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## 2026 AIA Fellowship

Candidate     Gianna Lisa Pigford  
Organization   Stantec  
Location       Celina, Texas  
Chapter        AIA Texas Society of Architects; AIA Dallas

### Category of Nomination

Object 5 (Alternative Career, Service to Society, Volunteer Work) > Service to Society

### Summary Statement

Gianna Pigford changes the face of architecture by founding enduring mentorship pipelines, advancing equity policy, building thriving organizations, and inspiring underrepresented youth and professionals - leaving a measurable, sustainable legacy of inclusion, leadership, and community transformation.

### Education

Mississippi State University, 1994-2000, Bachelor of Architecture

### Licensed in:

Registered Architect, Texas - 23009 (02/28/2012)

Registered Architect, Mississippi - 4154 (04/17/2007)

### Employment

Principal and Program Manager - Stantec, Plano, Texas – 2019 to Present

Design Program Manager - Starbucks, Dallas, Texas – 2018 to 2018

Project Architect and Manager - Gensler, Dallas, Texas – 2004 to 2018

Project Coordinator - Foil-Wyatt Architects & Planners, P.A., Jackson, Mississippi – 2000 to 2004

Intern Architect - Albert and Associates Architects, Hattiesburg, Mississippi – 1999

Intern Architect - Gresham, Smith, and Partners, Nashville, Tennessee – 1998 to 1999



October 7, 2025

Sanford Garner, FAIA  
Chair, 2026 Jury of Fellows  
The American Institute of Architects  
1735 New York Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Chair Garner and Esteemed Members of the Jury:

I firmly advocate for the elevation of Gianna L. Pigford, AIA, to the College of Fellows under Object Five—Service to Society because Gianna is a trailblazer and a rarity — a true “first” in her own right. Few leaders have contributed more significantly and broadly to equity and inclusion than Gianna. Recognizing her would be a wonderful opportunity for the AIA to celebrate her remarkable work and contribution to the profession.

Her transformative leadership has consistently shone since 2007 when I first met her. She made history as Mississippi’s first African American woman licensed architect, and she later became Texas’s fourth. Now, as a principal at Stantec, Gianna exemplifies design excellence fused with an unwavering commitment to civic leadership, project management, forging a legacy that will inspire future generations.

Gianna has greatly influenced her community and profession through her leadership in various organizations that serve different parts and groups within our field. She revitalized the NOMA Dallas–Fort Worth Chapter in 2012 with just six members, earning the NOMA Most Improved Chapter of the Year award in 2017 while she was Chapter Vice-President. As President she led the charge to increase membership, which is now over 150 members. She also brought Black Women Architects’ Brunch (BWA) to Dallas after noticing how few of us there were and wanted to create a space for us to gather and connect. She has hosted BWA for the past four years, with 38 attendees at the 2025 event last month, marking the largest gathering of Black women in architecture in Dallas. Gianna continually seeks ways to close gaps in mentorship and support for Black women in architecture. Additionally, through initiatives like the Hip Hop Architecture Camp and the NOMA Project Pipeline, she has introduced underserved students to design thinking and civic responsibility, inspiring the next generation of architects.

In practice, Gianna launched Gensler Dallas’s Licensure Network, significantly increasing participation in the Architect Registration Examination (ARE) and laying a strong foundation for future architects. Her role as an at-large representative on the AIA Strategic Council, NCARB Experience Committee Chair, and TxA EDI Committee Chair allowed her to shape national and regional policy, where she successfully championed initiatives that promoted equity and access within the profession, including the development of mentorship programs and advocacy for more inclusive licensing requirements.

Gianna’s numerous accolades, including the *Dallas Business Journal’s* 40 Under 40 and the 2022 Texas Society of Architects John S. Chase FAIA Award for Equitable Practice, highlight her remarkable contributions. Yet the truest measure of her work is seen in revitalized organizations, strengthened licensure pathways, and a constantly expanding community of young architects she has welcomed into our profession.

Not elevating Gianna would be a missed opportunity to connect AIA’s highest honor with its essential values—equity, access, mentorship, and public service. Celebrating Gianna L. Pigford as a Fellow would not only strengthen the College but also make it more relevant and inspiring to members and the community.

I urge you wholeheartedly to elevate Gianna L. Pigford, AIA, to the College of Fellows under Object Five—Service to Society.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charyl F. McAfee-Duncan".

Charyl F. McAfee-Duncan, FAIA, NOMAC  
President, McAfee3 Architecture + Design  
Past President, DFW NOMA (2017 Most Improved Chapter of the Year)  
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**McAfee3 Architecture + Design**

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## 1 Summary

### OBJECT FIVE: SERVICE TO SOCIETY

***Gianna Pigford changes the face of architecture by founding enduring mentorship pipelines, advancing equity policy, building thriving organizations, and inspiring under-represented youth and professionals— leaving a measurable, sustainable legacy of inclusion, leadership, and community transformation.***

#### PIPELINE AND MENTORSHIP LEADERSHIP

Gianna Pigford's legacy in the profession starts with developing impactful mentorship and youth engagement pipelines. She has transformed Dallas's future talent pool by creating and leading programs like the Hip Hop Architecture Camp and DFW NOMA Project Pipeline, which have introduced over eighty underrepresented students to the power of design. Her long-term commitment to mentoring through the ACE Mentor Program, CREW Dallas Careers (where she developed the curriculum for public schools), and Girl Scouts Cookie Box Creations has reached more than 150 girls in the region. Gianna connects with students as a visible role model, showing that careers in architecture are both possible and achievable. Her approach inspires, builds essential skills, and creates a pipeline of returning youth—many of whom go on to study architecture and take on leadership roles. These programs are now embedded in the community, sustained by the successors she has mentored, ensuring each generation embraces diversity and empowerment more strongly than the last.

#### EQUITY AND POLICY ADVOCACY

Throughout her career, Gianna has driven systemic change, transforming lived experience into leadership and policy action for the entire profession. As the first chair of the Texas Society of Architects' EDI Task Force, she authored the organization's first equity policy. She organized the state's first all-minority keynote lineup, shifting mindsets from mere compliance to genuine opportunity. Within Gensler, she founded and led the Dallas licensure network, creating a playbook that was adopted by national peers and increased the number of firm licensure candidates tenfold within a year. As national chair of the NCARB Experience Committee, Gianna directly influenced AXP guidelines, impacting every emerging architect in the United States. She has served as the equity connector for the AIA National Strategic Council, ensuring EDI is integrated into all strategic areas rather than isolated. In every board role—from NOMA National to ULI Women's Leadership Initiative and CoreNet North Texas—she has consistently raised standards for inclusion and turned policy into everyday action.

#### ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Gianna excels not only in starting programs but also in rebuilding and sustaining organizations for the long term. She revived DFW NOMA after six years of dormancy, increasing membership from five to over forty-five, developing strong bylaws, and establishing a succession pipeline that regularly introduces new leaders. Her leadership in ULI's Dallas Women's Leadership Initiative transformed a shrinking committee from three to more than twenty active members,

creating legacy structures for women of color to lead at both local and national levels. Gianna's approach, combining urgency with foundational systems, ensures her impact endures beyond her direct involvement. She builds boards, implements systems, and leverages her role as the first licensed Black woman architect in Mississippi to inspire, recruit, and mentor future leaders. Her communities and organizations are not only stronger because of her service but also positioned for sustainable growth, inclusion, and ongoing transformation.

*“Gianna is a powerful catalyst for change within the profession. Through her unwavering commitment to advocacy, mentorship, and equity, she has not only reshaped the architecture profession but has redefined who sees themselves within it. She consistently answers the call to serve, offering her time, voice, and leadership to advance the profession. Through tireless volunteer efforts with youth from under served communities, she opens eyes to what's possible. By centering leadership and activism, she removes systemic barriers and builds bridges for those historically excluded, ensuring the path to licensure and leadership is more visible, inclusive, and accessible for the next generation of diverse architects. Her presence and influence leave an indelible mark on all she touches.”*

Nixon Exantus, AIA  
RS&H Vice President, Building Services Division  
Leader and DFW NOMA President 2023-2024

## 2 Curriculum Vitae

**Gianna Pigford** is the first African-American woman licensed to practice architecture in Mississippi. Currently a successful architect in Texas, she is one of the most prominent, persistent, and effective leaders addressing the profession's significant diversity challenges. To confront the issue from a multitude of angles, Gianna engages with AIA and a wide range of AEC industry organizations at the national, regional, and local levels as well as with community-based organizations that provide mentorship and outreach to marginalized youth. As she advocates for more inclusive and equitable workplaces, she also prepares the next generation of architects and industry leaders. Because African-American women represent fewer than one percent of architects in the US, empowering young Black women and clearing a path for them to envision and pursue a career in architecture is essential for the future of the profession. Gianna is an award-winning national leader among her peers and finds profound joy in servant leadership.

### Professional Experience

Principal and Program Manager  
**Stantec | Plano, TX | 2019 - present**

Design Program Manager  
**Starbucks | Dallas, TX | 2018 - 2018**

Project Architect and Manager  
**Gensler | Dallas, TX | 2004 - 2018**

Project Coordinator  
**Foil-Wyatt Architects & Planners | Jackson, MS | 2000 - 2004**

Intern Architect  
**Albert and Associates Architects | Hattiesburg, MS | 1999**

Intern Architect  
**Gresham, Smith, and Partners | Nashville, TN | 1998 - 1999**

### Professional Background

Bachelor of Architecture  
**Mississippi State University | Mississippi State, MS | 2020**

Certificate in Leadership, Cox School of Business Program  
**Southern Methodist University | Dallas, TX | 2012**

Registered Architect  
**Texas | #23009 | 2012**

Registered Architect  
**Mississippi | #4154 | 2007**

Construction Document Technologist  
**2006**

LEED Accredited Professional, BD+C  
**2004**

National Council of Architectural Registration Boards  
**1998**

### Professional Affiliations and Leadership Roles

#### AIA (National) | Current

Strategic Council, At-Large Representative (elected), 2021 - 2022

Collaborative Achievement Jury, Chair, 2022

#### Texas Society of Architects (TxA) | Current

Nominating Committee, 2022

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee, 2020

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Taskforce, Chair, 2017 - 2018

Young Public Awareness Committee, Member, 2014 - 2015

#### AIA Dallas | Current

VP Secretary Board of Directors, 2025

Community Honors Committee, Member, 2025

VP Treasurer Board of Directors, 2023 - 2024

Website Taskforce, 2022

Ex-Officio Board Member, 2021 - 2022

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Taskforce, 2020 - 2021

*Columns* Advisory Board, Member, 2018 - 2020

Nominating Committee, Member, 2018

### Professional Affiliations, continued

Programs Taskforce, Member, 2017

Education Outreach Committee, Member 2016

RETROSPECT Committee, Member 2013 - 2014

Tour of Homes, Volunteer, 2012 - 2014

Emerging Leaders, Member, 2010

#### National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) | Current

Past-President, Dallas Chapter, 2019 - 2020

President, Dallas Chapter, 2018

Vice President, Dallas Chapter, 2016 - 2017

Membership Committee, National, 2015

Secretary, Dallas Chapter, 2014 - 2015

Recording Secretary, National, 2013 - 2014

#### National Council of Architectural Registration Boards | Current

Program Continuum Advisory Committee, 2020

Experience Committee, Chair, 2019 - 2020

Experience Committee, Member, 2017 - 2018

Think Tank, Essay Reviewer, 2017 - 2019

Experience Advisory Committee, Member, 2016-2017

#### CoreNet Global North Texas | 2019 - 2024

Past-President, Chapter, 2024

President, Chapter, 2023

Vice President, Chapter, 2022

Vice President-Elect, Chapter, 2021

EMPOWER Committee, Advisor, 2021

EMPOWER Committee, Diversity & Inclusion, Chair, 2020

Golf Committee, Chair, 2019 - 2020

#### Urban Land Institute | 2019 - 2025

WLI Executive Committee, National, 2021 - 2023

WLI 10th Anniversary Committee, National, 2022

WLI Innovation Grant Review Committee, National, 2022

DEI Exchange and Council Committees, National, 2020 - 2022

WLI Executive Committee, Chair, DFW Chapter, 2020

Programs Committee, Member, DFW Chapter, 2016 - 2017

## 2.1 Significant Work



### CHAMPION FOR FUTURE PIPELINE

#### DFW NOMA Project Pipeline camp

Volunteer | 2021 and 2023

Organizer and Host | 2020

*Project Pipeline guides students through all stages of design using provoking and fun exercises, including drawing and model building, analyzing through diagramming and research, and engaging through interviews and site visits. At the end of the camp, students present a fully realized project that addresses an issue in their city.*

In 2020 Gianna organized and hosted the first DFW NOMA Project Pipeline camp, an architecture summer camp for middle and high school students. Several students from the 2018 Hip Hop Architecture Camp returned to participate and learn more about architecture and plan to pursue architecture courses in high school and college. Gianna created the curriculum, solicited sponsorships and marketing, hosted parent introductory sessions, compiled and delivered camp supplies, and trained and organized the volunteers.

