

2023 AIA Young Architects Award

Information from online submission form

Candidate Shannon F. Gathings, AIA, NOMA

AIA Chapter AIA Mississippi:

Summary Statement

Shannon Gathings, AIA, NOMA, spends her time, talent, and skill in service of a worthy mission – to help lead the effort to make substantive change for the architectural profession and the communities we serve.

Education

Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS

2005-2010

Bachelor of Architecture, 2010

Initial Licensure

March 28, 2022, Mississippi

Licensure

Mississippi

Work History

Duvall Decker Architects, Jackson, MS

Associate, 2021-present

Duvall Decker Architects, Jackson, MS

Project Manager, 2010-present

Carl Small Town Center, Mississippi State University, MS

Intern, 2008-2009

Design Discovery Camp, Mississippi State University, MS

Instructor, 2008-2009

September 6, 2022

Chair, 2023 Young Architects Award
American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006-5292

Re: AIA 2023 Young Architects Award Nomination for Shannon Gathings, AIA

Jury of the Young Architects Award,

It is our great pleasure to write in support of Shannon Gathings, AIA for the 2023 American Institute of Architects Young Architects Award. We have known Shannon for more than 15 years as a student, an employee, a professional colleague, a friend, and now, a Duvall Decker Associate. Shannon joined Duvall Decker after graduating from Mississippi State School of Architecture in 2010. Shannon's decision to stay in her home state and employ her professional skills and leadership to help others, to work to make a difference where the challenges are toughest, reveals her dedication to serving communities of need and bringing to center those in the margins. Through this commitment, she has honed the effective skills she uses to lead the profession on the national level.

Shannon is a skillful and inspiring leader in the Duvall Decker studio. She has led some of the firm's most important community reinvestment work in Mississippi including 47 affordable housing units for an at-risk neighborhood in Jackson; a 42-unit affordable housing project scaled for non-traditional families in Greenville known as the Reserves at Ed Gray; the legal aid offices of the Mississippi Center for Justice in the Delta community of Indianola; and the renovation of Operation Shoestring's Ellen Harris Center, an after school and outreach nonprofit serving inner-city Jackson students and their families. In addition, Shannon has contributed to many projects in the Duvall Decker studio. In each, she demonstrates design and leadership skills well beyond her years. For the US District Courthouse in Greenville, Mississippi, Shannon led the team that designed the interiors. For the Selah House in Malvern, Pennsylvania, she led the firm with the most refined detailing we have ever been able to achieve. She is a leader, teacher, and role model for us all.

Shannon's service to the community and profession is exemplary. She has received numerous awards and recognition for her design work, service, and leadership. As you will see in the submission, she has been a leader in the state, serving as an AIAMS board member and the first female black chapter president. She has contributed to AIA national leadership, first as the Associates Representative to the AIA Strategic Council and then as the Associate Director on the AIA National Board in 2021. In each position, Shannon worked to improve the profession for emerging professionals and create opportunities for minorities. She is a tireless advocate for improving equity, diversity, and inclusion of minority voices in the profession and frequently shares her voice with students and professionals in juries, lectures, and seminars.

It's important to note that this work is desperately needed. Not only is Shannon one of the only approximately 500 African American women architects in this country (less than 0.5% of all architects according to NCARB), but she is also one of the most excellent of all young architects in the country. Please join Anne and me in recognition of this young trailblazer, role model, and leader, a young architect who cares for her home, works to overcome its most difficult challenges and serves the profession with hope for a more equitable and diverse future.

It is with heartfelt enthusiasm that we recommend Shannon Gathings, AIA, for the 2023 Young Architects Award of the American Institute of Architects.

