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## **2020 Women Who Build Spotlight: Marissa Dionne Mead, Svigals + Partners**

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Marissa Dionne Mead, Director of Art Integration at Svigals + Partners

How many years have you been in your current field? 14 years

Which project, deal, or transaction was the “game changer” in the advancement of your career during the last 10 years? Working as the project architect and lead designer for New Britain’s Beehive Bridge has been a rewarding experience. I rejoined Svigals in 2014 to work on this project, and immediately jumped into early phase planning and community engagement efforts along with our talented team members from Fuss & O’Neill, Richter and Cegan, and Pirie Associates. Together, we implemented a meaningful collaborative process over many years in order to understand challenges, meet aspirations, and develop solutions to reconnect two disparate neighborhoods. The design of the bridge railings and sculptures drew on every aspect of my artistic skill and technical knowledge.

What was your favorite job and what did you learn from it? One of my favorite jobs was working as an associate at BloomerStudio.

In my role, I oversaw and participated in the design, fabrication and installation of architectural ornament and sculptural projects. On my feet and with my hands dirty, I was able to refocus on what it is about the design profession that I love most of all. I learned to appreciate my artistic talent and I also learned that my energy is best spent pushing the boundaries of my strengths.

What would you tell your daughter about entering this profession? Every voice at the table has value, including your own. In this industry, we must celebrate, amplify, and support the well-deserved accomplishments of our peers of all backgrounds. These small efforts accumulate and ultimately boost equity and raise the bar. And must have the courage to point out the systemic biases that artificially suppress female and minority leadership.

What motivated you to step out on your own? Outside of my role at Svigals + Partners I co-own an art studio, Atelier Cue, with my design partner, Ioana Barac. We founded the studio as a stage for connecting the art of design with the craft of making. The ability to model, prototype and fabricate by hand helps me to maintain a more visceral connection with the built world.

What project, transaction, honor or accomplishment are you most proud of? I am proud of Atelier Cue's work with Town Green District in downtown New Haven. Over the past year we have led an extensive community engagement and visioning process to conceptualize an artistic expression at one of New Haven's busiest intersections. Our work has been well-supported by the community and is now on track to become a reality.

What is the best leadership advice you have ever received? Who was it from? From a friend and founder of the American Design Club: "find a community that you enjoy and then contribute". To me this is what signals great leadership – it's not about finding the best way to advance yourself, it's about finding the best way to improve a community that you love.

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