Gianna returned as a Project Pipeline camp volunteer in 2021 and 2023 to continue her mentorship and outreach to future architects. Both camps have brought together over 20 volunteers to educate and serve more than 50 students, with many students returning for the second year of camp. This is remarkable in that both camps were held in a virtual forum due to the circumstances caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic. The momentum set in place by these two camps have led to DFW NOMA instituting a Project Pipeline board of director's chair position and

committee, insuring Project Pipeline camps continue to provide a vehicle by which student participants matriculate into the profession.

Project Pipeline presented its fifth camp this year and has expanded to a three day event. The lasting effect is that we now have several of the first year camp participants now entering college to pursue an architecture education.

#### Hip Hop Architecture Camp

Advocate, Organizer, Facilitator , and Sponsor | 2018

*Hip Hop Architecture Camp is a hands-on curriculum for middle schoolers that uses hip hop culture as a tool for introducing underrepresented youth to architecture, urban design, and planning.*

Minority students are underrepresented in architecture schools, resulting in fewer minorities entering the profession. The award-winning camp begins to unravel the injustices of blight, poverty, and lack of affordable housing in marginalized communities. Students see these every day but don't have the means to challenge or address them. Through the camp, they see for the first time the role architects, designers, and policy makers play in organizing cities, neighborhoods, and communities. Students can see that they hold a place in society and why it is essential for their voices to be heard in decisions that determine how communities and neighborhoods develop. Additionally, architecture is overlaid on the deconstruction of song lyrics to relate to space and forms and how those can translate to buildings, roads, and parks.

## 2.1 Significant Work

In 2018, Gianna brought the camp to Dallas. Several previous attempts had failed when local advocates realized they were responsible for funding camp costs, securing volunteers, and identifying students. One main sponsor pledged \$5,000 if Gianna could obtain additional sponsors and organize the camp. When everyone who had initially expressed interest in organizing the camp backed out, Gianna found two additional facilitators to meet weekly and assist with planning and community outreach. As the economy began to slow down, few corporate sponsors were interested. Gianna negotiated discounts on the facility rent and convinced the Dallas Parks & Recreation department to partner and provide the Juanita J. Craft Recreation Center's Technology Center, which offered seminar space with computers, sound studio, and 3D printers.

Ultimately, she secured \$12,500 in monetary and in-kind donations, which was more than double the initial goal, and 25 volunteers from area design firms, college students, high school teachers, and sponsors. These volunteers would rotate in and out throughout each event day, providing diversity in career focus and ethnicity.

Thirty-eight kids from all across the Metroplex attended the camp with 10 to 15 volunteers assisting each day. Gianna coordinated with camp founder Michael Ford on the curriculum and transformed the camp from an one week-long session to four consecutive Saturdays to accommodate the school schedule, which changed the format, materials, and curriculum. The students learned about architecture from the basics of forms, shapes, and space to ultimately

creating a place that would revitalize their neighborhood. They designed everything from theaters to housing. They also created a rap song together that spoke to what they were doing for Dallas. The top vocalists were awarded various prizes and highlighted in the final rap video. Their song was titled "Unity in the Community", which is apropos for their very participation in the camp, as it united a community.

Recently Gianna received news that one of the students in the program has entered college majoring in Architecture.

### CREW Dallas Careers

#### Architect Contributor | 2016 - 2017

*CREW Dallas Careers is a scholastic mentoring program with the Commercial Real Estate Women organization in Dallas. The program informs female students on possible real estate industry-related careers, including architecture.*

Gianna developed the CREW Careers curriculum, spoke at high schools, provided the building programs, and mentored students on event day. Most students attended the public school system, which offers no architecture or design education opportunities. Some 94 percent of students in the Dallas public school system are African-American or Hispanic, and because this program is limited to female students, it creates a powerful support system for minority women to enter the profession. The program culminated with a competition that gave participants a real-life introduction to careers in architecture, design, construction, and real estate. As a Black woman, Gianna was sought after by the girls for one-on-one conversations, to connect with someone who understands the dynamics of their cultural and societal pressures.



## 2.1 Significant Work

*"AIA Dallas views the opportunity to work with Girl Scout Cookie Box Creation Program as a way to promote the value of architecture to young women as well as the general public. The winning exhibit comes to the gallery at the Dallas Center for Architecture and is a conversation piece for members, allied organizations and the public."*

Paula Clements, Hon. TxA  
Former AIA Dallas Executive Director



### Girl Scouts of America North Texas Cookie Box Creations

Design Team Lead, STEM Mentor | 2009 - 2015

*Cookie Box Creations is a six-month program for girls between ages 12 and 15 with interest in an A/E profession that teams girls with women architects and engineers in a design contest to turn empty Girl Scout cookie boxes into free-standing structures.*

After hearing of this program, Gianna knew that there were few women of color to participate and mentor. Thus, it was vital for her to participate and offer the opportunity for more young girls to see themselves represented as a STEM professional. Gianna encouraged other design professionals to dedicate their time to mentorship. And as team leader, Gianna structured the program's volunteer opportunities to best work with active women professional's schedules.

Gianna mentored and coached her teams' critical thinking and problem-solving throughout the design process. Competing teams are evaluated by prominent judges in categories that include creativity of design, difficulty of engineering, use of color, and alignment with STEM initiatives. Gianna's 2011 team won first place in the final competition. The program offers girls an understanding of architecture and the design professions, as well as a basis for developing their careers.

### ACE Mentor Program

Volunteer Mentor | 2011 - 2013

*The ACE Mentor program works with high school students to encourage careers in architecture, engineering, and*

*construction through mentoring.*

Gianna mentored high school juniors and seniors weekly during the school year. She guided them in understanding spatial requirements, developing site analysis, building program, design, documentation, and presentation skills. She conducted construction site visits and instructed students in hands-on project problem-solving tasks. She also assisted with fundraising for scholarships awarded at the end of each program year. With the mentorship and scholarship assistance, many students have gone on to complete architecture school and begin their careers in the architecture profession.

*"Few are as committed in their professional, personal and outreach work, taking clear steps to empower current and future minority design professionals, as Gianna is. From her extended work as a Principal in Stantec where she leads and creates programming for the BLK and Women in Stantec employee resource groups, among others; to her leadership roles in local, state and national boards, and her hands-on approach with Hip-Hop Architecture and NOMA's Project Pipeline directly with K-12 students; Gianna has changed the face of design circles welcoming thousands of voices, including myself and my high school students, into the conversation."*

Oswaldo Rivera-Ortiz, Associate AIA  
2025 AIA Associate of the Year and Former Dallas  
ISD Careers and Technical Education Instructor

## 2.1 Significant Work



*"True leaders like Gianna don't create more followers, they create more leaders. I am thankful for Gianna's mentorship and encouragement to become licensed and to join the AIA emerging leaders class."*

Ashlee Paar Richardson, AIA  
Gensler Senior Associate



### MENTOR TO EMERGING PROFESSIONALS

#### National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB)

Experience Committee, Chair | 2019 - 2020  
Experience Committee | 2016 - 2020  
Program Continuum Advisory Committee | 2020  
Think Tank Essay Reviewer | 2017 - 2019  
Experience Advisory Committee, Member | 2016 - 2017

*The NCARB Experience Committee charged with overseeing the development delivery, and assessment of the Architectural Experience Program (AXP) for use by the 55 licensing boards in the US.*

As a member of the advisory committee, Gianna revised AXP guidelines, clarified language, updated marketing protocols, added supervisor instructions, and improved alignment with NCARB's examination and education requirements. For three years, she also reviewed essays of Think Tank applicants and advised on staff liaison selections.

With four years of service to the Experience Committee, Gianna impacted how the AXP transformed to better align with how architects practice in a more fluid professional career. She also played an influential part in the roll-out of new supervisor training, guidelines, and marketing strategy for the institution. To ensure the continuum of the discussion between the Experience, Education, and Examination committees, Gianna was asked to serve on the inaugural Program Continuum Advisory Committee. This committee convened to evaluate and make recommendations for NCARB standards and programs.

#### Gensler Licensure Network

Co-founder, Mentor, Coach | 2006 - 2018

Gianna created an ARE toolkit that provided study material and motivation for ARE candidates, recognizing candidates and their exam process whether they passed or failed. As a founding member of the Gensler Dallas architectural licensure team, she ensured that all licensure candidates in the office had a formidable network of resources and mentors to guide them through their examination process. As a result, 30 of the office's architecture staff became registered architects in the first year alone and many joined the network as mentors to their colleagues. This involvement led to Gianna serving on the NCARB Experience Committee, where she could further her endeavors to champion licensure at the highest levels.

#### Gensler L.I.N.K. Mentor Program

Founder | 2009

Gianna created this mentorship program which connects office leaders with junior staff after her own experience left her without a mentor. The program aligns senior staff with junior staff and includes educating staff on the difference between mentors and coaches and what expectations both mentors and mentees should have. Gianna led introductions to the program and offered speed-mentoring sessions to assist staff with finding mentors.

This program affected the junior staff the most in that they saw a means to engage office leaders outside of project work. This set a baseline for staff engagement and galvanized Associates and Senior Associates to play a bigger role in mentorship and not just coaching.

## 2.1 Significant Work

### TESTIMONIAL STATEMENTS FROM THOSE GIANNA HAS MENTORED

*“Gianna was an extraordinary mentor at the start of my career, and I would not have had as strong a foundation without her guidance and encouragement. She supported me through the licensure process in a way that made it far less intimidating, helping me approach each step with confidence. Beyond my own experience, her leadership and unwavering commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion have opened meaningful pathways into the profession for countless aspiring architects. Gianna’s impact exemplifies the spirit of fellowship—uplifting others, expanding access, and ensuring that architecture is visible, inclusive, and attainable for all.*

*As I reflect on my career, I know it is not mine alone—it has been shaped by the many people who have guided and supported me along the way. Gianna is among those mentors, and I am deeply grateful for the role she played in my growth. I am proud to attribute much of my success to her guidance and encouragement, and I am honored to share my career with her.”*

Nathaniel Pall, AIA  
Quinn Evans Senior Architect

*“Gianna has been an amazing colleague and friend during our years serving together at AIA and NOMA.*

*She is a role model to so many of her peers as they strive to become emerging professionals in the field of Architecture. Her dedication and service to AIA and her colleagues by mentorships, planning events, and leadership is inspiring to many others and myself.”*

Kirsten Griffin, Associate AIA, NOMA  
HKS Associate and 2025 Texas Society of Architects  
Associate of the Year

*“Gianna has been an exceptional mentor, offering both personal guidance and professional insight that has greatly influenced my growth within AIA and beyond.*

*Her unwavering dedication to advocating for diverse voices and fostering mentorship within AIA, NOMA, and Stantec demonstrates her commitment to empowering the next generation of architects from underrepresented communities. Gianna’s personal mentorship has been invaluable to my own professional and AIA journey - her guidance has shaped both my growth and engagement within the profession. I’ve also witnessed her deep, intentional commitment to mentorship within AIA, NOMA, and Stantec, where she consistently uplifts others and creates space for underrepresented voices to thrive.”*

Samantha Markham, AIA  
Stantec Senior Associate and 2025 Texas Society of  
Architects Young Architect of the Year

*“Gianna has been a transformational force in my career and in the lives of so many young professionals entering the field. Her mentorship with me went far beyond project deadline, she taught me how to think critically, design responsibly, and lead with intention. She sat beside me during long nights, sketching details by hand so I could truly understand how a building came together. Gianna walked with me through the licensure process and empowered me to become a licensed architect and coached me as a young project architect on my first project. Her leadership inspired us to co-create a program that supports emerging professionals on the path to licensure, just one of many examples of how she opens doors for others.*

*Through her unwavering advocacy and commitment to equity in our profession, she has redefined what it means to lead. Gianna doesn’t just mentor, she multiplies mentorship.” architect and coached me as a young project architect on my first project. Her leadership inspired us to co-create a program that supports emerging professionals on the path to licensure, just one of many examples of how she opens doors for others.*

*Through her unwavering advocacy and commitment to equity in our profession, she has redefined what it means to lead. Gianna doesn’t just mentor, she multiplies mentorship.”*

Shannon Bearden, AIA, RID, NCARB, LEED  
Dunaway Vice President

## 2.1 Significant Work



*"It is very easy to list involvement in various organizations but, of more importance is Gianna's impact on both the architectural profession and community at-large. More than being a member of NOMA, AIA Dallas and the Texas Society of Architects, Gianna is a role model, particularly for both, women and all students of color that aspire to the profession. In her capacity as a project architect, Gianna is a role model for all architects, regardless of race or gender."*

Kevin M. Holland, FAIA, NOMAC  
k.michael architects. Los Angeles

## ADVOCATE FOR EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

### American Institute of Architects

Strategic Council At-Large Representative | 2021 - 2022  
Collaborative Achievement Jury Chair | 2022

In 2020, Gianna was urged to do more for the profession in light of the heightened anti-racism movement which she saw as a call to action. As a result, she self-nominated and was elected to the AIA Strategic Council to serve two terms beginning in 2021. Gianna's Council role was as Connector for the Equitable Communities Area of Impact in 2021. The Area of Impact is a prevailing course of action that is important to the future-focused strategic council. As Connector, Gianna's role was meant to coalesce the current four Areas of Study to ensure the convening councilors discuss how these areas of study impact the equity of the communities in which architecture is meant to serve. These Areas of Study are, Rural + Suburban Agenda, Housing + Infrastructure, Mental Health + Architecture, and Technology Impacting Practice. Gianna's focus was to look at the entire body of work that the Council produces, make the needed connections, identify opportunities to break down silos between the Areas of Study, and create opportunities for more discourse and discovery to happen.

