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# BUILDING A LEGACY

ON THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF ROWLAND+BROUGHTON, SARAH BROUGHTON REFLECTS ON THE STUDIO'S PAST, PRESENT AND VERY EXCITING FUTURE

STORY LAURA BEAUSIRE



*After fifteen years of designing ever-larger projects, Sarah Broughton is always looking forward to the next challenge. "There's a lot of pressure, in a good way," she says.*

PORTRAIT COURTESY ROWLAND+BROUGHTON





**When you talk to Sarah Broughton, the word “exciting” just keeps popping up.**

The Aspen- and Denver-based architect—who launched Rowland+Broughton with her husband and partner, John Rowland, 15 years ago—radiates enthusiasm for her firm’s achievements in architecture, urban design and interior design.

“There’s been a constant striving for excellence and pushing great design and being innovative with new building materials,” Broughton explains. “It’s design that is based on good proportion, good scale, timeless materials, great natural light—something that doesn’t go out of fashion, and therefore has legacy to it,” she says.

With an impressive slate of commercial, residential and hospitality projects in the works—including a renovation of the Hotel Jerome and the old *Aspen Times* building, as well as Aspen’s brand-new W Hotel—R+B welcomes new challenges while staying true to its

local roots. “In the last 15 years we’ve gone away from a heavy mountain vernacular, and things have really gone to the more contemporary,” Broughton notes. “I think it’s going a little too far in that direction, personally, right now. It’s really important as designers and architects and clients that we respond to context, and really study and understand what we’re designing to and for, and not just the latest trend,” she says. Case in point: R+B’s plan for the W Hotel, which infuses Aspen’s vintage Austrian chalet aesthetic with a modern sensibility. “What was really important to us is keeping that ski heritage vocabulary,” Broughton says. >>

*ABOVE, LEFT: R+B’s modern transformation of this lodge-style home retained the traditional gables, but replaced the end walls with glass. ABOVE, RIGHT: To update this 1969 cliffside home for the 21st century, R+B restored its outstanding original features while making sensitive contemporary adaptations to enhance indoor-outdoor flow.*

PHOTOS FROM LEFT: NICK JOHNSON, BRENT MOSS



Responding to social and environmental needs is an R+B priority. “We have high sustainability goals,” Broughton explains. “Whenever we are presented with a project, we try to understand if something can be reused,” she says. “Over 60 percent of our work is renovation, and we feel that often that is the most sustainable thing that you can do.” Putting their principles into practice, Rowland+Broughton is adapting the historic Mesa Building to become their 24-person Aspen headquarters, while their 16-person Denver office is housed in a restored 19th-century coffee beanery in LoDo.

As a design leader, Broughton takes mentorship seriously. “It’s part of my day, every day,” she says. The Rowland + Broughton team is nearly 50 percent female. Broughton explains, “We all know that having multi-culture, multi-gender ways of looking at things is super

*BELOW, LEFT: The Rowland + Broughton team designed Matsuhisa’s Denver (Cherry Creek) restaurant with an understated, natural elegance inspired by Japan. BELOW, RIGHT: For a new home in an historic Aspen neighborhood, R+B created a sleek, modern interpretation of Victorian gable, porch and patterned siding traditions. Pocket doors open to the terrace.*

important, so I’ve always seen it as a benefit.” The guidelines for success at R+B are simple and straightforward. “Regardless of whether you’re a woman or a man: Be prepared, do your homework, don’t take it lightly, and come to the table ready to contribute,” Broughton says.

It may sound old-fashioned, but the R+B brand of responsible citizenship fueled by hard work just might be the key to the firm’s future success. “We definitely feel a stewardship to the community, to the environment,” Broughton says with her trademark exuberance. “That actually excites us; we like that challenge,” she says. “It’s thrilling.” ○

[rowlandbroughton.com](http://rowlandbroughton.com)

PHOTOS BRENT MOSS

