



# JOYCE OWENS

Joyce Owens considers herself a citizen of the world. Born just outside of Chicago, her family often camped in national parks, where she built an appreciation for the Earth and its elements. Now, the modernist architect has built a reputation for designs that sync with Mother Nature's rhythm, leading with sustainability and rooted in a deep respect for the architecture of the past (she studied architecture in Rome and spent 11 years running her firm in London, where she specialized in historic buildings). Since landing in Fort Myers in 2004, she's been keen on understanding, reclaiming and creating a native language for architecture in Southwest Florida, gathering clues from traditional cracker houses, Seminole chickee huts and the midcentury modern design that's synonymous with nearby Sarasota. For a time, she penned a column in a local newspaper detailing the relevance of modern architecture locally, and she has curated museum exhibits in the region dedicated to local mid-century modern buildings.

Through her firm, Architecture Joyce Owens, she draws elements from the past with current design innovations to create residences that are wholly at home and resilient in their environment with elevated floorplans to protect from flooding,

high-pitched roofs that allow hot air to rise and rain to run off, deep overhangs for shade, cross-ventilation to capture the Gulf breezes, and details like using tinted glass to keep turtles on the beach and away from artificial light sources. "No matter what, we never forget that we are in Southwest Florida, and we have to deal with the climate, and we have to learn from the past," Joyce says.

Today, Joyce is a go-to for sustainable architecture and modernist designs. She's a force of nature, restoring island structures (like the 1970s cottage by innovative post-modernist Charles Moore, which she renovated on Captiva), designing sustainable homes and commercial buildings, and creating new techniques to ensure safe coastal living. As the islands recover from devastating hurricane damage, Joyce stresses the importance of building safer and smarter. She works with structural engineer Shawn Anderson at Select Structural on the islands. Together, their teams found a more effective alternative for stilt-like pilings, instead driving the pilings underground to act like tree roots, creating a foundation that lasts.

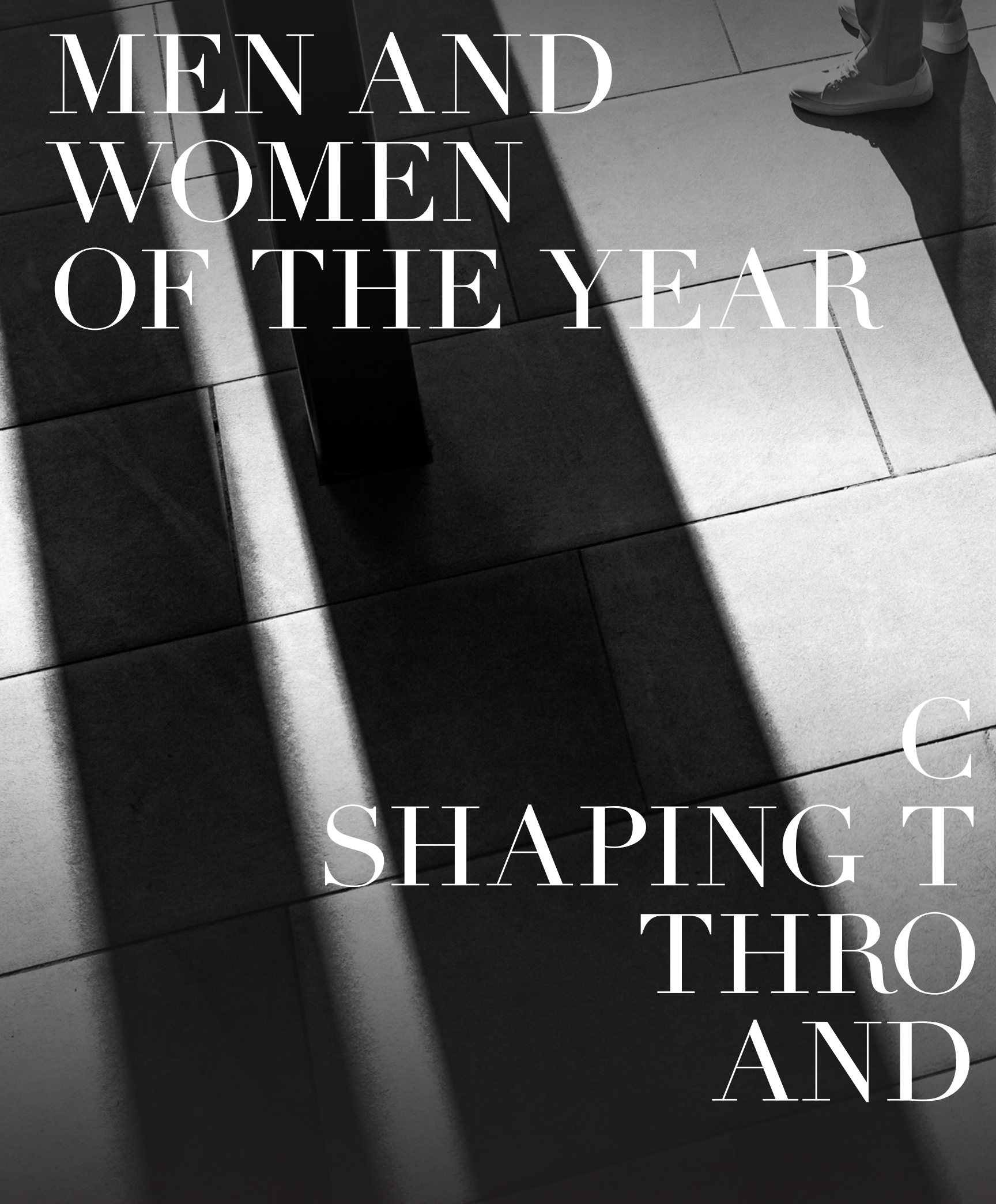
She's also inspiring a new generation of female leaders in the industry, working with young women on her team and local talent, like landscape

architect Mariah Bakke. Joyce's latest accomplishment through the American Institute of Architects marks a critical time for women in the traditionally male-dominated field. She revels in the number of women working in design and architecture today. Though female coworkers and mentors were far and few between early in her career, she points to a former colleague Andrea Clark Brown, who passed this year, as someone who inspired her with innovative designs that stand out in a sea of cookie-cutter developments.

In July, Joyce was the first woman to win the Gold Medal from the Florida chapter of AIA, the organization's highest award. "It's my responsibility to remind people where we live and what we need to do, and how architects, if you give them the chance, can help with many situations," she says.

Overdevelopment is a key concern for Joyce, who values sustainability and walkable communities. She thinks a lot about climate protection and affordable housing and how architects can be a force for good by building more thoughtful spaces. "It's important for architects to find our place in the community as we're moving forward," Joyce says. "I want to be the voice of my profession right now, to remind people that we do more than blueprints."—J.B.





MEN AND  
WOMEN  
OF THE YEAR

C  
SHAPING T  
THRO  
AND





# HANGEMAKERS THE COMMUNITY ROUGH ADVOCACY PHILANTHROPY

Photography by Omar Cruz Styling by Anna Ruiz