

A Perspective from a Female Architectural Role Model: What You Do Must Make People's Life Better

*“Architectural projects must make people's lives better, therefore an ecosystem and community based design process remains the most sustainable model to undertake. In the long term, Peace reigns in the hearts of the people. ” ---Joy' Martinez Onozawa
Certified Green Lifestyle Design Professional, Architect, Environment Planner (The Philippines)*

Joy is no regular architect, and we can have a glimpse of her uniqueness via the above philosophy of hers. For Joy, architecture is more of a methodology, a tool that she is capable of utilizing in order to improve people's quality of life. Besides being a certified green design professional architect, Joy is also an environment planner who loves to apply Mother Nature's elements into her design. With her 33 years of integrative eco-architectural expertise, Joy manages to focus her passion on empowering local community and handling their ecology by creating benefits from managing local resources such as people's skills, traditional culture, and natural assets. She pursues sustainability in her developing process by marrying the undertaking of design and planning with managing the creative use of local resources in multiple aspects of the project development.



A childhood of exploring sustainability, creativity, and self-sufficient mindset

Having grown up in an urban farm, Joy was greatly influenced by her parents. In her childhood, Joy's family managed self-sufficiency by planting and obtaining resources they needed from the home garden. Her parents built their house on their own and also encouraged their children to be creative with their hands in making their toys and obtaining building material from the nearby natural environment. Joy and her brothers were trained to think, build, and be innovative all the time. They never needed to buy anything from the market. Because of this upbringing, Joy grew up being enthusiastic about using sustainable



methods of designing and maximizing the natural resources in the most efficient and creative way. She gradually built up this lifestyle which inspired her greatly with the core concept "Everything you need is already available in nature".

Besides fostering Joy with a sustainable and self-sufficient life style, her parents were also very enthusiastic about charity work. They built a church for their local community, and enhanced the community lifestyle by providing everyone a place to gather and to share thoughts and ideas. Joy's parents believed that no one should live alone. The

experience of forming a mutual supporting network within local community had greatly inspired Joy, and with this kind of mindset, her architectural works and designs started to focus on making people's lives better.

In her childhood, Joy once laid her passion in dancing. Besides the love for sketching and building, Joy also wanted to become a ballet dancer when she was a child, and she started studying ballet at 4 years old. For a period of time in her childhood, she embraced the life of a young ballerina in a ballet school and wanted to pursue a career as a ballet dancer. Discouraged to do so by her parents she found herself registering for Architecture, and it was fate. Joy was always good at math and designing structures, and she soon fell greatly in love with Architecture. It was perfect for her to combine both creativity and passion for improving people's life. She then started the journey as an architect and never looked back.

An architect that designs lifestyles to improve life

With her childhood experiences and life style in mind, Joy soon realized that Architecture was not just about designing buildings. The happiness of the marginalized locals living around her projects and their livelihood improvement were far more important and meaningful for Joy. She thought that Architecture was not only about designing spaces, but also about designing lifestyles, experiences, and community relationships. In her architectural projects, Joy brings together

the clients, the government, and the local communities into her design process. Joy has a design philosophy of creating win-win scenarios for not only the officials, but also the local community who live around the construction location with her sustainable architectural designs and resource planning.

Resource mapping and fulfilling aspirations for local communities

Joy would first start development with a process called "Resource mapping", which is to get to know the local communities and how could they potentially collaborate with this project. She would then start communicating with them by asking, "What is your aspiration in life?" For when those aspirations are expressed clearly, Joy could then start her negotiating process with the government and the clients to address these aspirations. With the condition of fulfilling the project in time, the clients would support Joy's plans for a good cause, and the local government would also assist where they could, specially with trainings.

For instance, for the Carmen Safari Development Project in Cebu, with the consent of her client, Joy requested the

contractors for the project to hire the people from nearby communities to improve their income. The local communities were able to fulfill their aspirations of providing education for their children. Once the resort was built, they were hired as staff later on. These employment opportunities further provided them with a stable long-term incomes to maintain their aspiration in life.



In other projects, the resource mapping produced information on handcrafting expertise of local females. Joy included them in her projects for their amazing handcraft abilities. While Joy was designing and building the resorts, local women became a great force in producing light fixtures made with local bamboo. Joy would send her team to fetch the finished work from their home, therefore these women could participate in these projects without leaving their children alone. These women are proud

of themselves for being able to produce bamboo house fixtures, make an income, and also fulfill their duties as mothers at home. Joy achieved social changes by providing the client an opportunity to make the most out of their architectural projects and at the same time assist the local communities in improving their livelihood step by step. "If you want to design with sustainability,

you don't design a sustainable building, you design a sustainable life. We are not designing sustainable buildings so that the building could survive, instead we design in order to ensure people's survival," said Joy with a smile on her face.

Embracing the nurturing instinct of women and maximize the uniqueness of the female perspective within architecture

Architecture is as we know, a comparatively male-dominant industry, yet Joy, as a successful female architect, has constructed a path for herself and set a wonderful role model for all. Joy is a loving and caring female and she strongly believes that as a female architect, she is using her nurturing instinct in aiming to make people's lives better. She strongly believes that female architects should think outside the box and use their motherly instinct to take the lead in their practice, thus providing the world with a perspective totally different from men. While asked about the advices for female architects around the world, Joy said firmly: "Be who you are. Don't try to copy what men are doing, we as women have our own way of expression. Embrace the fact that we are women, and

don't try to compete with men. Look at your strength and proceed with that mindset." In the architecture industry, women are just as capable as men and collaboration with each other is crucial in providing innovative points of view in the project. Being just that, a female architect, empowered Joy with a strong will of improving people's lives better. She is always persistent when it comes to this design philosophy. Joy doesn't yield easily for she sees the merit and values behind her philosophy so she is adamant about this process. Joy never stops believing in herself for she sees the living evidence of how many people's lives are greatly improved through her efforts. "I love life, I love being a woman, and I love people. I care about the way they live," said Joy, a sustainable professional architect, a loving environment planner, and a true role model for women.

