Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

¡Sí, Se Puede!

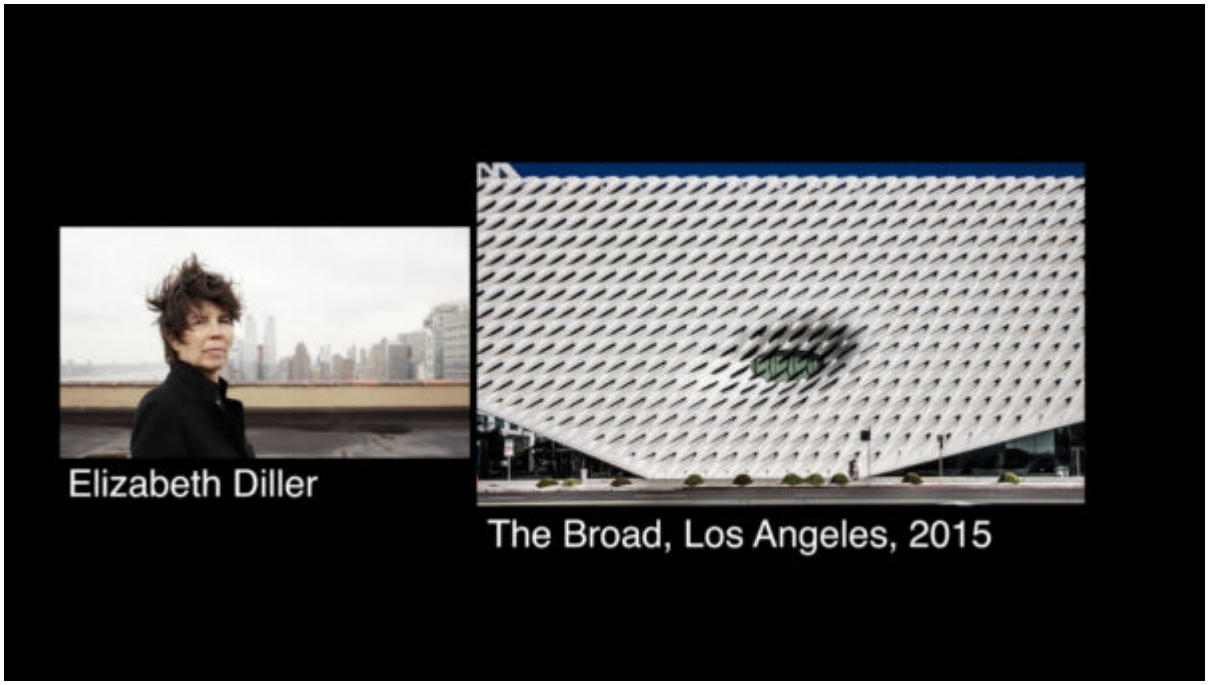
Rick Meghiddo · Wednesday, August 28th, 2019

This short documentary, "¡Sí Se Puede!," is dedicated to women of action on two subjects: architecture and politics. Seemingly unrelated, the two disciplines follow a similar process: DREAM > PROGRAM > DESIGN > BUILD. Both crafts demand courage, imagination, and tenacity.

The cry used as the title was conceived by Dolores Huerta (89) during the 1970s and has since been the motto of the United Farm Workers of America. President Barack Obama adopted the English version "Yes, we can!" first during the 2004 Illinois Democratic primary race for US Senate. It became a slogan of his 2008 presidential campaign.