The resultant has meant that at every opportunity, all Councilors have kept equity at the forefront of mind when creating the vision for the Institute's Board of Directors to undertake. As Connector, Gianna is able to direct this discussion while attending Grassroots, engaging the 2021 Steering Committee, Hudson AIA

Visibility Network, Annual Business Meeting, Regional Caucus, and various Council meetings and calls. In her 2022 term Gianna advocated for equi

Gianna continues to advocate for the AIA and the role the Strategic Council plays in its organizational structure. Her service was recognized in 2022 as an Louise Blanchard Bethune Fellow by AIA.

### Texas Society of Architects (TxA)

Board of Directors Nominating Committee | 2022  
EDI Committee, Member | 2020  
EDI Taskforce, Chair | 2018 - 2019  
Young Public Awareness Committee, Member | 2014 - 2015

As the first chair of this taskforce Gianna led a state-wide team of architects to produced TxA's first ever diversity statement, provided a database of future conference keynote speakers that were more diverse and inclusive than in years past, coordinated workshops and speaking engagements to educate the membership body, and created a database for organizational leadership to build a more diverse and equitable future. Thanks to her work, the entire slate of keynote speakers for the 2018 statewide convention consisted of minorities for the first time.

In 2020, Gianna pushed TxA to include clearly defined actionable items in the statement it issued in response to the murder of George Floyd. The items included implicit bias and leadership training for the board of directors and committee leaders, reforming the nomination process, identifying its standards of merit, and creating partnerships with NOMA and Texas universities. In addition, the statement acknowledged

## 2.1 Significant Work

*“After I realized that I had to build my seat at the table, I started crafting the architecture career I was always meant to have. Not because I chose this path, but it became a necessity. If I were to survive and thrive in this profession as a whole person, I had to champion the work environment and challenge the industry constructs that determine why others see more success. This advocate’s path is necessary, but not just for me to engage the career I always wanted. It is one made necessary for me to travel to broaden the way behind me. I may not get to the heights that the profession can take you, but I certainly can cut down some trees and clear the debris that clutters the path for future BIPOC in this profession. I didn’t get to choose this journey; I was born into it.”*

the frustration and anger of Black colleagues. TxA has begun to implement more equitable policies as the profession emerges from the pandemic. The Award for Equitable Practice in Architecture in honor of John S. Chase jr. FAIA was realized from the efforts of the EDI Committee. And in 2022, Gianna herself was a recipient of the award. Gianna called for action from TxA to increase the number of minorities nominated and elected to the Board of Directors. As a result, Gianna was asked to serve on the 2022 TxA Nominating Committee to establish new nominating rules and guidelines. She and the committee nominated the organization’s first black regional component President in its history and his very diverse board members.

### AIA Dallas

VP Secretary Board of Directors | 2025  
 Community Honors Committee Member | 2025  
 VP Treasurer Board of Directors | 2023 - 2024  
 Website Taskforce | 2022  
 Ex-Officio Board Member | 2021 - 2022  
 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Taskforce | 2020 - 2022  
 Columns Advisory Board, Member | 2018 - 2020  
 Nominating Committee, Member | 2018  
 Programs Taskforce, Member | 2017  
 Education Outreach Committee, Member | 2016  
 RETROSPECT Committee, Member | 2013 - 2014  
 Tour of Homes, Volunteer | 2012 - 2014

Gianna has provided leadership and service for a wide range of AIA Dallas activities, including the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion taskforce, Dallas Tour of Homes, portfolio workshop, Retrospect committee, Education Outreach committee, Programs taskforce,

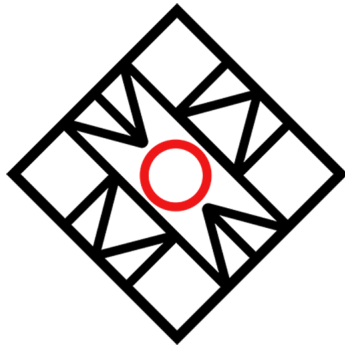
Nominating committee, and thought leadership presentations. As a member of the 2010 Emerging Leaders Program she participated in Advocates for Architecture Day at the state capitol in Austin to lay the foundation for stronger relationships with lawmakers, and returned again in 2025. With the heightened attack on equitable practice and the legislative actions affecting the prosperity and practice of architecture, Gianna felt it important to be a represented minority extending her advocacy at the state level.

As a member of the *Columns* advisory board, which oversees the component’s quarterly magazine, she advocated for including topics addressing diversity and minority community issues such as redlining, placement of expressways, and other elements that define the Dallas architecture community. Her point of view reduced the echo chamber that is the editorial staff and advisory board. As member of AIA’s Strategic Council, she was asked to join the AIA Dallas Board of Directors as an ex-officio member, serving as Strategic Council Liaison. She advocates for more minority voices to be included on the board, recognized in award nominations, and promoted to committee leadership positions.

In past three years, Gianna has served on the AIA Dallas executive committee creating and transforming policies that not only shape the chapter but provides opportunity for emerging professionals, seasoned professionals, and the community to understand how they all partner to develop and sustain an environment where the architecture profession can thrive.



## 2.1 Significant Work



### ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

#### National Organization of Minority Architects

##### NOMA National

Member | 2007 - present

Membership Committee | 2015

Executive Board of Directors, Recording Secretary | 2013 - 2014

##### DFW NOMA

Past-President | 2019 - 2020

President | 2018

Vice President | 2016 - 2017

Secretary | 2015

Member | 2007 - 2009

##### Mississippi State University NOMA Student Chapter

President | 1997

Founding member | 1996

Secretary | 1996

Gianna co-founded the NOMAS chapter at MSU and served as the national recording secretary for NOMA in 2013 and 2014. In addition to recording all executive board meetings, she coordinated quarterly in-person board meetings, organized the national professional design competition, hosted the juror meeting, presented the award winners at the national convention, and coordinated the presentation of the student design competition winners. She joined the national board to be a conduit from the national organization to the then-defunct Dallas/Ft. Worth chapter. In an effort

to revive the DFW chapter, she began having conversations with former members at the 2014 National NOMA Conference, however, few were interested.

After her time on the national board, she formally re-instated the DFW chapter in 2015 after a six-year hiatus. Having convinced five people—enough to form an executive board—the group began meeting in fall 2014, and by mid-2015 had re-established the chapter by-laws and planned a 2016 chapter relaunch. The first events were social, allowing people to see members in the community. Gianna also brought national board members to Dallas and created a pipeline for leadership in the local chapter. Gianna has served as secretary, vice-president, president, and immediate past-president. She led the community and industry engagement initiatives and organized the team to conduct DFW NOMA's first summer camp in 2020.

At the end of her presidency in 2020, Gianna set in place a leadership pipeline that has led to a now thriving chapter with the largest membership in the national organization's South Region. The chapter has established a scholarship aimed at those members testing for their architectural license which in turn fosters the continuum of licensed architects ready to lead the organization.

In 2025, Gianna has begun a three-year term on her alma mater's School of Architecture Advisory Board, bringing a full circle opportunity to again revisit and reconstitute equitable practices in architecture at the academic level.

## 2.1 Significant Work

*“Gianna is a great advocate for social justice within the field of architecture, herself being one of fewer than 500 Black women architects in America. We, who are part of NOMA’s leadership, are grateful for her leadership within the organization, and fully support her elevation to positions that will enhance her impact.”*

R. Steven Lewis, FAIA, NOMAC former NOMA President, Los Angeles



### Stantec BLK Employee Resource Group (ERG)

Corporate Sponsor | 2025  
NOMA Liaison | 2022 - present  
Member | 2019 - 2022

Gianna has led and organized Stantec to sponsor and support three NOMA Conferences and the local DFW NOMA Project Pipeline with marketing, mentoring, judging, career fairs, and advocating for junior level staff to attend and learn to network, learn, and grow their future leadership abilities.

In 2024, the largest Stantec employee attendance was through Gianna’s role as NOMA Liaison.

Gianna’s unwavering voice and steadfast advocacy for equitable practice and support of the BLK ERG led her to be selected by the Stantec Director of Diversity Compliance to guide the BLK ERG leaders and help develop their yearly programming and initiatives that support the companies employees.

*Gianna remains committed to advocating for diversity in all aspects of the profession and being a visible example of what is possible in a more inclusive future.*

### Urban Land Institute

National Women’s Leadership Initiative (WLI)  
10th Anniversary Committee | 2022  
Innovation Grant Review Committee | 2022  
Executive Committee | 2021 - 2023  
DEI Committee Liaison | 2020 - 2021

National ULI Diversity Equity Inclusion Council | 2020  
National WLI Circles | 2020  
DFW DEI Committee, Member | 2020 - 2023  
DFW Advisory Board, Member | 2019 - 2020

DFW WLI Executive Committee, Chair | 2019 - 2020  
DFW Programs Committee, Member | 2016 - 2017

Gianna was appointed chair of the ULI DFW Women’s Leadership Initiative in recognition of her commitment to empowering women in the commercial real estate development and architecture community. Prior to Gianna taking the helm, the WLI had dwindled to three committee members. She rebuilt the committee to more than 20 members and set in place a pipeline of new women leaders and empowered them to lead and be visible in the commercial real estate community at the local and national level.

In spite of a global pandemic curtailing in-person events, Gianna was able to successfully engage women members via various virtual programs. These included a 5-part presentation series focused on highlighting local women industry leaders, monthly coffee networking event, and creating a women’s speaker’s bureau so other committees could have a directory of women to include on panel discussions. Additionally, she encouraged women to gain the necessary tools, mentorship, and practice public speaking to increase their profile.

On the national WLI level, Gianna served on the DEI Council and as DEI liaison to the WLI Executive Committee. The DEI Council formed as a response to discrimination and systemic oppression affecting the real estate and development industry. Gianna worked within work groups to discern how ULI should tackle the internal and external concerns, as well as telescope the messaging to local District Councils. She developed short-term and long-term goals with the

## 2.1 Significant Work

*"I believe that this workshop will be a fantastic event to equip you with the tools needed to define diversity, recognize and advocate for those who do not feel as they belong, and ultimately redefine how we engage marginalized communities and underrepresented minorities to create a more equitable and inclusive future for our industry. I'll ask you to look around the next time you are at an industry event. It is quite obvious that the real estate industry has a diversity problem. For EMPOWER, we are creating the forum for our CoreNet members and Corporate Real Estate community to break down the barriers that prevent us from addressing racism, ageism, sexism and other elements that hinder the underrepresented members of our body to thrive in their chosen CRE careers. Once we are openly having the conversations and understand the definitions, viewpoints, and have the resources to arm our policy changes, then we can see more reform in CRE education, business practices, hiring and retaining talent, and of course corporate development that is meant to serve all inhabitants and address the history of displacement, gentrification, red-lining and so forth."*

Gianna delivered this statement at the CoreNet North Texas "Deconstructing Equity" workshop she moderated



The Global Association for  
Corporate Real Estate

vision that a plan be put in place to address all facets of the organization. Gianna continues to serve as the national DEI liaison to the WLI EC to ensure the conversations continue and actions are taken.

In her capacity as National WLI Executive Committee member, Gianna directs the DEI dialogue to include the intersection of issues exerted on women of color. As the stage is set for national ULI to host their 2022 Fall Meeting in Dallas and Gianna holds several national and local Dallas board positions, she will serve as the conduit to connect WLI and DEI District Councils from across the globe with intent that they create positive change for the organization's future.

In 2023, in response to need for new direction and addressed the organizations's strategic vision to be more inclusive, there was a need for WLI to redefine it's mission, values, and goals. Gianna was invited to attend a two-day strategy session to redefine the new direction for WLI at the national level with intent that it informs how local district councils and chapter perform.

