IAWA Symposium: Competition / Collaboration (Blacksburg, 1–2 Apr 27)

The International Archive of Women in Architecture Center, School of Architecture, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, Apr 1–02, 2027
Deadline: Nov 1, 2026

Elizabeth Keslacy, Virginia Tech

The International Archive of Women in Architecture Center 2027 Symposium:

Competition | Collaboration

The 2027 IAWA Symposium centers on competition and collaboration: two complimentary yet opposing modalities through which women have initiated and sustained their professional practices. As a form of labor within the capitalist system, architects compete for school admission, for employment, for individual projects, and for recognition. Conversely, architecture is an intensely collaborative profession. Not only do firms bring together architects of various roles and expertise to accomplish complex designs, but architects must collaborate with a broad spectrum of other professions in the design and realization of buildings. Architects also collaborate with the public, often inviting the building's constituents to participate in its design. Competition and collaboration often converge; for example, architecture firms often get their start through competition wins.

Competition and collaboration are shaped by questions of access, power, authorship, and recognition within the profession. For women architects, collaboration and mentorship have often created opportunities to establish and sustain practices within, and sometimes outside of, traditional professional structures. While architecture is produced through collective knowledge and labor, its histories have often privileged individual authorship, raising questions about whose contributions become visible and ultimately part of architectural history.

This symposium seeks scholarly work as well as practice-based perspectives on the relational nature of architecture. How have women in architecture leveraged competition and collaboration to further their careers? How is the design of buildings shaped by the structure of teams that create them? How have women innovated in the design of practice to meet the challenges of their time? By what means have women competed for recognition or credit when collaborations fail to highlight their contributions? To what extent have women utilized architectural competitions as a way to build their practice, and what can we learn from instances of women's successes and experiences in architectural competitions?

Possible topics include:

-Individual architects or firms whose careers were established through competitions or singular commissions

-Use of competition entries to enhance firm profile or develop an office's architectural language

-Innovative forms of collaboration within the profession and with adjacent professions, such as landscape architecture, interior design, engineering, or general contractors

-Innovative financial or legal structures used to accomplish projects, such as land trusts or integrated project delivery

-Studies exploring how recognition or credit is distributed among collaborators

-Microhistories of individual buildings shaped by collaborations

-Ethnographies of architectural firms that parse the role of competition and collaboration in firm operations

-Accounts of competition or collaboration in women's academic work

-Pedagogies of competition or collaboration

-Critiques or analyses of gendered conceptions of competition or collaboration

-Accounts of care work within the profession (such as employee resource groups)

The 2027 IAWA Symposium will be held at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA. Papers may be presented in person or virtually.

Please email 300-word abstract and a one-page CV, by November 1, 2026 to: iawacenter@vt.edu

Subject heading: 2027 IAWA Symposium Abstract Submission

Please indicate in your abstract if you plan to attend in person, or present virtually.

Call for Abstracts: September 15, 2026 – November 1, 2026
Selection announced: November 15, 2026

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Reference:

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