Sincerely,



Anne Marie Duvall, FAIA
Principal



Roy T. Decker, FAIA
Principal

DUVALL DECKER[®]
(an expanded practice)

1 BIOGRAPHY



SHANNON F. GATHINGS, AIA, NOMA
LICENSED ARCHITECT, MARCH 2022

WORK EXPERIENCE

Duvall Decker Architects

Associate, 2021-present

Project Manager, 2010-present

Carl Small Town Center,

Mississippi State University

Intern, 2008-2009

Design Discovery Camp,

Mississippi State University

Instructor, 2008-2009

EDUCATION

Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS

Bachelor of Architecture, 2010

Aberdeen High School, Aberdeen, MS

Valedictorian, 2005

AIA YOUNG ARCHITECTS AWARD | 2023

When asked at a high school scholarship interview, “Are you going to leave Mississippi when you graduate?” the obvious answer for Shannon was “no.”

Mississippi has always been a complex place of extraordinary challenge, but the people and the need have always been a greater anchor to the place.

“If a change happens here, why can’t I be the one to make it happen?”

Shannon spends her time, talent, and skill in service of this greater mission – to see a need and help lead the effort to make substantive change.

DESIGN RECOGNITION

Shannon is a leader in and out of the studio. She is a skilled project manager and designer at Duvall Decker Architects, a Mississippi firm that believes in the potential design has to create positive consequence. Shannon has led many of the firm’s successful projects including the Reserves at Gray Park and the renovation of Operation Shoestring’s Ellen Harris Center. She is a teacher in the studio, helping her peers as they grow and develop, and has an unwavering passion for architecture and its role in making communities healthier.

DESIGN LEADERSHIP IN THE AIA

Shannon’s volunteer efforts with the state and national AIA are many, as she has contributed to numerous committees and leadership roles in AIA Mississippi including Communications Director, Associate Director, member of the Board of Directors, and rank positions on the Executive Committee such as Chapter President. She has served as 2021 Associate Director for the AIA National Board of Directors following her previous positions as 2020 Strategic Council Associate Representative, Gulf States Regional Associate Director, and member of the National Associates Committee.

2.1 SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS



AWARDS

AIA Upjohn Fellow, AIA National, 2021
 AIA Bethune Fellow, AIA National, 2020
 AIA Presidential Citation, MS Chapter, 2020
 AIA Emerging Professionals Award, MS Chapter, 2019
 AIA Presidential Citation, MS Chapter, 2013
 Alpha Rho Chi Medal, Mississippi State University, 2010
 Association of Retired Faculty, Student Award
 William L. Giles Award for Excellence in Architecture, Mississippi State University, 2008

PUBLICATIONS

Next to Lead: Deconstructing Barriers to Leadership for Ethnically Diverse Women, YAF Connection Magazine
 Article Author, October 2020

Say It Loud Exhibition, Beyond the Built Environment
 Feature, 2020

Faces of Change, Oculus Magazine
 Feature, 2020

Masters of Design, Portico Magazine
 Feature, 2016

AIA Mississippi: A Year in Review
 Creator and Editor, 2013-2015

AIA Mississippi Quarterly Newsletter
 Creator and Editor, 2013-2015

LECTURES & PRESENTATIONS

US Architects Declare Social Justice Seminar, Speaker, 2022

AIA Louisiana
 "Growing and Promoting Diversity in Practice", Speaker, 2021

[Include] A Virtual Design Equity Symposium, AIA MS
 Emerging Professionals Committee with help from Mississippi State University & Chapters of AIAS and NOMAS, Speaker, 2021

AIA Louisiana
 "Housing Mini-Film Festival - Midtown: A Blueprint for Better"
 Speaker, 2021

US Architects Declare Town Hall Meeting, Speaker, 2020

People+ Association for Community Design Conference
 "In a Tight Spot: Architects Working to Achieve Excellence in Highly Constrained Settings", Speaker, 2019

2.1 SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS



JURIES

AIA National Collaborative Achievement Award Jury
Jury Member, 2022

AIA West Virginia Design Awards Jury
Jury Member, 2022

Payette Sho-Ping Chin Memorial Academic Scholarship
Jury Chair, 2021-2022

Mississippi State University, Spring First Year Jury
Jury Member, 2019-2020, 2022

