

Trula Remson, AIA

The first woman president of AIA Baton Rouge and AIA Louisiana, Trula Remson, AIA, proved her mettle by deftly guiding the state's architects through the Hurricane Katrina response and recovery. Remson served as an outspoken public advocate for the profession, successfully bringing architects to the forefront of the debate on rebuilding the Crescent City and the Gulf Coast, and a lifeline to those who lost their homes, their offices, and their firms. Now, Remson, along with her partner Sam Herpin and partner-husband Chris Remson, is at the forefront of local re-envisioning and rebuilding.

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Firm: Remson-Haley-Herpin Architects

Education: Bachelor of Architecture from Louisiana State University.

Hobbies: Sailing and gardening.

Last book read: The House of Medici. Christopher Hibbert wrote it. We're going to Italy next month so I've been reading a lot about Italian architecture and families.

Favorite place: I think it's home, which is Bogalusa, La. It's where I spent the first 18 years of my life. I have to go there every once in a while to center myself.

Work philosophy: Every project we do is unique and it's a search beyond the obvious solution.

Why you do what you do: I think design is very important, particularly the built environment, and I think that



architects have the potential to make a huge effect on the places that we live. It excites me to see it happen and be part of that change, and we get to do it every day. That gets me really energized about coming to work, and it's the same with AIA. I think that architects are, by our training, programmed to be problem solvers, and we really should be so much more involved in public office because we have the skills that it takes to be really good leaders, but we have our heads down so much working that I don't think we realize the potential that we hold to help our communities.

Professional inspiration: Doug Ashe. Doug was on the [AIA National] Board. He's been a Gulf States director, and I've worked with him quite a lot at our state chapter. Doug is just so passionate about what he does—about everything he does whether it's work, or AIA, or raising his child. He just seems to enjoy every minute of it and he does

a good job at everything he does. He's really inspirational to me.

Greatest challenge: I think it's probably dealing with compromise. You come up with a solution—and it's a great solution and it's feasible—and then to have it watered down by others. Sometimes it's hard to convince the developer, for instance, that the solution you've come up with is the best because there's an aesthetic element to it, and it frustrates me that that element is sometimes undervalued. People don't want to pay extra for it to look good.

Most rewarding project: Right now we're working on a condominium project in New Orleans, and it's not even out of the ground yet, but it's really been a fun project because we're helping to envision what the rebuilding of New Orleans is going to be like. It's going to have to be a vertical community because they are landlocked, and we have to build on high places. To conceive of a vertical community, how do you make it better? How do you make it have the pedestrian life that all of the great little streets have that we're used to seeing? I've really enjoyed the challenge.

Practice tip for colleagues: Realize that the service that you provide is very valuable. I think that a lot of architects feel shy for some reason about realizing the value of their service and charging appropriately for it. Realize that good design is good business and design every project like it was yours. Then make a good living at it and enjoy it.

DOER'S PROFILE

Advice for young and future archi-

tecs: To me, if you have a passion for architecture and buildings, then it's a great profession. Being married to my partner is one of the best things because we speak the same vocabulary. Everybody doesn't have that luxury, but I think if you have a passion for architecture, it'll never be a job. But if you don't, it's going to be a tough job. So, if you love it, do it and don't let anybody talk you out of it. But another great thing about architecture is that there are so many different ways you can go. You don't just have to do design. When you have an architectural background, there are a lot of options for you.

Next on the horizon: We want to be our own client. We're interested in doing some development around Baton Rouge and building better places for people to live. We're really involved in the redevelopment of downtown Baton Rouge. There's a lot of housing going up in downtown, but it's all high-end housing, and we're trying to find a way to do some more affordable housing. We think that will help revitalize downtown.

—Heather Livingston