design microcosm, five women quietly lead the charge. Together, they log thousands of hours and design everything from treehouses and condos to boutiques and 25,000-square-foot homes. They are creative problem solvers, hand holders, and visionaries. Some are married and some have children. One is a Leadville 100 champion and one speaks multiple languages. While their design philosophies and business models differ, each one defers in her own way to the mountain environment as a defining element of her work.



user friendly

Jamie Brewster McLeod Brewster McLeod Architects

I grew up in Glacier National Park and spent my childhood in big lodges and incredible natural settings. I am used to beautiful places and that is what I expect to see.

what is your specialty?

My firm is about the client and customer service. I am a boutique firm – you call my office and you get me.

how do you make a 10,000-square-foot home more energy efficient?

My clients want comfort more than anything and, as the architect, I need to make sure their house is comfortable for them. I also need to make it very energy efficient. When I talk to them about energy efficiency, it's not about straw bale homes or the radicalness of what some energy savings can be. Marble and hardwood floors are still in the program, but we address what is in the walls first. My clients are building really unique homes. Whether or not they like it, they are trendsetters because they have the ability to use different platforms within their homes. Fifteen years ago, no one wanted to use radiant heat. Now it is used everywhere and it started in high-end construction. That same idea needs to occur with energy savings and green building materials. As architects, we educate our clients about a design idea and its impact on the community and overall energy use. If I can build a 10,000-square-foot home that is as energy efficient as a 5,000-square-foot home, that's great. We need to push the envelope to achieve that.

what is the latest trend in mountain architecture?

It used to be that everyone wanted a home theater or a wine room. Now everyone wants a swimming pool.

what differentiates your business?

This summer, I turn 37 and I will celebrate six years of having my own company. I have had clients say that I was nothing that they thought they wanted, but in the end, I was everything they needed. That is what I want. I have lost projects before because the client felt more comfortable with a 55-year-old man. There is nothing I can do about that.

fresh perspective



Sarah Broughton Rowland & Broughton Architecture and Urban Design

Design solves problems and big decisions should not occur without every type of thinking present.

describe your business.

I met John Rowland in my first college design studio. We have been married for 13 years and business partners for nine. We run our business like an urban office and have very high expectations. John is the big thinker and I am the closing pitcher. We are both very hands-on designers. We know what we are good at, and we surround ourselves with people who are experts in their field. Forty percent of our work is commercial and hospitality. I love it because it is quick, fun, and allows younger architects to really engage in a project from start to finish.

why hire you?

People come to us for our creative thinking and because they want us to be the leader of design. We offer a youthful freshness but we also have strong opinions and give good reasoning why something should be a certain way. People like that we are a woman and man partnership because we can offer both perspectives at the table. We have a reputation for putting 110 percent into our work, and we are incredibly flexible. If a design does not work, we change it.

what trait is most important in an architect?

As a society, we are not creating many leaders these days. In this firm, we are really trying to teach leadership skills because people expect us to be the leaders. Architects need to know everything about a project. If we aren't getting an answer out of a client, it is probably because they aren't getting the right information.

what inspires you?

I am inspired by travel. We took a European ski vacation this winter because we wanted to experience comparable European resorts. People are always comparing Aspen to Telluride and Vail, but we should be looking to Europe for inspiration.

fresh perspective



Lea Sisson Lea Sisson Architects

I create an experience of living on the land because I believe that if my clients develop a positive relationship with their surroundings, they will relate positively with the rest of the world.

what characterizes your work?

My buildings grow out of the ground. They are not meant to look like they have been placed on a site. I create places for people to have an experience that resonates with them and their surroundings. I want them to experience the sun, the wind, the views, and the grass beneath their feet. If I can give them that, along with everything else they want – objects and things that make it a functioning home for them – then I have succeeded.

how did you become an organic architect?