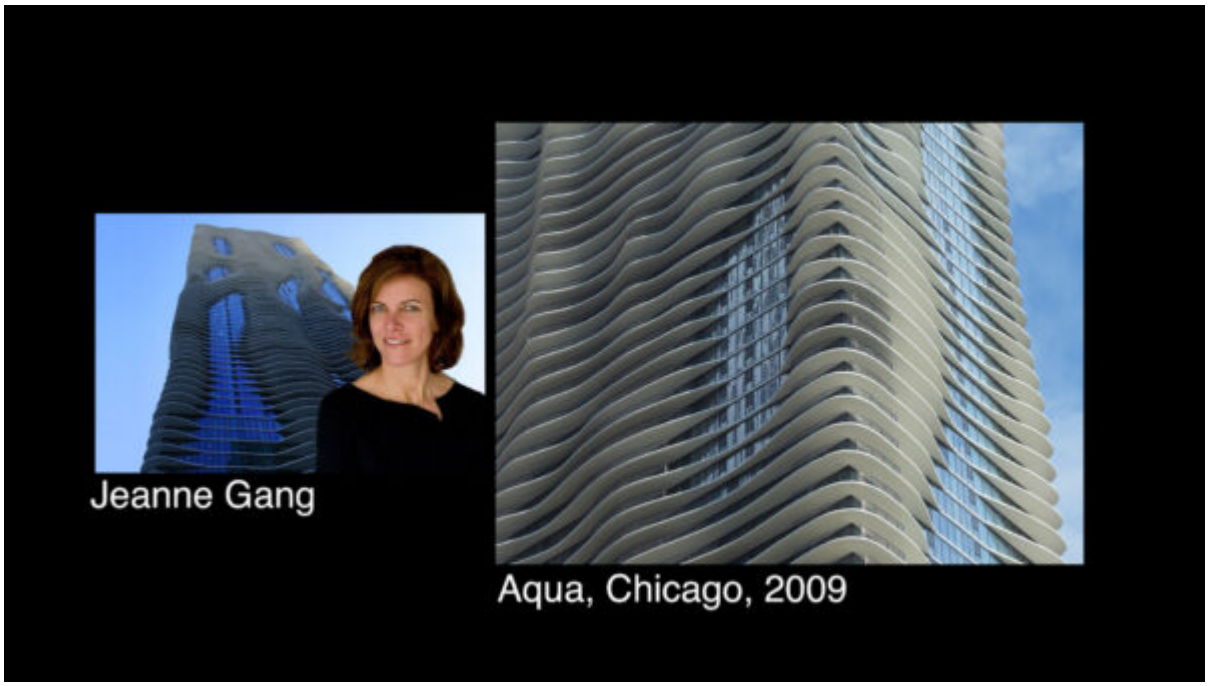
Dolores Huerta, neither an architect nor a politician—she has always been an American labor leader and civil rights activist—is chosen here as a symbol of a woman fighting for ideas.

