



Valerie Hassett, AIA, IIDA, LEED AP the present AIA Northern Virginia Chapter president - is an associate with SBE Architects. Ms. Hasset was born in La Jolla, California. Having earned a Masters of Architecture from Virginia Tech and a BFA in Interior Design from Virginia Commonwealth University, she has both NCARB and NCIDQ certifications. She generously, contributes her personal time to various organizations such as AIA and IIDA Mid Atlantic. She enjoys playing the piano and currently, making latticino (a type of glass-lamp work.)

Editor: What kind of a student were you?

VH: I was a good student; I liked school and did well. In particular I enjoyed math and science.

Editor: Who did you work for after you graduated?

VH: I worked for a wonderful man, Madis Valge. He had a small firm in Silver Spring, MD.

Editor: Who is your favorite architect?

VH: Lou Kahn, for the particular way his buildings render daylight.

Editor: Who is your favorite Artist?

VH: Johannes Vermeer, for the particular way he rendered daylight.

Editor: Who is your favorite philosopher?

VH: Lao Tsu.

Editor: Who is your favorite musician?

VH: Brian Eno he also excels as a producer, bringing out in musicians something elemental to their individual sounds.

Editor: What is your favorite book?

VH: Babel by Patti Smith; although I cannot help but collect glossy architecture coffee table books.

Editor: Any books that helped/influence you?

VH: "Absolute Architecture" by Hans Hollein.

Editor: Do you have any heroes/any role models?

VH: Reading about the life of Eileen Grey, She was a fearsome woman.



Editor: What does it take to be an architect?

VH: To thrive as an architect one needs desire, talent, communication skills, technical expertise, and business sense.

Editor: What does inspire an architectural design? What is the sequence of events that leads to a great work of architecture?

VH: Typically it is a series of numerous small inspirations solving interrelated puzzles, which will hopefully lead me to a simple, elegant solution.

Editor: How does it make you feel to see your designs become reality?

VH: It's brilliant. I think of the people I worked with, the challenges and the successes.

Editor: Have you had any disappointments?

VH: Yes, I just try to move on.

Editor: What is more important to you in designing a building? Is it Function; or Aesthetics?

VH: They're both parameters that need to be taken into consideration. Design strives to balance multiple, often conflicting requirements.

Editor: Is there anything you wish you never did?

VH: No.

Editor: Would you recommend becoming an architect to a young person?

VH: Architectural education teaches skills useful to many professions; it is an education that more people should undertake. The practice of architecture requires determination and offers many rewards.

Editor: Do you think architects are as involved as they should be in the matters of the environment?

VH: Not yet, the construction industry has too big of an impact on resources for architects not to be leaders in developing sustainable structures.

Editor: What do you think our prevalent style of architecture is?

VH: What is fashionable today is somewhat irrelevant, our society seems to have a thirst for what is fashionable next. Personally I do not want to chase after popular style.

Editor: What's the greatest challenge of our industry?

VH: The profession of architecture is shrinking at an unsustainable rate. Currently there are a little more than 100,000 registered architects in the country; over the past ten years there has been an attrition rate of about 3,000 per year and only about 1,000



new architects are becoming registered annually. As the baby boom generation begins to retire this attrition could become desperate.

Editor: What's the greatest challenge for architects?

VH: The same as it has always been to envision and shepherd into existence places that speak for a community. Today architects just have a wider palette of materials, more complex systems and a greater recognition of the diversity within our communities.

Would you do it all over again?

VH: Yes, absolutely.

Editor: How did you become active with the International Interior Design Association?

VH: In 1998 I joined the IIDA Mid Atlantic Chapter Board as VP of Regulatory Affairs, and then served as President in 2000-02. There were a diverse set of opportunities while I was the regional representative such as hosting a delegation from The British Interior Design Association (BIDA) as they were reformulating their association.

Editor: How did you become active with the American Institute of Architects?

VH: In 1993 Susan Woodward Notkins asked me to attend the AIANOVA board planning meeting and I have been actively involved with the chapter ever since. I am currently the AIA Northern Virginia Chapter president. And over the past few years I have been fortunate to enough to serve on various state and national committees including AIA150.

Editor: What is AIA150?

VH: In 2005 the AIA created a nationwide community service initiative *Blueprint for America* to mark the organization's 150th anniversary. The program provided the opportunity for individuals to collaborate with architects and share their ideas for creating livable communities.

Editor: Why do you volunteer for professional associations?

VH: Fellowship, I have had the opportunity to work with a diverse group of professionals and form lasting friendships. Beyond that I have had the opportunity to be on the vanguard of issues and developments within my profession. Some of the brightest minds are giving of their time and resources to these organizations; to participate gives me so much more than I could ever give back.

Editor: Thank you for your time, Ms. Hasset. It was an honor.