I spent a year studying at the Architecture Association in London studying with internationally known architects. That was a year of big ideas and esoteric philosophy. I also spent a year in Stuttgart, which was the epicenter of the ecological movement at that time. There, we were detailing new solar power systems and coming up with better solutions for green building efficiency. After I graduated, I worked with Imre Makovecs, considered by most to be the Frank Lloyd Wright of Hungary. After I left Europe, I went to Big Sur, California where I worked with the designer of the Post Ranch Inn, Mickey Muennig, another organic architect who had ties to Frank Lloyd Wright's studio proteges.

describe your current projects.

I have a treehouse structure on Chair Mountain and a total net zero home in Paonia. There are all kinds of crazy projects within the vicinity of Aspen, so I am able to do the creative work that I want to do and that people are looking for.

what architect inspires you most?

Frank Gehry has taken a sculptural form and made an absolute science of it. He uses technology to its highest level. There is a playfulness to his buildings that he helps us all think about. Whether or not we like it, his work challenges us to think about a structure not looking like it's supposed to.

paying it forward

paying it forward

Kim Raymond Kim Raymond Architects

I have designed custom homes here for twenty years. I want to give back. The world is changing and I want to be a part of that change.

what type of architecture do you prefer?

Smaller scale work is more of a creative challenge because of space restrictions. If you have a large home and think you need a pantry, I can just push the wall out and make a pantry for you. Some of my favorite projects are the Aspen Highlands and Buttermilk Ski Patrol headquarters. I was on the Highlands Ski Patrol for many years so that was like designing for family.

describe your work in africa.

I have been working on an orphanage village in Rwanda for three years. We have 17 kids living there now and our goal is to establish systems that will make it self-sustaining. It is a model that I would like to duplicate around the world. The buildings and site plan might change, but the model – teaching kids responsibility, how to make a living, and to get along with one another – is applicable anywhere. We want the kids to think of it as their family home. I am also trying to set up a solar project whereby citizens can buy into a central system that distributes rechargeable batteries for headlamps and light bulbs. Because Rwanda is on the equator, it gets dark at 6:15 p.m. every night of the year. People spend a lot of time sitting in the dark. With one light bulb, kids could do their schoolwork and parents could learn English. This could be a transformative project.

how are women changing the world?

My work in Rwanda is expanding and it is because people are making money and the country is progressing. Who is making this change happen? Women. They are dedicated and determined, and they bring a fresh perspective to the challenges of everyday living.

what's the best advice you could give a young architect?

Every architect should work as a carpenter. It taught me a lot about architecture.



experience matters



Gretchen Greenwood Gretchen Greenwood Architects

I have been designing custom homes in Aspen for 30 years and I am in the prime of my career. It feels good to have finally developed a distinct design sensibility.

what is your specialty?

My business has always been large custom homes, primarily because that is the market here. But more importantly, custom homes are the cutting edge of architecture. There is always an opportunity to try new materials and ideas that advance all aspects of the profession. I think it is the most creative part of the profession.

describe your business model.

I offer a comprehensive and personal design service that includes site planning, architecture and interior design, including lighting and furniture design.

what characterizes your work?

I like to combine old ideas with contemporary design. My buildings look simple, but they aren't. I love to integrate rooflines, trusses, skylights, and windows with wood and steel. I don't repeat my designs. Everyone gets a uniquely personal home.

how do you design to the needs of your clients?

As architects, we are always challenged to create buildings that suit the lifestyle that draws people to this environment, and more importantly, are compatible with the surrounding landscape. Many of our homes are large because people want homes that serve a variety of purposes. Because we are not in an urban environment, a home has to function as office, athletic club, and entertainment center. There are so many unusual homes here because they define and identify the owner. Homes are getting smaller, and that is partially a product of the economic downturn, but primarily dictated by a need to simplify. As architects, we are always striving to create a new idea and direction in architecture.

is there a difference between men and women in architecture?

Women architects really champion the idea that you can change your life by the house you live in. I am creating a life for my clients, but my houses may change the way they ultimately live. They live in a floor plan, but the way they live in it will be different from the way they have lived in any other space before.

experience matters