### CoreNet Global North Texas

Past President | 2024

President | 2023

Vice President | 2022

Vice President-Elect | 2021

EMPOWER Founder and Chair | 2020 - 2021

Golf Committee Co-Chair | 2019 - 2020

Gianna has organized CoreNet's golf tournament and pursued establishing a corporate real estate network to elevate underrepresented minorities. She established EMPOWER at CoreNet Global North Texas as a women's network, and in 2020 it evolved into a

committee to address equity, diversity, and inclusion within the chapter and industry at large. In recognition of the global race reconciliation movement, there was a clear need for the committee to pivot, and Gianna directed the chapter's executive board and committee leadership to focus on the new mission. Gianna moderated a workshop led by Dr. Nita Mosby Tyler to help chapter member become comfortable with the subject matter and learn how to advocate for equitable workspaces.

Additionally, Gianna created an EMPOWER advisory board to guide the conversation and be a sounding board for the chapter's new mission and vision while in service to the organization. EDI was embraced by the executive board and it became the umbrella philosophy for committees, as Gianna set in place an EMPOWER liaison in each committee to advocate and stress the EDI agenda and ensure the chapter's EDI goals are met. It is important that equity, diversity, and inclusion does not begin and end in a singular committee with only a few members held accountable.

Due to Gianna's diligence, over 20 scholarships have been granted and four years of equity, diversity, and inclusion based awards have been given to individuals and companies expressly for their equitable practice. This has allowed space for access, recognition and award of those diverse individuals seeking to pursue a career in commercial real estate professions, and recognize those that are doing great work to challenge and change their spheres of influence and magnify that there are capable practitioners elevating inclusion in their daily work.

## 2.1 Significant Work



### The Links, STEM Academy for Girls, Dallas

Mentor | 2013

Gianna aligned with a network of successful women who have served as mentors and role models under The Links mission to encourage and inform young girls' career decisions in STEM subjects. She led tours of Dallas architecture, engaged in dialogue about the A/E profession and its history, and advised on current STEM curricula. Through this partnership, Gianna was able to reach an underserved network of young women of color and share with them what a path in architecture may look like and what early education choices will help lead to an architecture career.

### Gensler Cup / Boys and Girls Club of Greater Dallas

Volunteer Co-chair | 2011 - 2016

Gianna co-chaired the Gensler Cup, an annual golf tournament hosted by Gensler's Dallas office that raised over \$25,000 every year for the Dallas Boys and Girls Club. She organized the golf tournament volunteer team and worked with her co-chairs to create a successful event.

As the only person of color on the on the Gensler Cup committee, Gianna directed the team to focus on maximizing donations that would go to serve the Boys and Girls Club. Gianna's servant leadership was recognized by the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Dallas and she was often asked to represent her firm at the Club's other charity events as this provided an opportunity for their students to see and engage a STEM professional.

### Make-a-Wish Foundation

Wish Granter and Event Volunteer | 2000 - 2016

Gianna's involvement as a wish granter and volunteer for the Foundation extends beyond the yearly fundraising and volunteering events to directly assisting a child with their wish.

### We Care

Contributor | 2007 - 2011

We Care is a community service program that provides holiday cheer to local Boys and Girls Clubs through a partnership with Herman Miller. Gianna focused on an underserved community in south Dallas, developing a design-related gift for the children that required customization and assembly. Her team coached the children through assembling and creating the gift for their parents or siblings.

### Furniture 4 Kids | CASA

Designer and Team Leader | 2011

Furniture 4 Kids is a celebrated Dallas program that allows design professionals to create an inspired piece of furniture to raise funds for Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) in Dallas. Gianna led a team to design and decorate a rocking chair that was auctioned off to a local charity.

### CANstruction

Contributor, Designer, and Team Leader | 2008 - 2012

This competition provides over one million cans of food each year to the North Texas Food Bank. Gianna provided design insight, rallied volunteers, and assisted with the build outs of her teams' entries.

## 2.1 Significant Work

*“Gianna Pigford is the embodiment of architectural excellence. Her commitment to her profession, her body of work, and her commitment to exposing students to a new world of “building up” is her superpower. Gianna initiates, welcomes, and embraces opportunities to create functional, safe and sustainable physical environments in a manner that promotes intellectual stimulation, leans into diversity of thought and creativity, and offers spiritual and socializing experiences for those involved in the process of creating and serving, as well as for the end users -- people and communities.”*

Marcelle S. Jones, JD  
Stantec Principal, Transportation Policy & Strategy

*“Gianna’s leadership was the catalyst for DFW NOMA’s (Dallas-Fort Worth - National Organization of Minority Architects) revival and flourishing success. She is a true visionary, and her forethought has created a thriving organization that will continue to shape the future of our profession for years to come. Through her relentless advocacy for a career in architecture and her continued support of the organization whether lending her experience on her path to FIAI or personally guiding me and giving advice, she continues to make the profession more accessible to a new generation.”*

Wenguel Yohannes, AIA, NOMA  
KAI Senior Project Manager and DFW NOMA  
President

*“Gianna leads with clarity and purpose, always centering equity and accountability in every space she enters. As my mentor, colleague, and friend, I’ve seen her consistently advocate for meaningful change while building the structures that make that change possible. Her leadership has opened doors for many, and her impact will be felt by future generations of architects. Gianna doesn’t wait for permission to lead. She creates space, builds community, and ensures others feel seen and supported. Her leadership is thoughtful and deeply strategic, and she has an incredible ability to navigate complex systems while staying true to her values. When I met Gianna through our work on the TxA EDI Committee, her leadership was undeniable. She doesn’t just talk about change; she lives it. From the very beginning, she has been a mentor to me and remains a trusted voice I turn to for guidance, inspiration, and clarity.”*

Melvalean McLemore, AIA, NOMA  
Abstract Group Director of Strategic Practice and  
Stewardship

*“I am proud to support Gianna in recognition of her unwavering commitment to advocating for the architecture profession. Through both practice and volunteering, Gianna demonstrates a passion for using architecture as a tool for equity, empowerment, and positive change. Whether through mentoring emerging professionals, volunteering with community-based design initiatives, or championing inclusive design practices within our projects, Gianna brings a thoughtful and intentional approach to every endeavor. I came to know Gianna when I followed in her footsteps as the incoming 2019-2020 DFW NOMA President. Gianna is a skilled architect and one of the most genuine, patient, and thoughtful professionals I’ve known in a leadership role. Her decision making and action-oriented demeanor demonstrates her strong work ethic, integrity, and values. Her insight, organization and attention to detail creates accountability and fosters a collaborative environment. I wholeheartedly support Gianna and commend her leadership in advancing a more inclusive and socially conscious future for our profession.”*

Maurice Thames, AIA  
Stantec Principal and TxA Vice President of  
Professional Development

### TESTIMONIAL STATEMENTS FROM THOSE WHO HAVE WITNESSED GIANNA’S STALWART LEADERSHIP

## 2.2 Significant Awards, Honors & Recognition

Texas  
Society of  
Architects

DFW N O M A

AIA Dallas

ENR  
Engineering News-Record

ULI Urban Land  
Institute



Retail Design Institute™

DALLAS BUSINESS JOURNAL

40  
UNDER 40

Good Design  
is Good Business

### INDIVIDUAL RECOGNITION

**Award for Equitable Practice in Architecture in Honor of John S. Chase Jr. FAIA | 2022**  
Texas Society of Architects

**Black History Month Honor | 2022**  
CoreNet Global North Texas

**Louise Blanchard Bethune Fellow | 2022**  
Texas Society of Architects EDI Committee

**Women's History Month Honor | 2022**  
DFW NOMA

**Black History Month Honor | 2021**  
ULI Dallas-Fort Worth

**TxA Presidential Citation | 2020**  
Texas Society of Architects EDI Committee

**Leadership Arts Institute | 2017**  
Business Council for the Arts

**"40 Under 40" Award | 2015**  
*Dallas Business Journal*

**SMU Cox School of Business | 2013**  
Certificate in Leadership Program

**AIA Dallas Emerging Leaders Program | 2010**

### PROJECT AWARDS

**Corenet Global North Texas | 2024**  
**Corporate Real Estate Awards-Workplace Strategy Capital Improvements and Special Projects**  
Dallas County Records Building

**PaperCity Design Awards | 2023**  
**Historical Restoration/Preservation Commercial**  
Dallas County Records Building

**Beverly Willis Architectural Foundation | 2020**  
**Built by Women LA Award**  
OUE Skyspace

**AIA Dallas Unbuilt Design Awards | 2017**  
Dallas County Records Building

**ENR California, Award of Merit | 2017**  
**Interiors/Tenant Improvement category**  
OUE Skyspace

**Los Angeles Business Council | 2017**  
**Architectural Awards in Hospitality/Attractions**  
OUE Skyspace

**Los Angeles Business Journal | 2017**  
**Gold - Best Retail Project**  
OUE Skyspace

**AEE Regional Awards Program | 2016**  
**Region IV Innovative Energy Project of the Year**  
G.T. "Mickey" Leland Federal Building

**ENR TX/LA, Best Projects | 2015**  
G.T. "Mickey" Leland Federal Building

**ULI Development of Distinction | 2015**  
G.T. "Mickey" Leland Federal Building

**Retail Design Institute, Best Brand Space | 2015**  
Holly Hunt Showroom

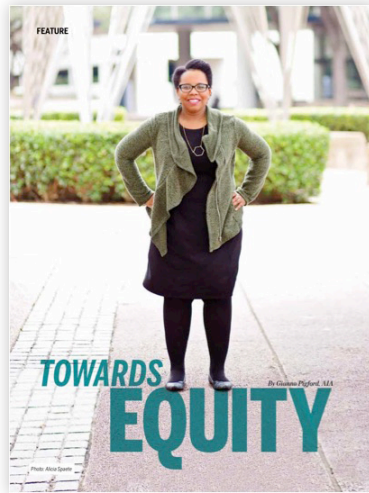
**Business Week, Architectural Record Awards "Good Design is Good Business" | 2013**  
Devon Energy World Headquarters

**IIDA Chapter Awards, Design Excellence | 2013**  
Devon Energy World Headquarters

**Interior Design Magazine | 2013**  
Best of Year Awards - Finalist  
Devon Energy World Headquarters



## 2.3 Significant Publications



### Authored by Nominee

#### **"Towards Equity"**

*Columns Magazine, Winter 2017*

#### **"Career in Architecture"**

*The Dallas Examiner, 2017*

#### **"Architects Talking to Architects: Gianna Pigford, AIA, of Dallas"**

*Texas Society of Architects, July 25, 2013*

### About Nominee

#### **Celebrating Architecture Week**

*AEC Unites, 2024*

#### **"Future Forward - Gianna Pigford, AIA, NOMA"**

*AIA Future Forward video, 2023*

#### **"Women's History Month Spotlight"**

*DFW NOMA, 2022*

#### **"WLI Celebrates Its 10th Anniversary: Looking Back and Looking Ahead"**

*Urbanland, January 11, 2022*

#### **"ULIDFW Celebrates Black History Month"**

*ULI Dallas-Fort Worth, February 9, 2021*

#### **"Stantec welcomes retail, workplace design architect to buildings team"**

*Texas Contractor, March 9, 2020*

#### **"Texans Serving on National Councils"**

*Texas Board of Architectural Examiners Licensing News, Winter 2019*

#### **"DI People: Pigford joins Stantec's buildings practice in Plano office"**

*Dallas Innovates, April 23, 2019*

#### **"Texas & Louisiana People: Construction Updates"**

*Engineering News Record, April 2019*

#### **"Strong Women in Design Discussion Addresses Gender Bias in Architecture"**

*The Shorthorn, March 6, 2019*

#### **"Dallas Hip Hop Architecture Camp 2018"**

*YouTube, January 24, 2019*

#### **"Hip Hop Is the Hook For Architectural Camp Aimed at Improving Diversity in Industry"**

*CandysDirt, September 31, 2018*

#### **"Hip Hop Architecture Camp Will Help Kids Find Their Rhythm in Dallas"**

*Dallas Innovates, September 14, 2018*

## 2.3 Significant Publications



### "A Stroll Through Richardson's Public Art"

*Plano Profile*, May 18, 2018

### "Pages 'Place' at TxA 2018"

*pagethink.com*, November 2018

### "Public ArtWalk"

*City of Richardson*, 2017

### "Leadership Arts Institute Class Project: 2017 Collin and Denton Counties - Public ArtWalk Richardson"

*Business Council for the Arts*, 2017

### "Public Art Master Plan Guides City's Public Art"

*Richardson Today*, 2017

### "Experience Committee"

*NCARB Annual Report*, 2017

### "Presentation of the Business Council for the Arts Public Art Walk"

*City of Richardson*, June 12, 2017

### "School of Architecture alumna writes AIA 'Springboard' column"

*Mississippi State University, College of Architecture, Art and Design*, April 1, 2017