AIA Wisconsin Design Awards Jury
Jury Member, 2021

AIA Upjohn Research Initiative
Jury Member, 2021

Payette Sho-Ping Chin Memorial Academic Scholarship
Jury Member, 2020

AIA Potomac Valley Design Awards Jury
Jury Member, 2020

Tuskegee University, Spring Fifth Year Jury
Jury Member, 2016

FILM

Midtown: A Blueprint for Better, AIA National, 2017

Jackson is Art: A Design Camp with the JCDC / Jackson
Community Design Center Camp Director, 2010

LEADERSHIP

AIA National, Associate Director, 2021

AIA, Board Knowledge Committee, 2021

US Architects Declare Steering Committee Member, 2020-2021

AIA, Strategic Council, National Associates Committee
Representative, 2020

National Organization of Minority Architects Member, 2020-Present

AIA National Associates Committee, Gulf States Regional Associate
Director, 2018-2019

2.1 LEADERSHIP CREDENTIALS



LEADERSHIP (CONTINUED)

AIA, Resolution 18-3 Diversity Pipeline Taskforce, 2019

AIA, Board President, Mississippi Chapter, 2018

AIA, Board President-Elect, Mississippi Chapter, 2017

AIA, Board Second Vice President, Mississippi Chapter, 2016

AIA, Secretary/Treasurer, Mississippi Chapter, 2015

AIA, Director, Mississippi Chapter, 2014

AIA, Director of Communications, 2011-2013

AIA, Director of Associates, Mississippi Chapter, 2011-2013

AIA, Gulf States Leader, Mississippi Chapter, 2011-2013

PROFESSIONAL PROJECT LEADERSHIP

United States Federal Courthouse Greenville, MS Ongoing

Piney Woods Community Home, Ongoing

Johnson Residence, Ongoing

Tougaloo Center for Equity and Justice, Ongoing

Selah House, 2020

Ellen Harris Center Renovation, 2019

The Reserves at Gray Park, 2018

MSARNG Building S-213 Renovation and Repairs, 2018

West Millsaps Housing, 2016

Jackson Federal Courthouse Renovation, 2015

Rowan Hall Renovation, 2014

Mississippi Valley State Library Renovation, 2013

Mississippi Center for Justice Indianola Office, 2012

Midtown Partners Housing, 2012

Beemon Hall Renovations, 2012

JSU Art Gallery, 2011

JMAA Security Checkpoint Reconfiguration, Unbuilt

Piney Woods Faculty Housing, Unbuilt

3.1 EXHIBITS



Declaration of Responsibility

I have personal knowledge of the nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included the performance of service to AIA Mississippi described within.

John Anderson, AIA
2017 AIA Mississippi President
unabridged Architecture

AIA MISSISSIPPI SERVICE

Jackson, Mississippi
Completed 2010-2022

Shannon's leadership in AIA Mississippi began early as a 2010 college graduate. When invited to serve as Associate Director, she accepted, not knowing what the role entailed, but committed to helping where there was a need. One yes became many more, and she soon became an integral leader within AIA Mississippi and the region.

As Communications Director, Shannon constructed the digital infrastructure to make consistent quality content for sustained membership engagement. Her graphic design work and critical eye raised the standard for design and content for AIA Mississippi. One of her first tasks was revamping the AIA Mississippi website to be a functional interface with consistent, up-to-date content. She expanded the digital presence of the organization by creating and updating the chapter's Instagram and Facebook social media platforms so members were kept engaged with the activity in the chapter. Shannon built quarterly newsletters and an annual Year in Review, a regular member benefit that connected a long-disconnected community of architects across the state of Mississippi.

As an Associate Director, Shannon created the Emerging Professionals group connecting Mississippi's associate and young architect members. She helped to foster connections with graduating students of the local Mississippi State University Architecture program, with hopes to increase their involvement in AIA Mississippi upon graduation. Through the YDP (Young Professional's Development Program) she helped create access to information about licensure, hosting an "NCARB & You: IDP, ARE & Certification" presentation from 2011 NCARB representative Martin Smith, AIA. Shannon served as a constant advocate for emerging professionals at the local and regional level, supporting programming and funding exclusively for emerging professionals including the 2012 Emerging AIA Gulf States Redefining Design Symposium.