Women-Architects and Women-Politicians

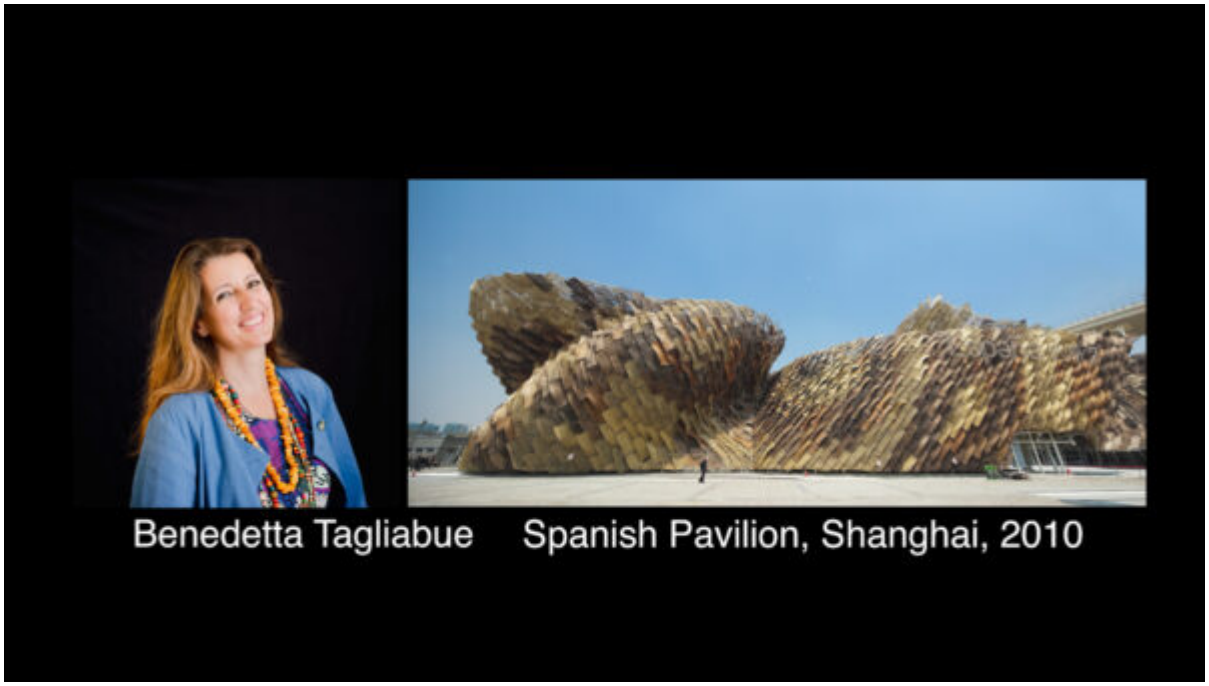


Elizabeth Diller

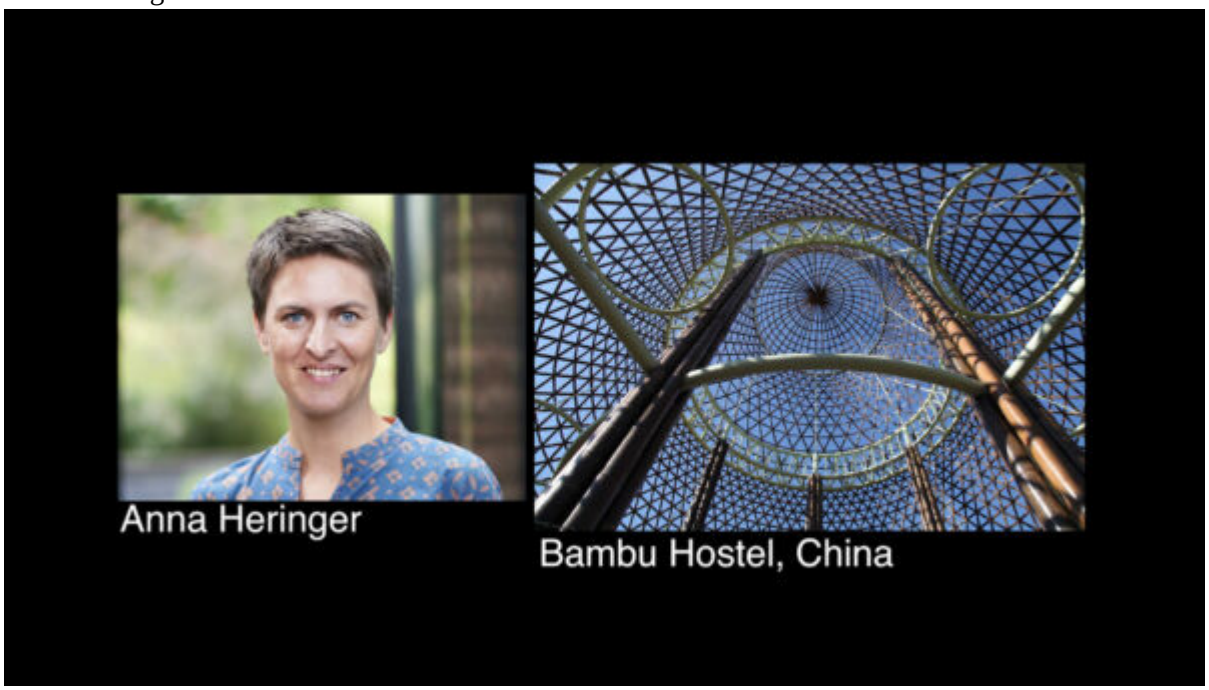
Zaha Hadid



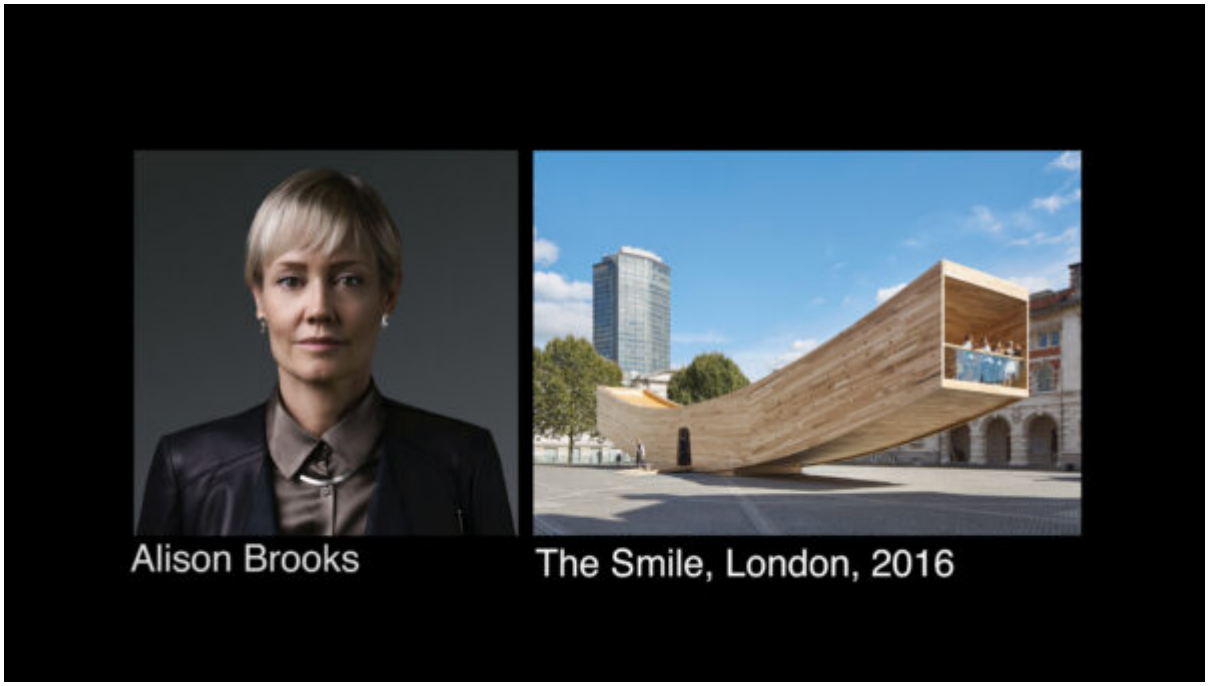
Jeanne Gang



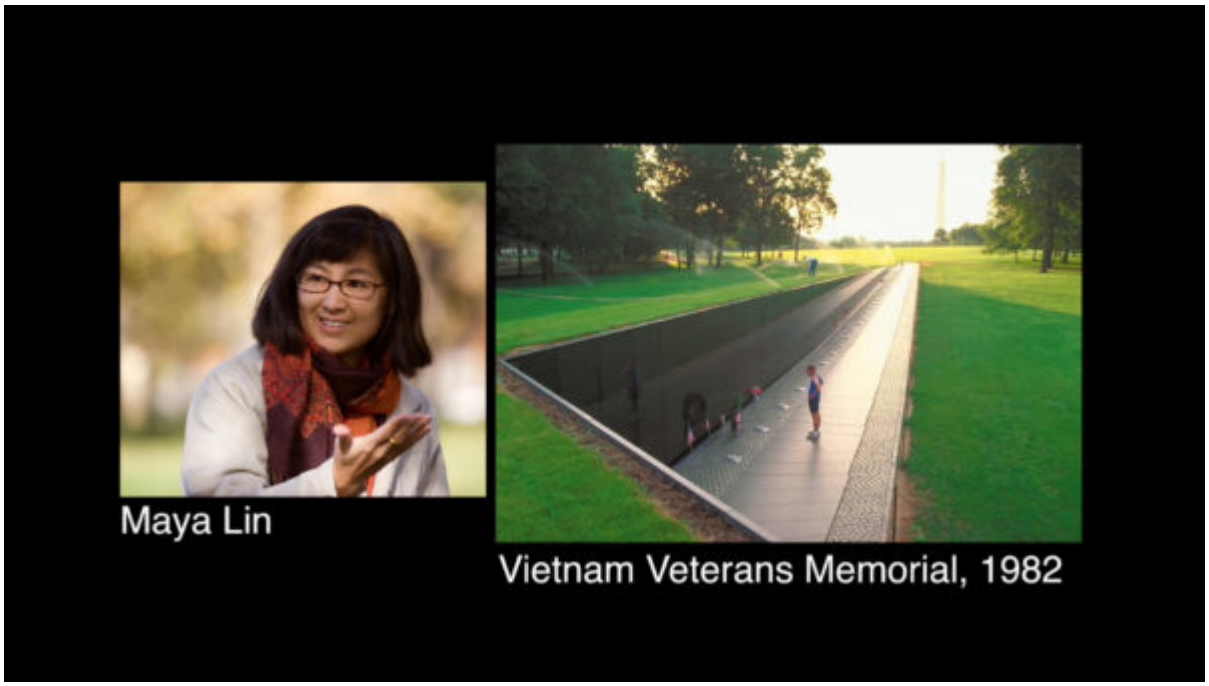
Benedetta taglibue



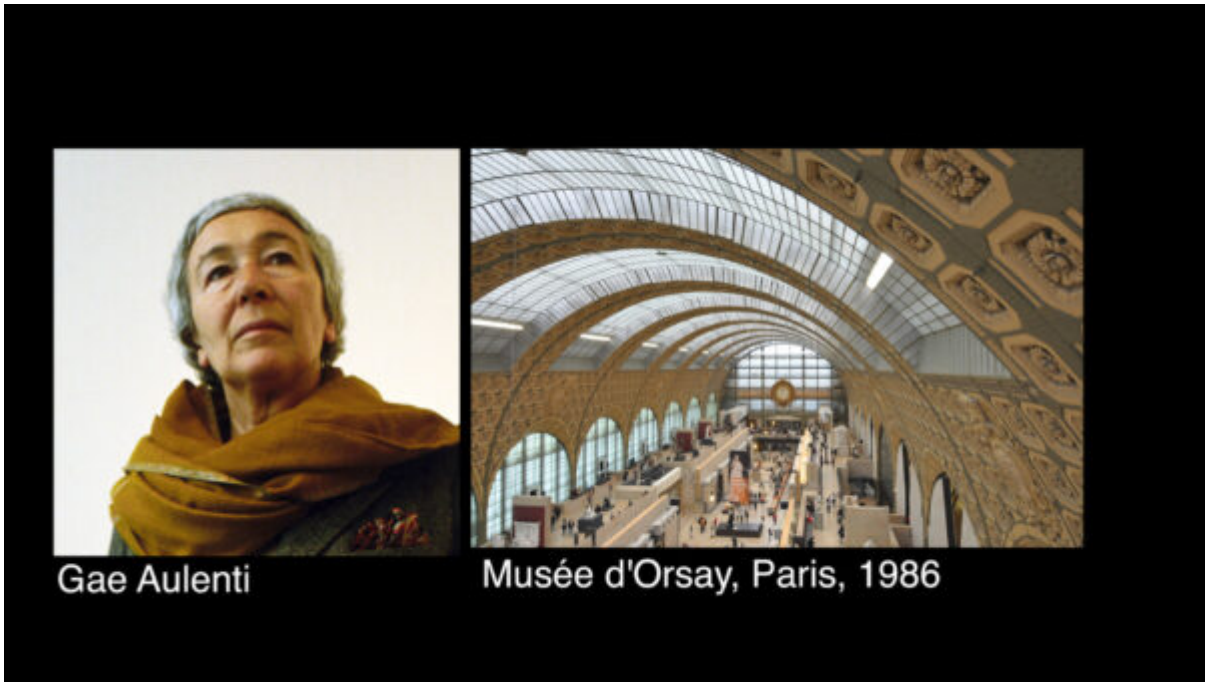
Anna Heringer



Alison Brooks