### "Gensler-designed OUE Skyspace debuts in Los Angeles"

*The Architect's Newspaper*, June 27, 2016

### "This Skyscraper Comes with a Slide - On the Outside"

*CityLab*, March 2, 2016

### "Who Are the 'Other' 5000 Faces in Architecture"

*blink!LAB*, 2015

### "Spotlight Local DFW Professionals"

*Affluent Blacks of Dallas*, 2015

### "The U.S. Bank Tower is Getting an Upgrade"

*Los Angeles Magazine*, July 14, 2015

### "40 Under 40: Gianna Pigford, Gensler"

*The Dallas Business Journal*, May 29, 2015

### "2013-2014 NOMA Officers"

*NOMA Magazine*, Spring 2014

### "Chapter Updates"

*NOMA Magazine*, Spring 2013

### "Reinventing a Classic: Reunion Tower Observation Deck Re-Opens"

*GenslerOn*, November 21, 2013

### "Judy Pesek: An Icon's View of Dallas"

*D Magazine*, October 17, 2013

### "Cloud Nine Cafe in the Reunion Tower Features a 360 Degree View of Dallas"

*D Magazine*, October 8, 2013

### "Reunion Tower to open new deck, Cloud Nine"

*Dallas Business Journal*, September 9, 2013

### "Six Years Later, Reunion Tower Observation Deck to Reopen With a New Look"

*Dallas Observer*, May 3, 2013

### "How Ray Hunt plans to turn Reunion Tower's deck around"

*Dallas Business Journal*, May 3, 2013

### "Portfolio / Resume Workshop"

*AIA Dallas Associates Blog*, June 18, 2011

## 2.4 Significant Presentations & Speaking Engagement

### CAREER DEVELOPMENT

**University of Southern Mississippi, Construction Management Cohort | 2024 and 2025**

**Black Women in Architecture | 2024**

**Texas A&M Capstone Jury | 2024**

**Mississippi State University | 2023 and 2024**  
School of Architecture Panel Roundtable

**DFW NOMA | 2023**

Charting A Path: Defining Your Career in Architecture

**NOMA National Conference Nashville | 2022**

Charting A Path: Defining Your Career in Architecture

**AIA / TEXO | 2022**

Industry Roundtable: Mentorship

**Career Institute South, Dallas ISD | 2022**

Gianna Pigford: A Career in Architecture

**elevateHER | 2022**

**Oklahoma State University | 2021**

4th-5th year Jurist to Comprehensive Design Studio

**ULI Smart Cities moderator | 2020**

**AIA National Conference, Orlando | 2017**

"Brewing ARE Buzz: How to Boost Licensure"

**Thomas Jefferson High School, Dallas | 2016**

**Design Boot Camp | 2016**

**Dallas Can Academy | 2016**

Architecture Career

**WT White High School | 2015**

Real Estate Development Career

**Thomas Jefferson High School | 2015**

Real Estate Development Career

**Gensler | 2014**

Construction Administration

**The Links, Inc. STEM Academy for Girls | 2013**

**AIA Dallas Portfolio Workshop Panelist | 2011**

**WT White High School | 2009**

Class Mentor

**Gensler/AIA Dallas | 2010**

Emerging Leaders Program

**NOMA | 2010**

Architecture Career Panelist

**Gensler | 2009**

L.I.N.K. Mentor Program

### EQUITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

**Texas Society of Architects Convention Dallas | 2025**

"From Redlined to Green: Equity Through Sustainable Design"

**AIA Future Forward Video | 2024**

AIA promotional video originally presented on AIA social media and played again at the 2024 AIA National Conference on the keynote address session

**Oklahoma State University | 2021**

"NOMA at 50" lecturer

**DFW NOMA | 2021**

"Mental Health Awareness: Design Professional"

**ULI Womens Leadership Initiative National | 2021**

Women's History Panel

**CoreNet North Texas | 2021**

"Deconstructing Equity" moderator

**CAPPA AIAS AND NOMAS | 2020**

"Critical Social Issues + the Role of Designers"

**Ladies in CRE | 2020**

"Learning How We Can Come Together as a Community and Within Our Workplaces"

**Texas Society of Architects | 2020**

"Call to Action"

**AIA Dallas | 2020**

Building Workplaces that Foster EDI

**ULI/WLI, Dallas | 2020**

"Looking for Women Role Models in CRE?"

**Diversity in Architecture Panel, Dallas | 2020**

for High School Students and Teachers

**Texas Society of Architects Convention Galveston | 2019**

"Pecha Kucha: EDI Storyteller"

**CAPPA Women's Alliance Panel**

**University of Texas at Arlington | 2019**

"Strong Women in Design"

**Project REAP Dallas | 2019**

"Architecture: From Blueprint to Footprint"

**Women at Stantec | 2019**

"Becoming a Person of Influence"

**AIA San Antonio | 2018**

"The State of EDI in Architecture"

**City Lab High School, Dallas | 2018**

"Equity and Community"

**Texas Society of Architects Convention Fort Worth | 2018**

"Whitney M. Young, Jr: 50 Years Later"

**Texas Society of Architects Convention Austin | 2017**

EDI Meet-Up Organizer and Discussion Leader

### ORGANIZATIONAL AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

**CoreNet Global North Texas, Dallas | 2020**

"Anything But Work"

**ULI Technical Advisory Panel | 2022**

"Farrington Field"

**Texas Society of Architects Convention Fort Worth | 2018**

"Legislative Lunacy – Can One Architect Make a Difference"

**NOMA Conference | 2014**

Professional Design Awards Program

**AIA Dallas/Gensler | 2013**

Workplace Performance Index

**Gensler Business Communication | 2012**



© AIA San Antonio

*“Gianna is one of those people who is highly versatile and always eager to take on a new challenge. She excels at finding creative solutions to difficult technical challenges. She is also a great team leader as well as a client relationship manager. Gianna is a consummate professional, a dedicated leader and an active community volunteer.*

Judy Pesek, FIIDA

South Central Regional Managing Director, Gensler, Austin

- 3.1 REVIVING AND REBUILDING A POWERFUL NETWORK OF LEADERS**  
NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF MNORITY ARCHITECTS ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP
- 3.2 REMOVING BARRIERS TO LICENSURE**  
GENSLER LICENSURE NETWORK
- 3.3 CREATING AWARENESS OF THE ARCHITECTURE PROFESSION**  
CREW DALLAS CAREERS
- 3.4 PROVIDING A PIPELINE TO ARCHITECTURE**  
AIA DALLAS / GIRL SCOUTS OF AMERICA NORTH TEXAS COOKIE BOX CREATIONS
- 3.5 REINFORCING AND REDEFINING THE PATH TO LICENSURE**  
NCARB EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE
- 3.6 INTRODUCING ARCHITECTURE IN AN UNCONVENTIONAL WAY**  
HIP HOP ARCHITECTURE YOUTH CAMP
- 3.7 UNDERSTANDING EQUITY IS THE CALL TO THE COMMUNITY TO ACT**  
TOWARDS EQUITY ARTICLE
- 3.8 EQUITABLE POLICY MAKING IN PRACTICE**  
TEXAS SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION TASK FORCE CHAIR
- 3.9 REUNION TOWER**  
COMPLETED 2015
- 3.10 US BANK TOWER / OUE SKYSPACE**  
COMPLETED 2016

### 3.1 National Organization of Minority Architects 1996 - present

#### Project Location

Mississippi State University, MS  
Washington D.C.  
Dallas, TX

#### Role Of Nominee

##### National NOMA

Member, 2007 - present  
Membership Committee, 2015  
Executive Board of Directors, Recording  
Secretary, 2013 - 2014

##### DFW NOMA

Past-President, 2019 - 2020  
President, 2018  
Vice President, 2016 - 2017  
Secretary, 2015

##### Mississippi State University NOMA

##### Student Chapter

President, 1997  
Founding member, 1996  
Secretary, 1996

#### Declaration of Responsibility

I have personal knowledge of the nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: leadership in NOMA

##### Bryan Hudson, NOMA, AIA

Principal Architect, Owner  
SOMA Design Consultants, Chicago



Gianna Pigford, AIA, NOMA, LEED AP BD+C

**Challenge:** The 2008 economic crisis had ravaged the local DFW chapter, as the leadership was composed of small firm owners and architects who were hit hard by the downturn. As a result, the chapter had gone dormant for six years. Even in a strong economy, the pool of minorities in architecture is small in Dallas. Additionally, most firms pay for only one professional membership for their staff, and many professionals do not choose NOMA. Thus, the organization is challenged with maintaining membership, creating a leadership pipeline, and funding programs.

**Role:** Gianna has long been committed to NOMA. As a student, she established the NOMA chapter at Mississippi State University, serving as president in its second year. She has since served at both the national and local level, sometimes simultaneously. From

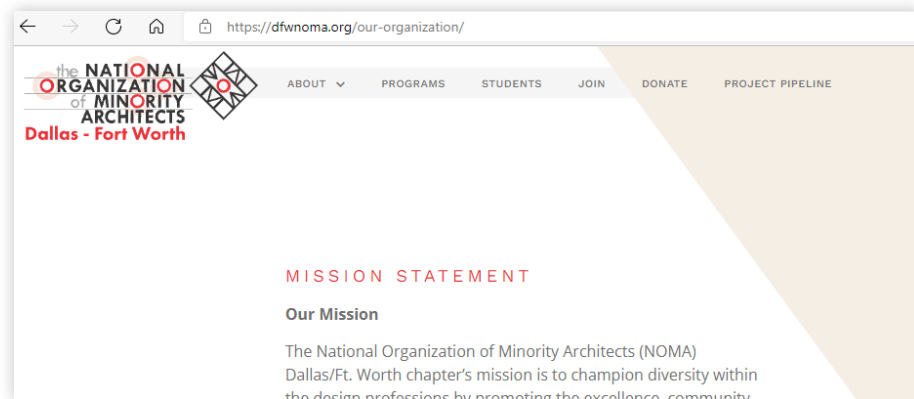
2013 to 2014, she served as the national Recording Secretary in a position created for her in response to her reaching out to national leadership to express her interest in learning how to recruit and maintain membership on the local level. While on the board, Gianna coordinated the national professional design awards program and presented winners at the national conference. She also managed and coordinated the board of directors' meetings and resulting notes.

In 2014, Gianna rallied Dallas minority professionals to begin a series of discussions on how to re-establish the chapter. It took more than a year to assemble the previous chapter documents, write new by-laws, vote in new leadership, and begin hosting chapter meetings and programs. Gianna encouraged former and new members to join the organization.

**Results:** Gianna's understanding of national NOMA's message and mission helped her re-establish the DFW NOMA chapter. Within one year of her commitment, the DFW NOMA chapter was back up and running with a new board installed, and in 2017, the chapter won the **Most Improved Chapter Award from NOMA National**. The membership continues to grow, and a robust Board of Directors is in place for the first time in over six years, and a four-year pipeline of leadership has been established.

Gianna set in place a growth strategy that provides consistent chapter leader succession, improve financial standing, and an increase in membership. The chapter started with 5 chapter members in 2015 and 6 years later it has over 45.

In 2021, although no longer on the executive board, Gianna saw the need to design and develop the DFW NOMA website. She created the content and worked with a web designer to deliver the website before the new fiscal year's first general body meeting. This new website has served as a means to elevate the chapter's presence which is leveraged to announce events, increase member participation, and solicit for sponsorship and volunteers.



## 3.2 Gensler Licensure Network 2006 - 2018

### Role Of Nominee

Co-Founder and Organizer

As Co-founder, Gianna determined the program's position on licensure, established the monthly calendar, identified candidates and their needed exam resources, recommended new study material additions for the library, created monthly desk and multi-channel reminders, as well as presented the gift box as recognition to candidates.

The program's success and Gianna's leadership is noteworthy, in that she continues to receive notifications from newly licensed architects although she is no longer employed at the firm.

### DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY:

I have personal knowledge of the nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: Co-Founder and organizer of the Gensler Dallas Licensure Network

**Tim Lavelle, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP BD+C**  
Co-Founder and Organizer  
Gensler Dallas Licensure Network

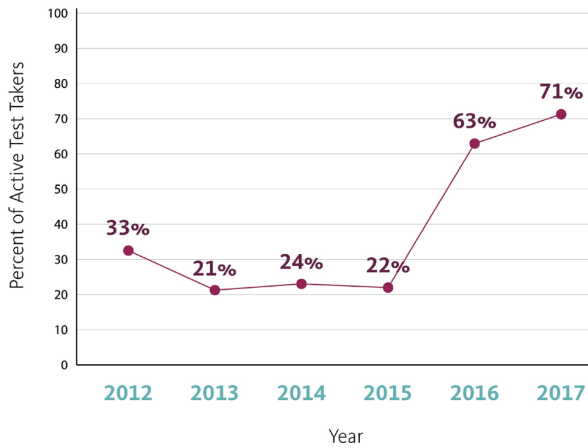


**Challenge:** Before this network was created, no organized study material library existed, and what material was available was outdated. Exam candidates were unsupported and essentially left to their own devices. While a significant number of staff were eligible to take the exam, few were doing so, and for the few that did start or complete the exam, the journey was not recognized. Identifying the roadblocks and creating a network was paramount to encouraging more candidates begin testing in the short term. The long-term goal was to change the office culture around testing.

