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55 YEARS

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2020 Women in Construction: Liz von Goeler, Principal at Sasaki

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Who or what inspired you to join the construction industry? Interior architecture seemed like an obvious choice of industry because it combines art, math, and curiosity. When I was a kid, our home

was completely reimagined by a decorator who was really a designer, but that term didn't exist in the 1970's. She took our shabby brick Victorian house and transformed it into a home that was inspired by the Victorian era. Not long after that my mother started bringing home discarded wallpaper books and carpet samples. I used those samples and cardboard boxes to create model houses. I didn't realize the work that I do today was even possible or available back when I was a child.

What was your greatest professional achievement or most notable project in the last 12 months? My favorite project this is year is for a tech company in the restaurant market. Our challenge was two-fold — express their culture, providing an element of surprise and discovery, and create a place where people would want to come to work and visit from other nearby offices. We sourced a food truck as the center piece of their café adjacent to a roof deck and created a speakeasy with a secret entrance through a phone booth. And with only nine months from beginning of design to occupancy we had to employ many new strategies for quick project delivery.

When I'm not working I am... obsessed with baking bread. This year I am concentrating on making the perfect sourdough baguette. Luckily, I think it is close to perfection with a super soft inside and crunchy outside. Sunday night is baguette night in my household and now my family fights over the loaves.

What are you doing differently in 2020 that has had a positive impact on your career? As a designer, it might be unexpected that I have spent the last year really looking at the business side of our practice. We are known for great design, but in the current market that isn't always enough. Our clients are growing rapidly and require a quick design-to-occupancy strategy. Agile workflow, borrowed from the software industry, allows us to develop multiple aspects of a project in tandem which increases our speed. Our in-house data and design tools team has created proprietary systems that help us rapidly create planning scenarios. These strategies maintain our great design quality and decrease design time.

What trends are you seeing in your field this year? Faster is definitely a trend which might be the result of having fewer co-working options available to accommodate rapid staff growth. We have had to rethink how we approach projects in order to meet the needs of our clients. Our clients are also looking to support their internal communities and increase the bonds between their people. Food and beverage programs have become a central part of our clients' spaces. Connecting people to the company mission is a strong part of those conversations and Sasaki's magic lies in how we create that connection in a meaningful way.