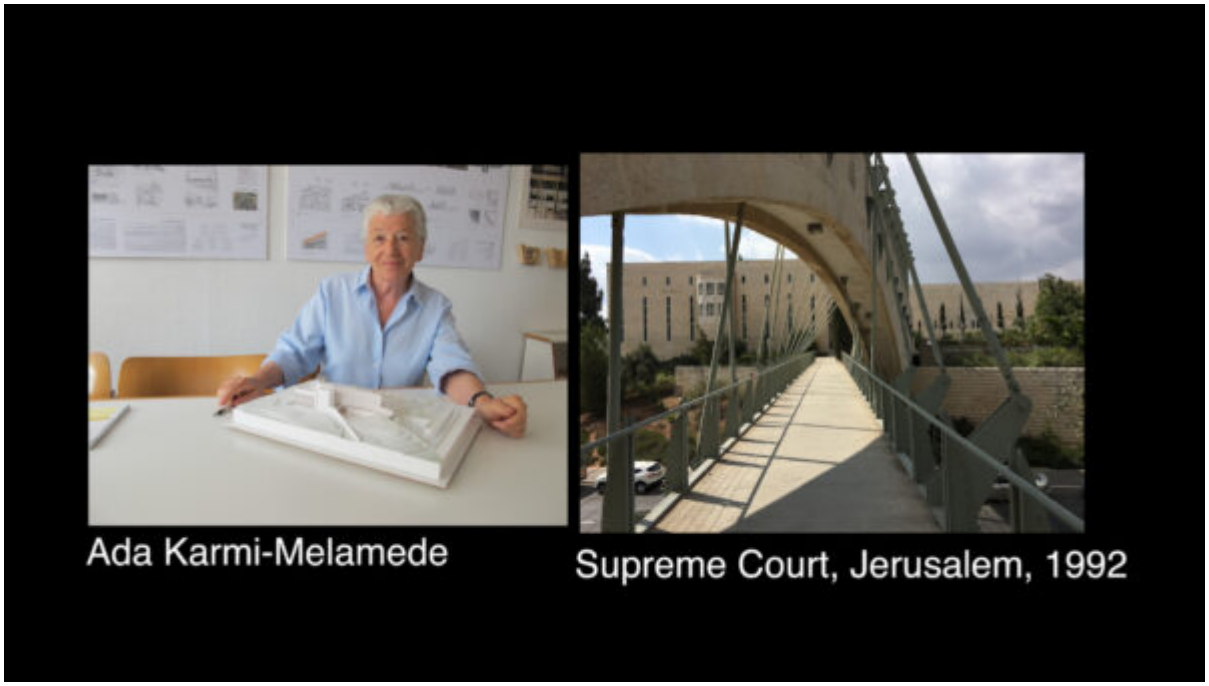


Maya Lin



Gae Aulenti

Ray Eames

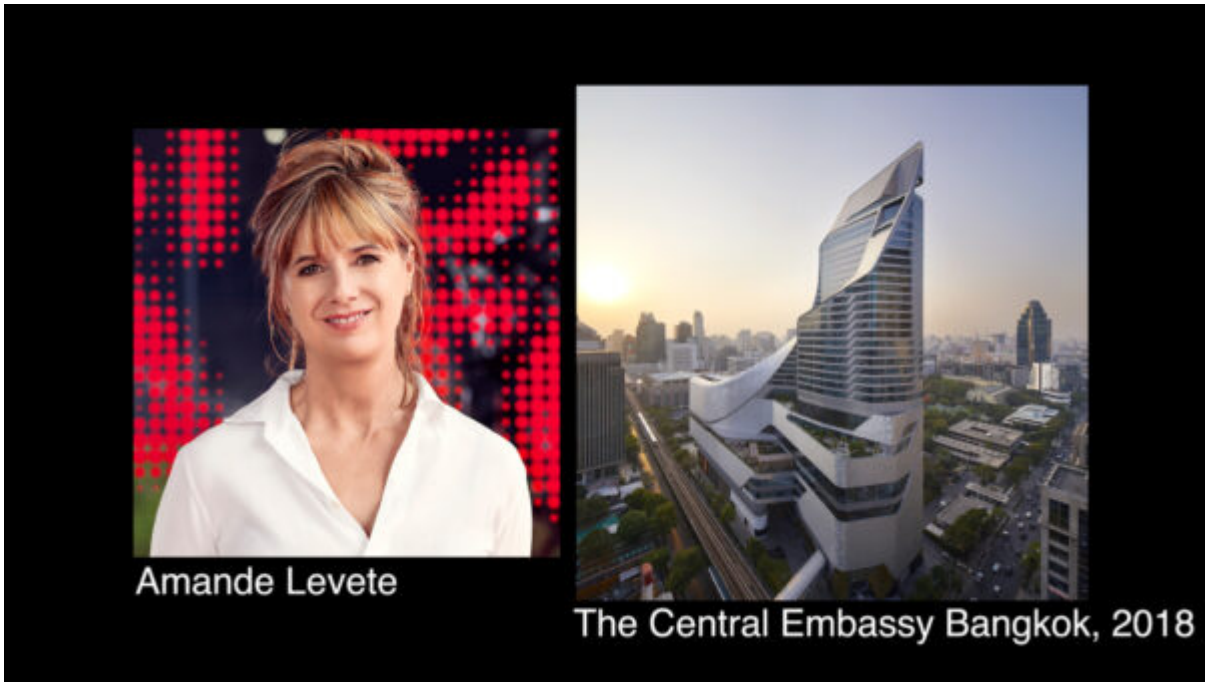


Ada Karmi-Melamede

Kazuyo Sejima

Lise Anne Couture

Caroline Bos



Amanda Levete

Roisin Heneghan

Michal Kimmel-Eshkolot

Gabriela Carrillo

Elora Hardy

The first two Democratic debates of twenty candidates running for President included six women: Senators Elizabeth Warren, MA; Kamala Harris, CA; Kirsten Gillibrand, NY; Amy Klobuchar MN; Representative Tulsi Gabbard, and Self-help author, Mariane Williamson. Their platforms have many overlapping, similar subjects. From all these, the most related to architecture are sustainability, the environment, infrastructure, education, affordable housing, and food production.

Included are also Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, NY, who won her nomination to the Congress at the age of twenty-nine, and Anne Hidalgo, Mayor of Paris, the first woman to hold the office. Ocasio-Cortez's proposed Green New Deal is likely to influence political decision-making in the foreseeable future. Anne Hidalgo's major part of her development program is the improvement of the environment. The infrastructure development plan also includes a 24-hour subway service, a ban on parking in certain areas and days, and the creation of new green areas, including urban farming.