The licensure network sought to change the mindset of the exam candidates and to build an ARE toolbox to be rolled out across the office to help candidates navigate the process.

**Role:** What began informally in 2006 as a way for the firm to provide ARE study material to exam candidates, morphed into a robust program that provided camaraderie, motivation, support, recognition, and empowered candidates to pursue licensure. As co-founder, Gianna determined the program's position on licensure, established the monthly calendar, identified candidates and their needed exam resources, recommended new study material additions for the library, and created monthly desk and multi-channel reminders. She also presented the gift box as recognition to candidates.

The branded "Toolbox" included several elements: the letter, the discussion, the opt-out card, the place mat, desk reminders, multi-channel reminders, and recognition. At the start of the program the candidate received an introductory letter and a one-on-one discussion to determine their mindset and level of engagement. If they weren't interested in participating, they could use the opt-out card.



test takers	6	5	9	10	29	32
eligible for ARE	18	24	37	46	46	45
total employees	107	124	169	194	200	204
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017



Once the candidate pool was known, each participant received the laminated place mat, a simple documentation of the licensure process to keep for reference through the process. Desk and multi-channel reminders were given to each candidate every month in varying formats that were light-hearted but well-intentioned to let the candidate know about available resources and exam format updates, as well as to encourage them to schedule and take an exam. Once exams were complete, the candidate was recognized in an all-staff meeting with a new hard hat along with a certificate and gift box.

**Results:** The number of staff engaged in ARE testing increased each year, as did the number of licensed architects. In 2017, out of 45 eligible ARE candidates, 32 were actively testing. Previously only one or two architects in the office were licensed each year. The culture in the office also changed as more people were comfortable discussing their licensure process. Despite an initial lack of leadership support, the program flourished and eventually earned approval.

The Fire Sale concept (implemented with full leadership support) was built on the premise that more candidates could be motivated to take the exam if they were given a safety net. Within a three-month window, a candidate could take exams and be reimbursed — pass or fail — as long as they shared proof of the exam result. Initially 10 to 15 candidates were expected to take advantage of the opportunity but in the three month window of 2016, 21 candidates participated, and 37 exams were taken. Although ten failed, the Fire Sale encouraged 12 new test-takers to begin testing, and five test-takers began taking exams again after a long hiatus. Ultimately 27 candidates passed exams. The ten failed exams cost the company only \$2,100. With this success, the firm opted to host another Fire Sale, which ran from November 2016 through January 2017 with comparable results. With this program’s success, a similar program was adopted for interior design staff.

### 3.3 CREW Dallas 2015 - 2017

#### Role Of Nominee

Architecture Career Advocate  
and Mentor



© CREW Dallas



**Challenge:** CREW Careers is the Commercial Real Estate Women's community outreach to high school girls to increase awareness of career opportunities in the commercial real estate industry. Many students who participate never considered a career in the real estate industry, let alone one in architecture.

**Role:** Gianna was one of only a few women architects in the local CREW Dallas chapter. She led career discussions about architecture with five high school classes during her tenure. With her knowledge of several building typologies, she provided a base AutoCAD template with building and site programs for students to analyze.

The program includes a day-long event, where school teams are given a site to develop and propose the building and tenant solution using the provided guidelines and curriculum. At the conclusion of the event, the teams present their solution, to a panel of judges. She also guided students on the architecture and design components at the competition event.

**Results:** The introduction to architecture as part of a commercial real estate industry career was shared with more than 50 high girls each year. With that, Gianna's outreach influenced over 150 girls and left a lasting impact for the CREW Careers program. The CREW Careers program provided hands-on knowledge and the critical thinking process allowed the participants to think differently as they considered their future career options.

#### DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY:

I have personal knowledge of the nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: Led architecture career discovery efforts

#### Rachel Rouse, RID, IIDA

VP Hoefler-Welker, Dallas  
Crew Dallas Careers Committee

### 3.4 AIA Dallas / Girl Scouts of America North Texas Cookie Box Creations, 2009 - 2015

#### Cookie Box Creations

Gensler

#### Project Location

Dallas, TX

#### Role Of Nominee

Organizer And Facilitator

#### Awards & Publications

First Place, 2011



The Cookie Box Creations program is a six-month commitment to a team of troop members between the ages 12 and 15 with interest in an A/E profession. It culminates in a design contest where the team —girls and professionals—build their design using Girl Scout cookie boxes. The resulting structure is publicly displayed, with winning teams awarded badges.

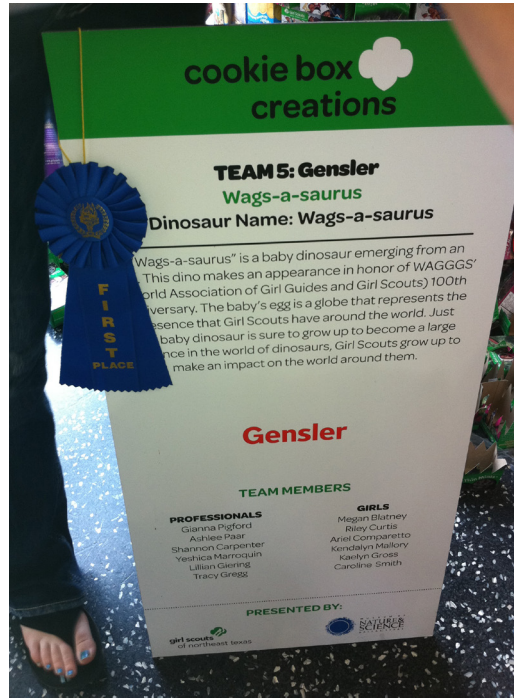
#### DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY:

I have personal knowledge of the nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: volunteer and team leader

**Challenge:** The program follows a linear path with lessons in architecture and design learned along the way. How to design the structure to not fall, what are the major elements in design, how to use the boxes creatively for color and scale, and how to plan the structure so you know how many boxes of each color to order. These are the same basics of architectural design as those applied to planning a building structure. The lessons are taught to the Girl Scouts troop members through a combination of structured curriculum and hands-on activity.

#### Rhonda Engelken, IIDA

Senior Associate, Gensler, Dallas  
Cookie Box Creations Volunteer



**Role:** As mentor and teacher, Gianna established meeting schedules and managed tasks for professional volunteers as well as troop members over the course of six months. Working toward the goal of building a structure, she introduced architecture, design, and construction terminology and coached her teams in critical thinking and problem-solving based on their skill level. She also worked to make volunteer opportunity meaningful to the professionals who provided their time and skills.

**Results:** At the end of the Cookie Box Creation program, several participants always state their interest in architecture or design. Gianna not only saw returning volunteers but also went on to help one young girl learn 3D modeling software and another while another requested an opportunity to shadow an architect.



## 3.5 NCARB 2017 - 2020

Experience Committee  
Program Continuum Advisory Committee

National Council of Architectural  
Registration Boards

Project Location  
Washington D.C.

Role Of Nominee  
Experience Committee Chair

### DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY:

I have personal knowledge of the nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: leadership on the NCARB Experience Committee

**Terry Allers, FAIA, NCARB, Hon FCARM**  
2019 NCARB President/Board Chair  
President, Allers Associates Architects,  
Fort Dodge, IA



© NCARB

**Challenge:** Gianna's firm-level leadership and her passion for architectural licensure mentorship led her to pursue NCARB as an avenue to become more engaged in the architectural licensure community. Additionally, as an advocate for diversity, Gianna saw a need to lend NCARB a voice from the minority perspective, which is underrepresented in its leadership.

**Role:** As committee chair, the challenges are to grasp the context of the committee's charges and disseminate that information to the committee members in a way that isn't leading, but capable of producing measurable results and board recommendations.

**Results:** Gianna led the Experience Committee to review and recommend ways in which AXP supervisors can become more informed on their role in the candidate's licensure journey, which resulted in NCARB-led blog posts, guidebooks, and webinars. Her work also resulted in recommended improvements to the education, examination, and experience continuum, and aligning the Model Law's Health, Safety, and Welfare (HSW) categories with AXP and the ARE. Gianna's participation in the education, examination, and experience continuum discussion led to her being asked to join the Program Continuum Advisory Committee, which recommends strategies to develop and maintain NCARB programs to the board of directors.



© NCARB

## 3.6 Hip Hop Architecture Camp 2018

### Project Location

Dallas, TX

### Role Of Nominee

Camp Organizer And Sponsor

### Awards & Publications

*"Hip Hop Is the Hook For Architectural Camp Aimed at Improving Diversity in Industry", CandysDirt, September 31, 2018*

*"Hip Hop Architecture Camp Will Help Kids Find Their Rhythm in Dallas," Dallas Innovates, September 14, 2018*

### DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY:

I have personal knowledge of the nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: organizer and facilitator of the 2018 HHAC Dallas

### Craig Drone, AIA, LEED AP

HHAC Dallas Facilitator and Sponsor  
Studio Director, LPA, Dallas



**Challenge:** Several people in Dallas tried to organize this award-winning camp—typically hosted in the summer on five consecutive days—but it was difficult to find true champions to bring it into fruition. This free camp introduces architecture to historically underrepresented students through the avenue of hip hop music. With a limited number of individuals on the planning committee, the tasks to pull off such a program were daunting.

**Role:** In 2018, Gianna established a small team of champions that would meet and plan the camp events, create and deploy a marketing strategy, and identify potential sponsors. She distributed information and applications to schools, social media, magazines, newsletters, and church bulletins.

Prior to each camp session, Gianna hosted a final check-in with the camp facilitators to run through the event presentation and camp curriculum. On the day of the events, Gianna led the discussions on

architecture and design, conducted one-on-one student coaching, organized the lunch service, managed the team of volunteers, and served as the event photographer.

**Results:** Thirty-eight students from across the city took part in the HHAC. The Dallas Parks and Recreation teen facility hosted the HHAC in the fall of 2018, which meant the camp didn't compete with other summer programs. However, with school in session, the HHAC had to be hosted on five consecutive weekends. Some students left with a higher regard for a future career in architecture, while others welcomed the opportunity to get to know architects and learn. A partnership was formed with the City of Dallas Parks and Recreation to host future events at their facility as well as partner with them to teach architecture focused programs. The intent is to follow up the success of the Hip Hop Architecture Camp with an architectural architecture camp program that works into the Parks and Recreation department's curriculum. The resulting video, which showcased the student work and final rap song was hosted at a local architectural firm. This was a means to elevate the HHAC program's visibility in Dallas. Several attendees expressed interest in volunteering and sponsoring the next camp.

*“I can say without reservation that this project would not have gotten off the ground and come to fruition without the hard work that Gianna did leading the team in general and specifically in preparing and leading each weeks interaction with the camp participants. Given all the challenges faced Gianna never let those obstacles hold this thing back. She is without a doubt the embodiment of making good happen.”*

- Craig Drone, AIA, LEED AP



Dallas Hip Hop Architecture Camp (2018)

233 views · Jan 24, 2019

8 0 SHARE SAVE ...



*Engaging middle school students in a subject matter that is unfamiliar takes diverse tactics to capture their attention, and motivate them to participate. Linking architecture to familiar music allows the students to readily grasp concepts. The students are encouraged to understand a rap song’s cadence of words and lyrics and how to translate those into 3D elements using Legos and CAD software.*

## 3.7 Towards Equity 2017

### Role Of Nominee

Author

*“Thank you Gianna for this excellent article and for sharing your experience in all the ways you have. All our communities, including architecture, need to have an intentional cultivation of diversity. It doesn’t just happen, we have to nurture it.*

*I cannot thank you enough for bringing this discussion to the table.”*

*- Kristi D.*

### Declaration Of Responsibility:

I have personal knowledge of the nominee’s responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: author

### Cindy Smith AIA, NCARB, RID

Former Associate Editor, *Columns*  
Founder and CEO Plan C Homes, Dallas

**FEATURE**

**At this point in my career, I simply will not be denied a seat at the table, even if I have to build the seat myself.**

**WHO AM I?**  
I'm 42 years old. Nineteen plus years of my life have been spent trying to fit into the architecture community. I'm a black female architect.  
I've been called a diva, told I wasn't assertive enough, told to watch my tone, told that I wasn't confident, told I act like I know everything, spoken of as though I know nothing... Well admittedly, I am stubborn and tenacious while sometimes quiet and reserved. (By the way, this is not a recommended character trait combination.) A few years ago I was struggling to overcome some career hurdles and a friend gave great advice: "Be who you were meant to become." At this point in my career, I simply will not be denied a seat at the table, even if I have to build the seat myself.  
In reality, anyone should have an opportunity to occupy any given seat without barriers, gaps, and roadblocks preventing access. Perhaps the emerging gray hairs have brought some wisdom so that I no longer complain and sulk about what I have not been given. So no, I didn't encounter my first mentor until age 37. I didn't have the same to groom my leadership abilities and professional acumen. I accept that my process shouldn't have been so fraught with mishaps, but it was. I am the product of many false starts and giant leaps of faith.