Shannon continued to elevate through the ranks of governance at AIA Mississippi, serving as Director, Secretary/Treasurer, Second Vice-President, President-Elect, and ultimately 2018 President, becoming the first associate and the first black woman to serve in this capacity at AIA Mississippi. Throughout her tenure, she led with sensitivity to the needs of all members, while facing the challenge of limited programming and operations budgets. Regardless of these challenges, she successfully programmed and organized the 2015 Mississippi Celebrates Architecture Symposium and the 2017 AIA Mississippi Annual Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana. Shannon represented AIA Mississippi at the national level, advancing her experience of board governance at multiple AIA Grassroots events. Despite her youth, her maturity and tenacity propelled her to become a storied leader for AIA Mississippi, earning several acknowledgments for her volunteer service.

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR



AIA MS Year in Review Publications



2015 Mississippi Celebrates Architecture

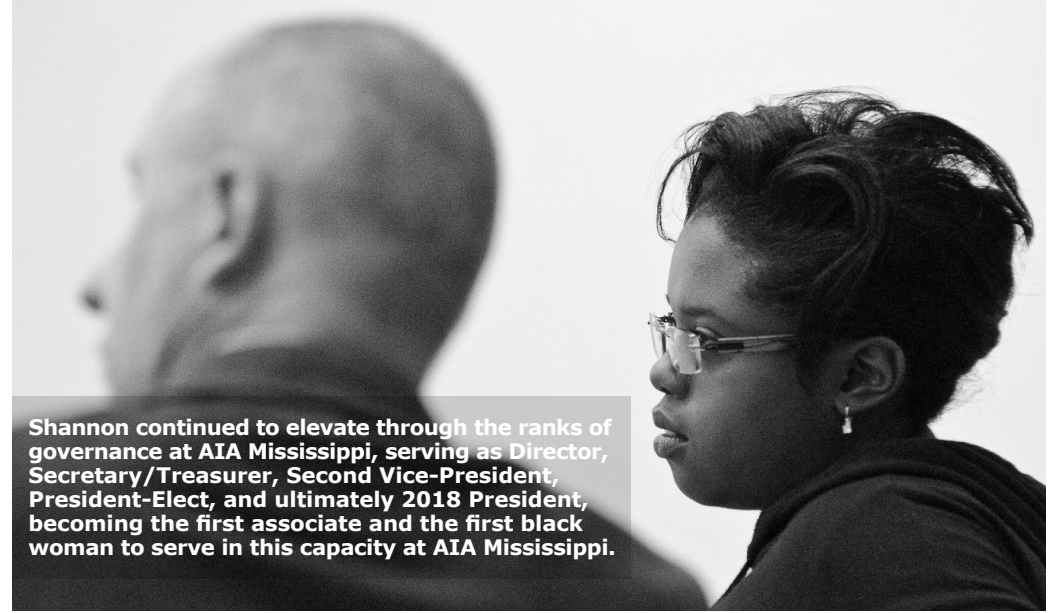


AIA Mississippi
AIA MS Conference Graphics

AIA MS ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR / GULF STATES REGIONAL ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR



2012 Emerging AIA Gulf States Redefining Design Symposium



Shannon continued to elevate through the ranks of governance at AIA Mississippi, serving as Director, Secretary/Treasurer, Second Vice-President, President-Elect, and ultimately 2018 President, becoming the first associate and the first black woman to serve in this capacity at AIA Mississippi.

