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AP MONEY WIRE

Snapshot

A look at local designers and what makes them tick.

February 25, 2004

Snapshot: Kristen Scott

By [SAM BENNETT](#)
Journal staff reporter

Principal and partner
Weber + Thompson
Year founded: 1987
Number of employees: 40
Location: 425 Pontius Ave. N., Seattle

Q: How long have you been with Weber + Thompson?

A: I was their first employee when I graduated from the University of Washington in 1989. When the firm was first established, we were very tightly focused on multi-family mixed-use -- mostly urban infill projects. We lacked project type diversity. In the early 1990s, when interest rates went up, the multi-family development market came to a standstill.

At that point, to broaden our services we added interior design services as well as a variety of new project types. We moved into financial facilities, commercial office and hospitality. Broadening the range of project types has allowed us to weather the ups and downs of the economy more easily.

Recently, we added planning as a major new discipline to our practice.

Q: How has W+T weathered the current slow economy?



Kristen Scott

A: Since interest rates are so low and demand is still high, housing has been exceptionally strong. So moving into planning and interiors has been very successful for us in. We've also seen a dramatic increase in projects going ahead in 2004 -- somebody opened the flood gates and said the economy has recovered in Seattle.



Blakely Hall at Issaquah Highlands will be a 9,000-square-foot community center building, and may achieve silver LEED certification.

Q: What projects have you most enjoyed working on?

A: For the past two years, I've been working on a new master-planned community in Issaquah Highlands, Crofton Springs and Crofton. The first phase, Crofton Springs has very diverse, eclectic homes -- from row houses that are formal on a more urban street edge to garden cottages set in the landscape. The key concept is to create a pedestrian-oriented community that fosters a sense of community and social interaction in what is essentially the suburbs. It's important to recognize that people create a sense of place through what they see, hear and touch -- through their memories. At Crofton Springs, we had the opportunity to create a meandering stream that flows through the middle of the site and provides a visual and auditory focal point for the neighborhood.

There are nine different housing types, each with plan and elevation variations. In addition, we used a variety of materials and colors to create a sense of individuality. We used over 80 different colors on 121 homes to instantly give the visual diversity you find in a more established urban neighborhood.

Another project I'm very excited about is Blakely Hall, a community center for all of Issaquah Highlands that we are designing for Port Blakely Communities. It's a 9,000-square-foot building, designed to walk the fine line between being warm and welcoming for homeowners and also needing to have the stature of a more public and civic building. Inside, we have highlighted timbers milled from local Port Blakely tree farms in a vaulted daylit space. We have designed clerestory lighting to create more even, natural daylighting inside.

Q: What made you accept the nomination to be AIA Seattle president this year?

A: There are so few women in architecture I felt it was important when I had this opportunity to be a role model and mentor to use it to encourage minorities and women to get into this profession by example.

Q: What are your goals as president?

A: AIA national has a big initiative this year to re-focus some of its energies to developing knowledge-sharing communities. As we all are more connected through Internet and geographic location means less, AIA has an opportunity to be a connector for people who have expert knowledge about issues, or project types or business models.

At AIA Seattle this year, we've focused on developing mini-conferences about different knowledge areas -- like in March we have a two-day residential design forum. We're doing

'Recognizing and

another conference on school design in the fall. We're also focused on community advocacy. As design professionals, we have a responsibility to share our problem solving abilities and insights for complex issues facing our communities.

Q: What's an important trend in architecture?

A: Sustainable architecture. When I talk to people around the country, they say Seattle is really on the forefront. Five years from now everyone will take for granted designs that have high indoor air quality and natural daylighting.

I also think there's something about modular building. When people think of modular, they think of a double-wide trailer. We're working with a firm in Canada to do the first multi-story condo building built with modular units. It's a six-unit condo in Fremont, and each modular unit is built in Canada and shipped to Seattle. They get lifted by crane and put into place on site. I think we'll see more and more modular housing like this because there are significant construction cost savings. Particularly in our area, there is an increasing gap between rising housing costs and what people are earning. Modular housing has the potential to bring the cost of housing down. What's been missing from modular housing has been design. I think there's a huge opportunity for architects to get involved and provide high quality, inexpensive design in this arena.

Q: Who are your influences?

A: The most influential person is my father, Michael Maher, who is also an architect. When I was a child, he spent so much time just explaining to me and showing the importance of being aware of your environment and really seeing the world around you. That's one of things that unfortunately gets glossed over in children's education today. Recognizing and valuing the quality of your environment changes your perception of the world and makes it much harder to ignore.

When I was a kid I always thought I could not be an architect because I was in awe of what he did. But my exposure to design, from a young age, apparently was infectious!

Q: What are your favorite buildings in town?

A: St. Ignatius Chapel has got to be right up there. I have a feeling that the new [Central] library is going to be one of my favorites. I think the quality of the interior space is going to be amazing. It's going to give everyone a unique view of downtown Seattle. When you're in that web of glass, seeing the entirety of tall buildings up to the sky is breathtaking and a view that is usually framed much tighter by small windows.

Q: What do you enjoy most about being an architect?

A: I love always learning something new on every project, and not repeating yourself -- always creating something different. And I love working with clients and the community to create projects that

valuing the quality of your environment changes your perception of the world and makes it much harder to ignore.'



Crofton Springs has seven styles of homes, each with its own mix of features.

everyone involved is proud of and are a successful addition to the neighborhood.

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