**SO WHAT'S MY STORY?**  
In short, I grew up in Deep South Mississippi where I dealt with almost every socio-economic statistic that is known. When I decided I wanted to become an architect, I couldn't even correctly pronounce the word. Without pure luck and happenstance, I would not have entered into the school of architecture because I certainly did not know any architects nor have means to connect with them as my post high school guidance narrowed quickly to just me. I didn't know there was a separate school of architecture application beyond the general university admission requirements. By luck, I can into the dean of the Mississippi State University School of Architecture and my father happened to mention my name to an architect.  
I hastened my A.R.E. testing to become one of the first black female architects licensed in Mississippi after I had learned there were none licensed in the state. But once licensed, I didn't push to be given opportunities on projects that would stretch my capabilities or develop the required professional soft skills.

Unfortunately, I thought hard work alone was the key to a successful career. Once enlightened, I joined the various organizations and leadership development programs that would give me the industry exposure and leadership skills that I lacked. I've since become an active leader in my architecture firm and community.  
Not everyone is as lucky, or stubborn enough, to overcome the challenges. So how is access to the profession granted and how is it sustained when one doesn't have circumstance and means of their own? Exclusion exists. Once we all nod our heads together and agree on that, we can move on to address equity. I know for a lot of those in my African American community if a change is coming it will have to start with my round brown face. I have to be a part of the pipeline that smooths the process for those minorities entering the profession.

**SO WHAT IS EQUITY?**  
Some confuse the word equality with equity, but they are not the same and should not be used interchangeably. Per Merriam-Webster, equality is defined as "the quality or state of being equal" whereas equity in this context is defined as "fairness or justice in the way people are treated." Equity is not about leveling the playing field—that is equality, and equality is nearly impossible to achieve within the construct of current society. An equitable environment intends that everyone is given the resources they need to thrive, as opposed to an equal environment in which everyone is given exactly the same resources. An excellent example of equality versus equity that many may have seen is the cartoon where three equally-sized different heights are standing at a fence. If given equally-sized boxes to stand on, the shortest person still cannot see over the fence. However, this is easily mediated if the tallest person, who doesn't need the box to see over the fence, gives his to the shortest person.  
Thus, without equity, the career achievements of minority architects will be different than those of affluent white men in architecture. To address equity in architecture, we need to go beyond inclusion alone, that notion that a minority represented on a project team or firm's organizational chart is enough. Equity is more than that. A more equitable architectural profession is one in which the disparity in access to higher education, job opportunities, career development, and firm leadership is

**TOWARDS EQUITY**  
By Gianna Pigford, AIA

Photo: Alicia Sparto

COLUMNS | aia.org | 17

**Challenge:** Gianna has been the only black woman architecture professional in each office in which she has worked. In order to be productive and successful, the discussion about the need for equity in architecture must allow for a positive exchange. As both an advocate and a practicing architect, Gianna is in a unique position to propel this essential conversation forward into action.

**Role:** The article shared Gianna’s story in a matter-of-fact, open narrative. Her intent was to challenge those who thought differently, inform those who are unaware, and support those who want to be heard, seen, and understood. For minorities in architecture, the entry into the profession is one challenge, but the biggest hurdle is to stay and succeed while jumping over persistent barriers that do not obstruct the paths of their white male counterparts.

**Results:** The well-received article has provided the framework for Gianna’s activism and advocacy, opening the conversation to a wide audience. She has since been asked to speak at universities, high schools, AIA components, as well as at events in her own firm. She is invited to committees and boards to provide an understanding voice with a welcomed point of view. Other professionals of color have reached out to seek her mentorship or coaching, or to share their own experiences.

### 3.8 Texas Society of Architects 2017 - 2020

#### Role of Nominee

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion  
Task Force Chair

#### Project Location

Texas

*“Gianna Pigford is an architect dedicated to both her practice and to the extensive efforts with the AIA at local, state and national levels. She has extensive experience in volunteering to make the profession more accessible through mentorship and advocacy for the advancement of women and minorities in architecture, design and construction. Gianna was recently part of a team that crafted the excellent statement... This statement demonstrates both an ability to face and name difficult, uncomfortable truths, and define actions to take to help change them.”*

- Betsy del Monte, FAIA, LEED BD+C

#### Declaration of Responsibility:

I have personal knowledge of the nominee’s responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: chair of the EDI Task Force

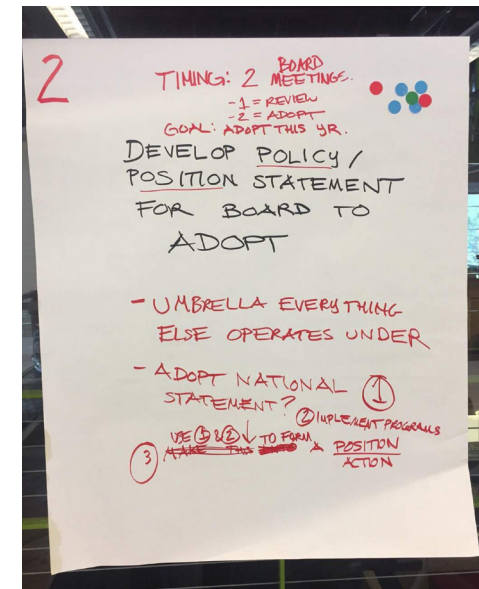
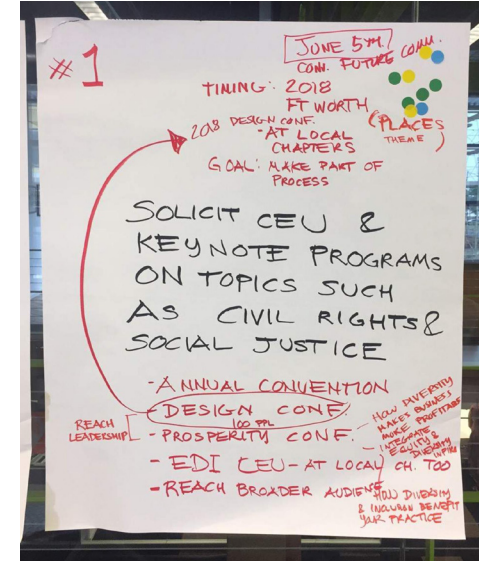
**Melvalean McLemore, AIA, NOMA**  
Strategic Practice and Stewardship  
Director at Abstract Group, Houston  
Vice-Chair TxA EDI Taskforce



**Challenge:** In 2017, the Texas Society of Architects (TxA) governing board created the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Task force “to champion a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion within the profession of architecture - more specifically, to carry out tasks as part of the strategic plan to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion until they are part of the mainstream.”

The specific charges were to solicit CEU and keynote programs on topics such as civil rights and social justice; develop a policy or position statement for the TxA board of directors to adopt; contact chapter leadership and firm principals to identify diverse candidates for committees; and create an event for/with people committed to diversity and advancing the profession. The task force set out to change the conversations and culture around the equity, diversity, and inclusion topic and to galvanize a diverse group of people who had never previously interacted was challenging.

**Role:** Gianna was appointed the task force’s inaugural chair, tasked with organizing its membership and mission. Individually, task force members had strong points of view, with some opposed to the group’s charge. The group had to quickly identify the key barriers and opportunities TxA faced and define measures



## Black Lives Matter. So Do Our Actions.

ADVOCACY BLOG NEWS

Texas Society of Architects

June 11, 2020

We are committed.  
We pledge to do the work.  
We are listening.

*“Since TxA’s founding, there has been only one Black voting member on the Board of Directors, and only one Honor Award given to a Black Architect. TxA must do better than this by engaging the diverse voices, talents, and contributions of our Black colleagues; not just in times of distress, but daily.”*

TxA Black Lives Matter Statement

Representation alone is not the answer. TxA commits to becoming an inclusive organization through the following of short-term steps with the long-term goal of eradicating the systemic racism that has impacted the lives and work of our Black colleagues. While we have been in the process of integrating equitable practices into our organization, including the formation of the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Task Force in 2017 to institute long-overdue changes, we have not done enough. We vow to immediately take the following actions:

1. TxA will educate our leadership by hiring a third-party consultant to advise the Board and provide implicit bias and diversity training. TxA will also provide access to implicit bias and diversity training to our state’s local chapters, firms, and members.
2. TxA will evaluate and reform as needed the current TxA nomination processes and governance policies to ensure fairness, inclusion, and transparency in order to increase the diversity of our leadership and membership.
3. TxA will challenge and identify the standards of merit ingrained in the Society by eliminating implicit bias, one of the most harmful obstacles preventing us from truly embracing diversity.
4. TxA will create partnerships with the National and local chapters of the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) to raise awareness of the social, political, and economic challenges NOMA advocates for through its professional and general organization. TxA vows to support initiatives such as NOMA’s “Project Pipeline,” currently planned for the fall in Dallas and Houston. Project Pipeline advocates for increased inclusivity, diversity, fellowship, equity, and excellence in design by ensuring architecture reaches a diverse population of students and increasing the “pipeline” of minority professionals entering architecture programs and gaining licensure.
5. TxA will collaborate with Texas university architecture programs to support minority students and increase the retention of minority emerging professionals throughout their architecture careers. The first steps are to support the development of curriculum that highlights the roles of Black and minority architects, create mentorship opportunities for students as they begin and develop their careers, and build stronger relationships between AIAS and NOMA.

by which it would be successful to maintain momentum and board support. Gianna’s open and frank dialogue positioned her to lead candid discussions and to report a consensus to the board of directors.

**Results :** Less than a year after forming, the task force presented the TxA Statement on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and the EDI task force’s work at local AIA meetings, the TxA convention, and the national NOMA Conference. The task force also created a database of AIA chapter and firm leaders and provided the convention committee with candidates for keynote speakers, resulting in the 2018 slate of keynotes, all of whom were people of color (two women, one man) for the first time.

In its second year, Gianna led the task force in advocating for TxA’s recognition of Whitney M. Young, Jr and the 50th anniversary of his historic 1968 speech. This recognition was presented at the TxA Conference with a panel discussion. In 2020, Gianna and a team of colleagues expanded TxA’s Black Lives Matter statement to include specific, actionable and measurable commitments to EDI.

Collaborating on the statement were: TxA EDI Committee; Chudi Abajue, AIA; Derwin Broughton, AIA; Jamie Crawley, AIA; Jessica Deaver, Assoc. AIA; Beau Frail, AIA; David Goujon, AIA; Brien Graham, AIA; Al Hernandez, AIA; Melvlean McLemore, AIA; Gianna Pigford, AIA; Agustina Rodriguez, Assoc. AIA; Michael Zaretsky, AIA; and the TxA Board of Directors.

### 3.9 Reunion Tower, Dallas 2015

#### Architect of Record

Gensler Dallas, TX

#### Project Location

Dallas, TX

#### Role Of Nominee

Project Manager and Architect

#### Awards & Publications

*"Reinventing a Classic: Reunion Tower Observation Deck Re-Opens", GenslerOn, November 21, 2013*

*"Judy Pesek: An Icon's View of Dallas", D Magazine, October 17, 2013*

*"Cloud Nine Cafe in the Reunion Tower Features a 360 Degree View of Dallas", D Magazine, October 8, 2013*

*"Reunion Tower to open new deck, Cloud Nine", Dallas Business Journal, 2013*

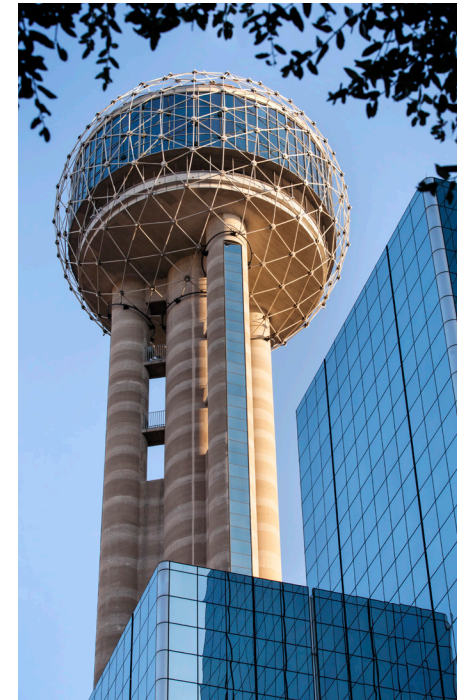
#### Declaration of Responsibility:

I have personal knowledge of the nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: project under direction of the nominee

**Cindy Simpson, FIIDA, LEED AP ID+C,**  
Regional Managing Principal, Gensler Dallas



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© Gensler ©Andrew Bordwin

**Challenge:** An interior renovation of the GeoDeck brought to life one of the most iconic buildings in the Dallas skyline. The project scope included the ticketing lobby, hotel pre-function, interior and exterior signage, observation deck, cafe, restrooms, retail, as well as hotel back-of-house upgrades. The initial queuing analysis asked that the four distinct patron groups be separated and directed to their destinations as they converge at the base of the tower. In addition to redefining the experience for observation deck visitors, restaurant diners, convention goers, and hotel guests, the evolution of the project's program and design elements also made for a challenging construction schedule.