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP



3.2 EXHIBITS



Declaration of Responsibility
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Ryan Gann, AIA, NOMA
Board of Directors
American Institute of Architects

AIA NATIONAL SERVICE

Jackson, Mississippi
Completed 2018-2022

Becoming an architect has been an experience not without significant challenges. Entering architectural education with limited exposure to architectural design and making a career seemed impossible. Gaining confidence through experience working in the field was transformational, and volunteering added substance to the work, but to excel required so much time and energy that completing architecture licensure examinations seemed insurmountable. Despite what seemed unattainable, Shannon has achieved and excelled. Her larger aim is to make the journey more accessible, conceivable, and possible for young women and people of color to follow.

Shannon's volunteer roles at AIA National allowed her to bring her voice and experience forward to positively influence the future of practice and the AIA.

Shannon was appointed to serve on the 2019 Diversity Pipeline and National Representation Task Force (Resolution 18-3) by 2019 AIA President Bill Bates, FAIA. Led by Gabrielle Bullock, FAIA, task force members confronted bias and preconceptions to design a process and program for current and future ethnically diverse women in practice. The resulting program, Next to Lead, creates sustainable paths to leadership for these women with consideration of the specific barriers and challenges that they face.

As the Gulf States Regional Associate Director to the National Associates Committee, Shannon served alongside a diverse group of young leaders not content to accept the inheritance of practice at its current state, and determined to shape a more inclusive future for architecture and design. Shannon was selected to serve as the 2020 Associate Representative to the Strategic Council and 2021 AIA National Associate Director. In both capacities, Shannon contributed her voice toward equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging – from serving on the Strategic Council Housing work group and advocating for housing as infrastructure, to hosting emerging professional-led conversations with the Board Knowledge Committee to identify paths for genuine engagement with associate and young architect members.

Noted for her pointed candor, Shannon's voice has impact. Her work and accomplishments will influence the course of the profession.

2019 DIVERSITY PIPELINE TASKFORCE MEMBERS



2019 Diversity Pipeline Taskforce, Washington, D.C.

2020 ASSOCIATE REPRESENTATIVE TO THE STRATEGIC COUNCIL



2020 AIA Presidential Inauguration, Washington DC



Grassroots 2020 Strategic Council Class of 2022



Grassroots 2020 Strategic Council Class of 2022



AIA National Board of Directors, Final Board Meeting^

2021 AIA NATIONAL ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR



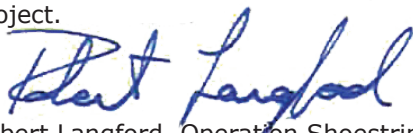
2021 AIA National Board at Lincoln Memorialv



3.3 EXHIBITS



Declaration of Responsibility
I have personal knowledge of the nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. The nominee was largely responsible for the design and the nominee's firm executed the project.


Robert Langford, Operation Shoestring

ELLEN HARRIS CENTER RENOVATION

Jackson, Mississippi

Completed 2019

14,087 sf Renovation

Architecture Firm of Record and Design Firm: Duvall Decker Architects

Role:

Shannon served as the project manager for all phases of the project — from performing early facility assessments and preparing renderings for principal fundraising through design and construction. Shannon worked with the faculty and board members to align their pedagogical needs with their spatial needs. She also led community engagement processes to receive input from parents and students guiding the program for the renovated building.

Project Description:

Operation Shoestring is a non-profit organization that has been promoting health and self-sufficiency for children and families in under-resourced Jackson neighborhoods since 1968.

The architects first served Operation Shoestring in 2011, providing guidance for an organizational strategic plan and a facility master plan. The strategic planning process engaged all stakeholders, from community members to organization leadership. The process revealed the need to shed extraneous programs and focus on its after-school and related parent support programs and expand its campus in the community. The facilities planning process mapped out a strategy for improvements and support for a capital campaign. Between 2014 and 2017, the architect's facility maintenance staff cared for the building including, after every storm, keeping water from building up on the failing roof and structure until funds became available for the renovation.