Elizabeth Warren

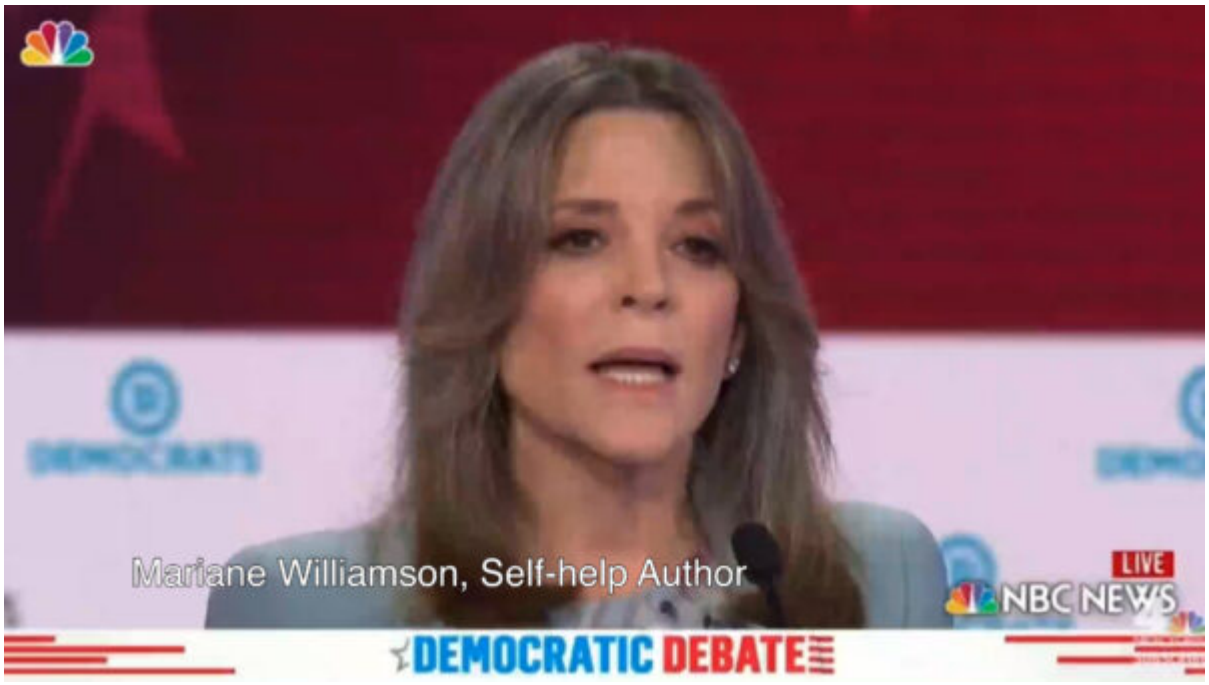
Kamala Harris

Anne Hidalgo

Kirsten Gillibrand

Amy Klobuchar

Tulsi Gabbard



Mariane Williamson

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

The women architects presented in the documentary come from different countries—Canada, Iraq, Poland, Israel, Mexico, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Spain, Germany, the UK, and the US—and they have built, besides their countries of residence, in Bangladesh, China, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, the Palestinean West Bank, and New Zealand.

There is a gap between the politicians and the architects on the broadness of worldview. While most of the politicians look widely at climate change, their vision on the physical implications of some of their subjects is limited to what is known. Architects, by training, learn to think globally and in multiple layers of complexity, and only then they work on the details. They use not only logical thinking but also lateral thinking, which implies infinite possibilities.

Besides Zaha Hadid, who died in 2016 at the age of sixty-five, the most innovative of the women architects brought here is Elizabeth Diller, a Partner of Diller Scofidio + Renfro. Her works include the High Line in New York and The Broad in Los Angeles. The Shed, currently under construction at the northern end of the High Line, is scheduled for completion in 2019. When completed, it is likely to become a revolutionary new icon of multi-use architecture. The $500m Center for the Performing Arts will house a vast transformable space and a big open piazza able to be covered by the extension of the movable outer shell, clad with an inflatable skin of quilted pneumatic cushions.

The Chicago skyline would not be the same without American architect Jeanne Gang. Aqua, the unique skyscraper that has become well-known for its wavy facade, is the third tallest building in the world designed by a woman. Most recently, she was named to the TIME 100 most influential people of 2019.

Also significant is the use of bamboo as a building material in the works of Anna Heringer in China and of Elora Hardy in Bali. Bamboo, an eco-friendly construction material, is one of the fastest-growing plants in the world.

Another architect to follow is Benedetta Tagliabue. In 1991 she founded the studio Miralles Tagliabue EMBT with Enric Miralles (1955-2000.) Her works include the Scottish Parliament in

Edinburg, The Santa Caterina Market in Barcelona, and the Spanish Pavilion in Shanghai, shown here.

Architects can take initiatives without waiting for a commission, but, in the final event, moving from paper-architecture to built-buildings requires other decision-makers: clients, city authorities, bankers, the community. The role of politicians is critical when the decisions needed are related to the urban environment, housing, and public institutions.

Politicians may—and should—dream big, yet moving from dreams to legislation to implementation demands, to a great extent, relaying on imaginative architects, who should possess, besides their skills, high moral standards.

A Personal Note

Influential women occupied a dominant place in my life. My mother, Fanny Frenkel de Maghidovich, was a strong presence not only at home but also publicly. As Secretary-General of Argentina's WIZO (Women International Zionist Organization,) she influenced thousands of listeners with her rhetoric in impeccable Spanish.

I grew up surrounded by loving aunts. From these, my aunt "Chichi," Dr. Marta Luz Frenkel, is an attorney still going to work every day at ninety-four. She is more "a big sister" than an aunt, and I rely on her judgment. I was also blessed by women-teachers of Spanish, English, and Math and I befriended some extraordinary women: Nancy Reeves, a pioneering feminist; Irena Kovaliska and Ilana Offer, committed artists; Sylvia Manheim, a political activist still fighting for human rights at ninety-four. The list goes on and on.

Last but not least, are my wife Ruth, also a partner as an architect, and our daughter Gabby, who, after practicing psychiatry, is still looking for new challenges. They both make a dent on my daily decision-making.

Fanny Frenkel de Maghidovich

Marta Luz Frenkel

Ruth Meghiddo

Gabby Meghiddo

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