

Architecture alumni award named in honor of Tulane Trailblazer

June 07, 2022 3:00 PM Olivia Roginson
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A new architecture alumni award is named for Angela O'Byrne (MARCH '83), CEO of Perez, APC, in New Orleans. O'Byrne has been recognized by Tulane President Michael A. Fitts as a Tulane Trailblazer for her contributions to her field and "substantial and lasting impacts on the university's culture, values, and narrative."

The inaugural [Angela O’Byrne Alumni Award](#) was presented on May 21 to School of Architecture alumnus Maziar Behrooz (MArch ’85), founder of MB Architecture in East Hampton, New York, and a member of the school’s Dean’s Advisory Council.

The new award is named for Angela O’Byrne (MArch ’83), CEO of Perez, APC, in New Orleans, and recognizes a Tulane graduate from a diverse background or community who has become a leader in the architecture field. O’Byrne, herself recognized as a [Tulane Trailblazer](#) by President Michael A. Fitts, has directed numerous social impact projects, locally and internationally, including The Moonwalk Riverfront Park Revitalization in New Orleans.

Maziar Behrooz is an Iranian native who came to the United States to pursue his education and is celebrated for his remarkable efforts in sustainable architecture. His innovative designs demonstrate a commitment to maintaining an integrated environment through mindful building.

[*Read more about Maziar here.*](#)

When the [Tulane Trailblazers initiative](#) launched, the university community was asked to nominate “Tulanians from diverse backgrounds who have made substantial and lasting impacts on the university’s culture, values, and narrative.” O’Byrne’s story stood out thanks to her extraordinary contributions to the field of architecture, her inspiring advocacy for diversity within the industry, and enduring support for Tulane. Her name was selected from among 350 unique nominations for this honor.

A pioneer for female architects, O’Byrne has long held a passion for advocacy in architecture and built environment professions. As the CEO of her firm, O’Byrne directs many projects that provide aid to groups in need. She has cultivated an advocacy-driven team, stating, “Everyone at my company is aligned with similar values. It would be hard to work [here] if you didn’t.”

O’Byrne earned her Master of Architecture degree from Tulane University, followed by a Master of Science in Real Estate Development from Columbia University, all while balancing student life with starting her family. She had two children while studying at Tulane and took summer courses to graduate on time with her class. Looking back on her time at Tulane, O’Byrne appreciates her rigorous education and recalls admiring the commitment to education shared by her peers.

When she graduated from Tulane, architecture was still a male-dominated field. While O'Byrne remembers many female classmates with her at Tulane, with a roughly 50/50 female-to-male ratio in her class, she found female representation decreased significantly in the workforce. She began her career by working in nontraditional spaces, where she gained valuable experience working for developers. She explored a variety of careers, at one point working on Wall Street, and eventually returned to the design world.

O'Byrne felt constantly challenged by new projects but took a resilient approach to tackling obstacles. "If I felt like I was hitting a brick wall, I would take a mental note. Then I would find another way," she said. Moving up in the architecture world, she slowly took on more project responsibility. "Working in a male-dominated field didn't necessarily hold me back," she said. "If you're talented and willing to work hard, there's always opportunity." O'Byrne focused on improving her expertise, practicing a "collaborative instead of combative" approach.

Advocacy has been significant in O'Byrne's life since childhood. Her parents led lives of service, and that mindset has remained prevalent in her career. Driven by issues that are important to her, O'Byrne sits on numerous boards in New Orleans and works closely with clients in need of aid. For example, the Perez firm works with the United States Agency for International Development and also monitors government postings to identify projects needing their attention.

In one notable international project, O'Byrne's company was called upon to design and develop a housing plan in Afghanistan. She flew with her team to Afghanistan and committed to the project, working with the client and also taking on Afghan employees. O'Byrne's passion for serving others transcended the architecture world when she offered aid to these employees, who later needed to flee Afghanistan. She worked diligently and dedicated her time and resources to ensuring their safety.

O'Byrne continues to actively seek out opportunities for advocacy and has created a network of clients through her previous projects. She believes that "for people interested in advocacy, there is no end to problems in the world," and leads her company with "a sense of urgency" for the sake of the clients.

O'Byrne began her successful career by asking questions and continues to do so today. She urges young professionals to "ask questions about what you are interested in, whatever it is," and "be open to opportunity." O'Byrne said her

nonlinear career path provided valuable lessons to guide her, all while remaining focused on serving communities in need.

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Tulane Trailblazer and architecture alumna Angela O’Byrne