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## Inside View: Rosemary McMonigal of McMonigal Architects

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Rosemary McMonigal

Owner and principal of McMonigal Architects

Veteran architect Rosemary McMonigal and her 29-year-old northeast Minneapolis-based architecture firm went “green” long before it was chic. While her practice has included institutional and education projects, she’s best known for her work in housing. She’s continually searching for new techniques for healthy living and energy-efficient construction.

Recognizing her forward-thinking, sustainable designs, the Minnesota chapter of the American Institute of Architects named her a 2013 Architect of Distinction. The St. Paul native studied architecture at the University of Minnesota and Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. She also received a fellowship to work at a firm in Finland. She practiced at several Twin Cities firms before launching McMonigal Architects in 1984. She serves as architectural adviser to the Capitol area in St. Paul and taught at the University of Minnesota for five years.



Rosemary McMonigal

Q: How did being in Ireland and Finland influence your career?

A: On the Dublin side, there was a lot of exposure to more classical architecture... Look ahead a few years to when I was in Finland, and there the star architect is Alvar Aalto... He was very organic, very natural. Look at the landscape. Save trees. Understand natural materials and sustainability... I was able to glean a better understanding by actually working and not just being a tourist in the country.

Q: Why launch your firm when you were just in your mid-20s?

A: I just decided if I was ever going to step out and take a risk, I would do it while I was young.

Q: What's your practice based on?

A: Understanding what each person's vision of 'home' is. What you might close your eyes and describe to be your perfect vision of home could be different than mine or the next 10 people we talk to. So rather than have a trademark style that I dictate to clients, I've always tried envisioning what home is to them.

Q: You were green long before it became fashionable.

A: I had clients early on that emphasized energy savings, healthy living and local materials, and that just became our mantra, such that I never thought of trying to market us as that ... It really has been the basis of all of our projects.

Q: Can you offer an example?

A: We have many clients interested in reusing materials. In a remodeling, we work hard to save light fixtures and get them repaired if need be, rather than the throw-out attitude. We reuse flooring and find salvaged things. I've had clients willing to look for six months or a year to find an old door that exactly matches. It can take more energy... but we all believe that's the best way to do it if you can.

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