

READER



CHICAGO READER | NEWS, CULTURE & FOOD

**Cubs
co-owner**
Laura Ricketts

**Playboy
managing editor**
Lee Froehlich

**Blackbird
mixologist**
Lynn House

Graffiti artist
Weed Wolf
& more

The

PEOPLE
issue

12 22 11

Zoka Zola

THE ARCHITECT



SARAH LAWHEAD

“I shift the norm just enough to move or provoke our thoughts and the way that we live.”

—Zola (age withheld), founder of Zoka Zola Architecture + Urban Design

I want to work in different places. It is more exciting, because it is different in each place, different working methods, different architects, different objectives, different role in architecture for the client and the society. It is also more challenging. I have to research the cultural circumstance. I have to adjust to very different contexts in which architecture is produced and used. I get to travel, meet people of different predispositions, study sites with different climates. In Croatia I like to work in particular. It is my other home beside my current home here.

I am interested in the whole spectrum of architecture. But particularly what interests me is architecture's influence on the way people live and think. I am looking into the modes architecture makes us reflect on, the way we could live our life with other people and the world that surrounds us. I shift the norm just enough to move or provoke our thoughts and the way that we live, but without architecture distracting our thinking. I like mute architecture that does not speak, or worse, chat. In that respect I am more interested in what architecture can do to us than in the object of architecture itself.

The other particular thing about architecture that interests me is the involvement

of time as part of the concept for every project. For example, Pfanner House is designed as a perpetual mobile, as if it is an endless house, because we are constantly forgetting about the existence of parts of it. Another example is Desert Walker, a 300-foot-tall tower in the desert for a solar power plant, which is designed like it is an animal that is a part of the desert but not anchored into a place.

I am mostly satisfied with my projects. I think it has to do more with my character than the projects, although some done quickly and without particular inspiration. I am aware are not as good as those done with 100 percent care. I think partly the reason I am satisfied is that I am immediately interested to do a better one next time.

I am a Chicagoan for the last 14 years, but I work in several places around the world with some of the most demanding clients and the most brilliant engineers using technologies, materials, and work methods that broaden my awareness of possibilities. The many ways to think about things and do things is what I offer to Chicago. To the world I offer the Chicago way of broadness and freeness.

—As told to Jerome Ludwig