**Role:** Initially brought on as project architect, Gianna led the design and construction documentation delivery and construction administration. She took on the additional role of project manager upon the project manager's retirement and used the opportunity to mentor and coach younger staff to elevate their project roles.

**Results:** The design designated locations for patrons to enter and exit as well as queue for tower elevators. Brand signage, wayfinding, and elevator upgrades eased the congestion and confusion at the tower base. The forms are derived from the tower itself, as well as geodesic domes and organic material study. Lighting and shapes are integrated with branding and wayfinding while the play of light and shadow and the use of everyday materials are rethought and formed into something new and innovative.

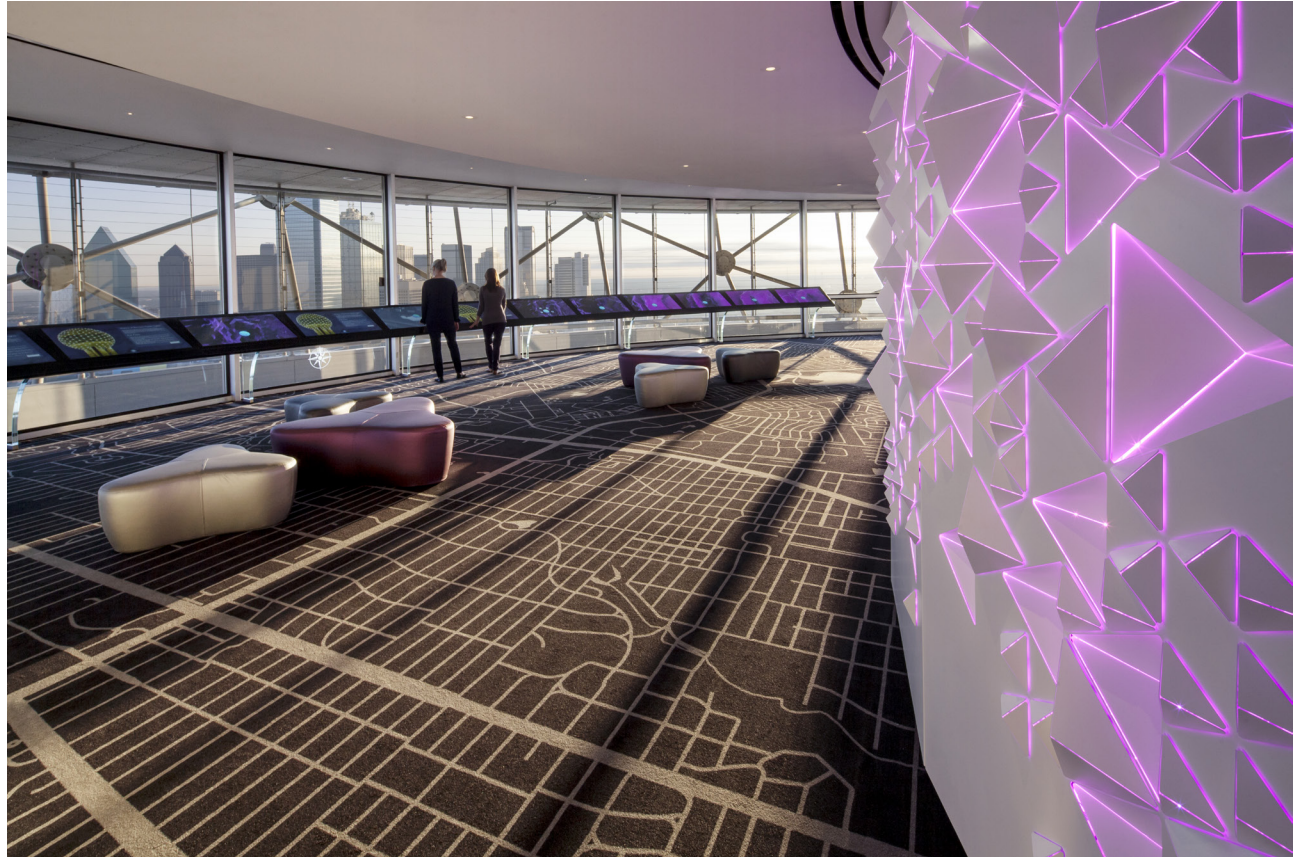


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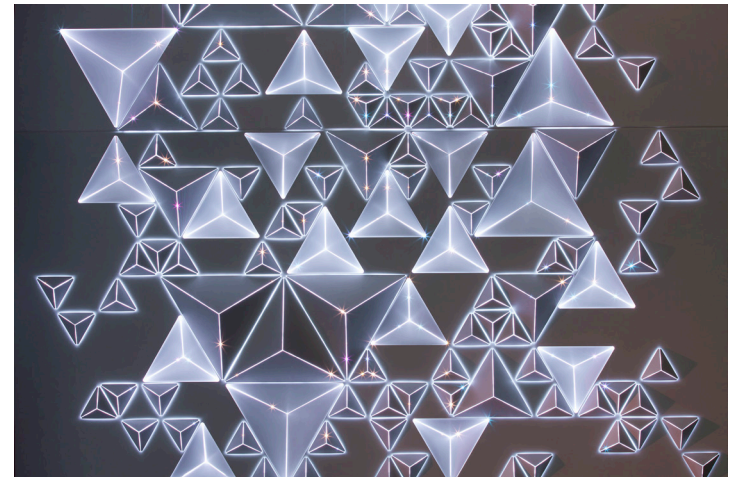
The light fixture that cascades down the tower's central stair shaft is a simple conduit and off the shelf light fixture held together with a custom gasket. The geodesic metal cut outs at the elevator surrounds illuminate to announce the elevator's arrival.



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© Gensler ©Andrew Bordwin



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### 3.10 US Bank Tower / OUE Skyspace 2016

#### Architect of Record

Gensler Dallas, TX

#### Project Location

Los Angeles, CA

#### Role of Nominee

Project Architect

#### Awards & Publications

ENR California, Award of Merit, Interiors/Tenant Improvement category, 2017

Los Angeles Business Council, 47th Annual Los Angeles Architectural Awards in Hospitality/Attractions Category, 2017

Los Angeles Business Journal, Gold Award – Best Retail Project, 2017

“Gensler-designed OUE Skyspace debuts in Los Angeles”, *The Architect’s Newspaper*, June 27, 2016

“This Skyscraper Comes with a Slide - On the Outside”, *CityLab*, March 2, 2016

“The U.S. Bank Tower is Getting an Upgrade”, *Los Angeles Magazine*, July 14, 2015

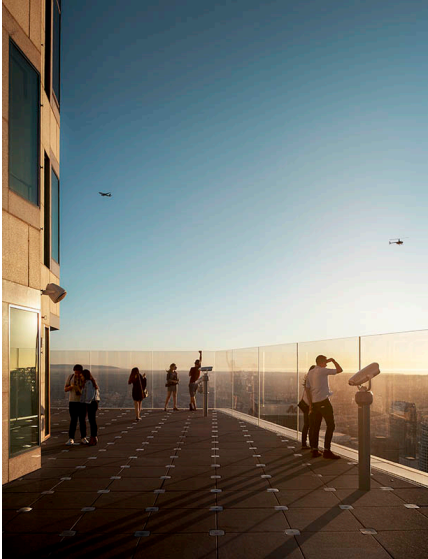


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**Challenges:** This 53,700 sf interior renovation included the second floor lobby, elevator lobby, transitional technology entertainment floor, observation decks, coffee shop, and retail. The project also incorporated innovative technology and a first-of-its-kind, exterior glass slide that takes patrons from the 70th floor to the 69th floor exterior patio.

**Role:** Because of her successful work on the Reunion Tower observation deck, the client requested Gianna’s team for this project. As project architect, she assessed the project schedule and development timeline and assembled a team to focus on innovation, technology, and technical skillsets. Several design elements were created, developed, and manufactured for the first time, including a lobby feature wall, electronic wall displays, a curved projection screen, and the exterior glass slide, all of which required intensive study, engineering, and iterative revisions before construction and installation.

**Results:** The intentional play of light and shadow mimics the “golden hour,” which became the project’s design theme. The completed project – a favorite venue of celebrities for private events and retreats – is often featured on social media. Additional accolades were received from industry outlets with awards, mentions, and publications.

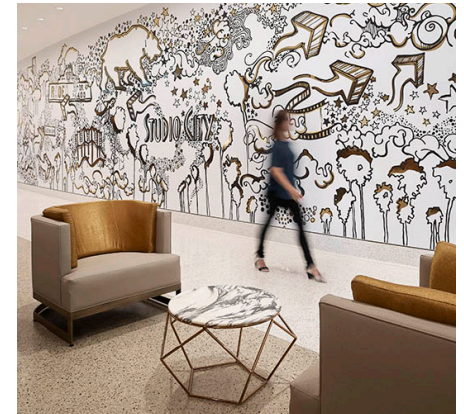


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An immersive Los Angeles skyline scene transforms the transfer elevator floor. This backdrop transitions patrons to other technology infused elements that are specifically designed to slow their pace while their elevator arrives to take them to the next level of entertainment.



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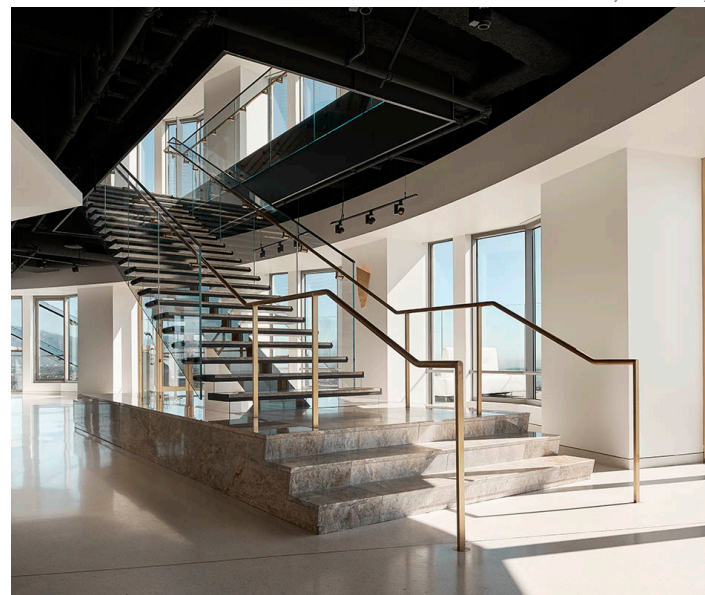


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### Declaration of Responsibility:

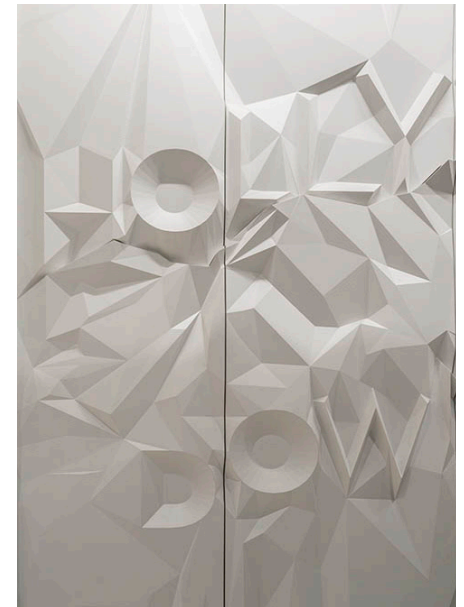
I have personal knowledge of the nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed above. That responsibility included: project under direction of the nominee

**Cindy Simpson, FIIDA, LEED AP ID+C,**  
Regional Managing Principal, Gensler Dallas



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There is a constrained play of textured surfaces, metal finishes, and subtle reminders of Los Angeles, which lend sophistication to a facility that serves the public and at the same time offers luxury accommodations for private events.



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