The design strategy relocated the entry drop from the busy street to the side, reorienting internal circulation through the building, allowing four distinct activity areas and a direct connection from the entry to a new exterior playground. The old dark bearing wall structure is opened to create connected large meeting spaces and small nooks in the margins. Round meeting "figures" within larger rooms form landmarks dividing spaces and transforming the interior into a landscape for play. Natural light and views are introduced with new windows and large inhabitable bays at the edge of larger classrooms. The building is now the embodiment of Operation Shoestring's pedagogy and an instrument of care for the community families and children.



Shannon served as the project manager for all phases of the project — from performing early facility assessments and preparing renderings for principal fundraising through design and construction.



3.4 EXHIBITS



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Nathan Benzing
Greater Greenville Housing and
Revitalization Association

THE RESERVES AT GRAY PARK

Greenville, Mississippi

Completed 2018

42,016 sf New Construction

Architecture Firm of Record and Design Firm: Duvall Decker Architects

Awards: 2022 Best Affordable Housing Architizer International A+Award

Role:

Shannon served as project manager for the Reserves at Gray Park, a project with unique context and innovative aspirations for affordable housing. She led the team toward efficient and economical design from layout to construction. She was a constant advocate for the owner during construction administration holding the line on design quality and construction integrity.

Project Description:

As the demographic makeup of Greenville has changed, the Gray Park neighborhood, located in the middle city, was one of the hardest affected. With a median income under \$30,000 and over 37% of the population living below in poverty, many could not afford the left-over suburban tract homes on individual lots. The composition of households has also changed, with non-family households representing 39% followed by single female-headed households at 28.4%.

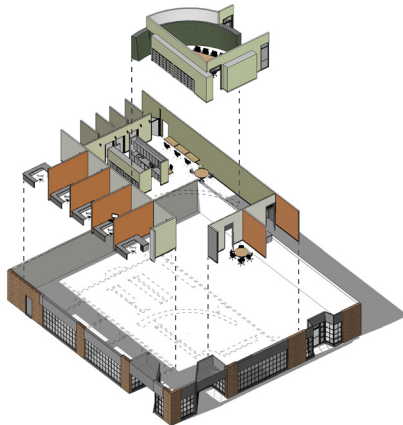
The design proposal involved rethinking the nature of public and private space in the "missing middle" with the development of housing units that meet the needs of smaller diverse families at costs within their means. Three building types were developed to serve as infill or cluster sites as in the Ed Gray neighborhood. The units are designed to increase density to 200-400%. The housing units are modest in size but with flexible floor plans, ranging from 750 SF one-bedroom to 1,200 SF three-bedroom. When clustered, the three building types form a mass similar to the typical single-family homes in the existing neighborhood, while allowing greater density and a fit of scale and feel that resists the stigmatizing typology of "affordable housing."

The project was built within a limited budget to keep rental rates affordable. The design is economical, durable, and energy-efficient. Material choices are economical and durable, the spatial and formal strategies were kept modest and simple, and the building envelopes and systems are designed to minimize energy operating costs to ensure low utility bills for the residents.

She was a constant advocate for the owner during construction administration holding the line on design quality and construction integrity.

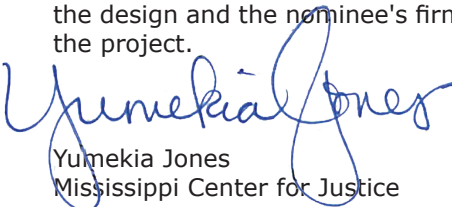


3.5 EXHIBITS



Declaration of Responsibility

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Yumekia Jones
Mississippi Center for Justice

MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR JUSTICE

Indianola, Mississippi

Completed 2012

6,000 SF

Architecture Firm of Record and Design Firm: Duvall Decker Architects

Role:

As a recent graduate, Shannon served as project manager for this simple yet meaningful renovation to an existing storefront building. Shannon worked with the owner to turn over coordinated interiors and furniture for this fast-paced renovation. She also worked collaboratively with the contractor to yield the best result for the owner.

Project Description:

The Indianola office of the Mississippi Center for Justice (MCJ) is located in the Mississippi Delta region, serving area residents, as well as, other residents statewide with legal counsel and support. Residents in the Mississippi Delta often face obstacles gaining access to the legal justice system. The intent of this ambitious project is to materialize confidence and respect for those in need of access to the legal justice system by providing attorneys and support needed to address the community's necessities.

