



nerej

2020 Women Who Build Spotlight: Julia McFadden, Svigals + Partners

February 21, 2020 - Connecticut

Julia McFadden, Associate Principal at Svigals + Partners

How many years have you been in your current field? 22 years

What are you planning to do differently in 2020 to have a positive impact on your career? My intention is two-fold: In my work realm I am creating a business plan to support a bolder approach in going after clients and work that is aspirational and ultimately fulfilling; in my personal life I will prioritize a dream writing project.

What was your favorite job and what did you learn from it? My favorite job was the smallest: A studio apartment make-over for the daughter of a former client. She was an up-and-coming copy writer for a national marketing firm and wanted to make a funky, creative living environment for herself. We re-purposed one of her closets to become an alcove recess for her bed, added a semi-custom island – serving as a kitchen work surface, a four-stooled dining space, and a creative writing desk. Black chalk paint on the remaining sliding closet doors made an idea zone for her writing work. I learned to trust my instincts and believe in my understanding of spatial design.

to support ambitions and identity.

What motivated you to step out on your own? When I was laid off in 2003, I didn't have an immediate intention to run my own architectural practice. My job-search landed interviews in DC, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, and eventually a job offer for a firm in Bermuda. However, by then, several past clients had contacted me for small jobs –and I decided I could make a run for it on my own. My firm flourished for three years, but when the housing economy tanked in 2007, the fun came to a quick halt and I had to lay off my staff of three and eventually close the business in 2008.

What project, transaction, honor or accomplishment are you most proud of? The Sandy Hook School project demonstrated what is possible when everyone brings their "A" game to the table and engages fully and sincerely to make a difference for a traumatized community. The project team won a CBC Team Award, which was truly deserved on every level for the depth of our collaboration and the concerted effort we all made to acknowledge every participant in the process, right down to every trade laborer.