The three-part design started with the shell: the abandoned furniture store was cleaned out and repaired. The order of rooms in which legal service office operations take place are built with inexpensive gypsum board partitions. The rooms are located to allow natural light to course into the inner plan. At the heart of the plan, a dynamically shaped, clay tile sheathed wall arcs and leans through the space, providing a landmark that not only unites all the rooms but more importantly, establishes a tactile enveloping, dynamic anchor; a kind of inner horizon that is both secure and hopeful about the future.

The green inner horizon wall is sheathed with roof tiles salvaged from Millsaps College. It brings material memory to the project and extends a civil rights family legacy that started in the 1920s at Millsaps and Tougaloo College.

MCJ founder Martha Bergmark was a student at Millsaps college in the 1960s and was an active civil rights supporter. She attended the social science seminars at Tougaloo College. The seminars, led by Dr. Ernst Borinski, framed much of the Civil Rights thinking in Mississippi. Martha's father, Dr. Robert Bergmark, was also a loved and respected philosophy professor and civil rights advocate at Millsaps from 1921 to 2003.

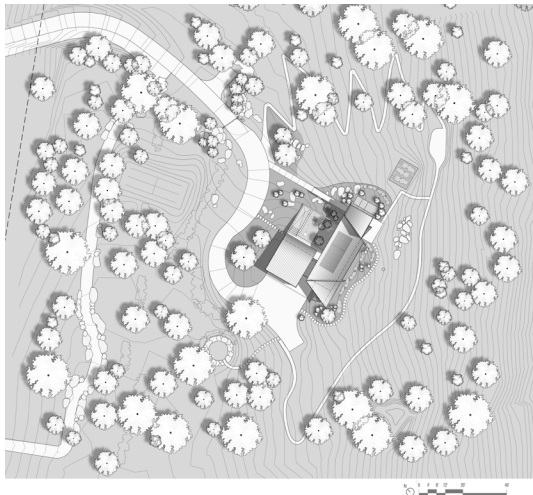
The green tile wall carries the memory and the energy of the ongoing work for Civil Rights and Justice into the future.



As a recent graduate, Shannon served as project manager for this simple yet meaningful renovation to an existing storefront building.



3.6 EXHIBITS



Declaration of Responsibility

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Graham Ashmead, PhD
Owner

SELAH HOUSE

Malvern, Pennsylvania

Completed 2020

2,247 sf New Construction

Architecture Firm of Record and Design Firm: Duvall Decker Architects

Role:

Shannon served as project architect for this custom residence from its schematic design iterations through construction administration. She worked closely with the skilled craftsmen to detail the artful woodwork and beautifully executed construction.

Project Description: Selah House, a small (2,247 SF) home for a retired doctor, is designed with mature environmental strategies. In its next life, the home will become part of a nature preserve. As such, great care was taken to locate the house in an existing clearing with a "light touch," removing very few trees.

Designed for a long 100-year life, all decisions regarding design, material, and systems were optimized for an environmentally engaged home. The program is simple - living, kitchen, bedroom, bath with two special spaces, and a private garden and a writer's loft. The house is designed for the owner and visitors to the future nature preserve to be intimately connected to the cycles of the day, weather, and seasons, as well as the abundant local flora and fauna. Standing in the center of the living room, you are only eight feet away from the courtyard to the north and the southern view to the distant mountains through the trees and across the valley. In the master bedroom with the sliding glass doors open, the bedroom becomes a sleeping screen porch in the forest. From the writer's tower, it seems as if you can touch the moon and stars, brilliant in the dark sky.

The materials are regional, durable, and easily maintained: pine framing, maple-finished paneling and trim, and slate shingles. The measured EUI is 61% below the benchmark.

Shannon served as project architect for this custom residence from its schematic design iterations through construction administration.

