



Beverly Willis

Das Ziel ist noch nicht erreicht

Mein tiefer Wunsch nach Unabhängigkeit hat seine Wurzeln in meiner frühen Kindheit: Im Alter von sechs Jahren wurde ich für mehrere Jahre in ein Waisenhaus gesteckt. Ich rebellierte gegen die rigide Struktur dieser „Anstalt“.

Wer nicht den Regeln folgt – und ich habe das niemals getan –, erwirbt eine gewisse Furchtlosigkeit. Sie hat mich angetrieben, meine Ziele immer höher zu stecken: Nach dem Studium habe ich mich sofort selbstständig gemacht. Mit jedem Schritt habe ich gemerkt, dass ich noch einen weiteren gehen kann. Mein Engagement für Frauen in der Architektur verdeutlicht diese Entwicklung sehr gut.

In den 1970er Jahren ging es für Frauen zuerst einmal darum, überhaupt arbeiten zu dürfen und einen Job zu bekommen. Heute kämpfen wir um den Zugang zu den Führungsebenen – auch im Bereich der Gebäudegestaltung. Männer würden sich lieber vor den Zug werfen, als Frauen hier angemessene Deutungshoheit und Entscheidungskompetenzen einzuräumen. Es geht dabei um nichts weniger als die Frage, wer Kreativität für sich beanspruchen darf.

Aber wo liegt der Unterschied zwischen entwerfenden Männern und Frauen? „Star-Architekten“ wie Gehry wollen in sich geschlossene Skulpturen schaffen und entwickeln Marken: Kennt man ein Gebäude, kennt man sie alle. Frauen hingegen geht es beim Entwerfen oft um die Beziehung zwischen Mensch und Umwelt. In den 1970er Jahren beispielsweise wurden infolge zunehmender Stadtflucht riesige Wohnbauprojekte „auf der grünen Wiese“ entwickelt. Da die Planer aber die Beschaffenheit des Geländes nicht kannten, kam es zu Erdbeben, Überflutungen, Todesfällen. Um solche Vorfälle zu vermeiden, hat mein Büro 1971 das Computerprogramm CARLA

entwickelt, mit dem man auch große Baugelände vermessen und beschreiben kann – und dies ermöglichte Entwürfe, die die Sicherheit künftiger Bewohner gewährleisten.

Frauen haben in vielen Bereichen unglaubliche Dinge geleistet. Die USA wollten den ersten Mann ins All schicken – aber er weigerte sich, in die Kapsel zu steigen, bis eine geniale Mathematikerin, auf deren Kompetenz er vertraute, die für den Flug maßgeblichen Koordinaten durchgerechnet hatte. Wer wusste davon, bevor 2016 der Film *Hidden Figures* erschien? Die Arbeit dieser Frau war essenziell für das ganze Vorhaben und blieb doch unbeachtet.

Den meisten Künstlern und Architekten geht es darum, Spuren zu hinterlassen. Schon in jungen Jahren merkte ich, dass Frauen in den Geschichtsbüchern nicht vorkommen, dass, egal wie gut ich war, niemand davon erfahren würde. Das motiviert mich bis heute in meinem Bemühen, die Geschichte von Frauen zu schreiben: Ich arbeite dafür gemeinsam mit Historikern an der Umgestaltung der amerikanischen Lehrpläne. Zudem stelle ich derzeit meinen neuen Film fertig: *Unknown New York – The City that Women Built*.

Warum ich das erzähle? Der Kampf für Frauen in der Architektur ist noch nicht vorbei, das Ziel noch nicht erreicht. Wir müssen Durchhaltevermögen zeigen. Durch meine Tätigkeit lerne ich immer noch dazu – das ist großartig. Im Alter von 89 ist es für mich nach wie vor selbstverständlich, nach dem Frühstück an die Arbeit zu gehen. Und ich kann noch dazu auswählen, woran ich arbeiten möchte. Das Leben könnte gar nicht besser sein! ■

Aufgezeichnet von Myrta Köhler

<https://translate.google.com/>

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by Myrta Köhler (1)

My deep desire for independence has its roots in my early childhood: At the age of six, I was put in an orphanage for several years. I rebelled against the rigid structure of this "institution".

Who does not follow the rules - and I have never done that - acquires a certain fearlessness. That's what drove me to set my goals higher and higher: after graduation I have immediately started my own business. I have realized with every step that I can go one step further. My commitment to women in architecture illustrates this development very well.

In the 1970s, for women the first aim was to be allowed to work at all and get a job. Today we are fighting for access to the leadership levels - also in the area of tall building design. Men would rather throw themselves under a train than to grant women authority to interpret and powers to decide. It is about nothing less than the question of who can claim creativity for themselves.

But where is the difference between designing men and designing women? "Star architects" like Frank Gehry want to create self-contained sculptures that are confined and complete in themselves and that develop their "brands": If you know one building, you know them all. For women, in contrast, designing is often about the relationship between people and their environment. For example, in the 1970s, as a result of the increasing urban exodus, huge housing development projects were developed "on the green meadow". As the planners often did not know the nature of the land, there were cases of landslides, floods, deaths. To prevent such incidents, my office has developed in 1971 the computer program CARLA, with which one can measure and describe also large project sites - and this enabled designs that ensure the safety of future residents.

Women have done incredible things in many areas. The US wanted to send the first man into space - but he refused to climb into the capsule until a brilliant female mathematician, whose competence he trusted, had manually calculated key coordinates for the flight. Who knew about this before the movie *Hidden Figures* was released in 2016? The work of this woman was essential for the entire project and yet it remained unnoticed.

Most artists and architects care about making impressions to leave behind. Only at a late age, did I realized that women do not exist in the history books. That motivates me to this day in my effort to documents the stories of women: I work together with historians who aim to transform American curricula. Also, I am currently finishing my new movie: *Unknown New York - The City that Women Built* .

Why am I telling this? The fight for women in architecture is not over, the goal has not yet been reached. We have to show stamina. Through my work I am still learning – and that's great. Even at 89 it is still natural for me, to go to work after breakfast. In addition, I can still choose what I want to work on. Life couldn't be better! *End of translation of article*

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by Myrta Köhler (2)

Why I am telling this

The goal has not been reached yet

It goes without saying, that at 89 the architect and women's rights activist Beverly Willis still goes to work every day straight after breakfast - shoot films and work on the transformation of the American school and college curricula to promote an equal rights view of history.

“My deep desire for independence has its roots in my early childhood: When I was six, I was put in an orphanage for several years. I rebelled against the rigid structure of this "institution".

Those who do not follow the rules - and I have never done that - will acquire a certain amount fearlessness. This fearlessness has driven me to put my goals ever higher: After graduation I immediately started my own business. With every step I realized that I can go one more step. My commitment to women in architecture illustrates this development very well.

In the 1970s, women first of all wanted to work and get a job. Today we are fighting for access to the leadership levels - also in the area of tall building design. Men would rather throw themselves in front of the train than give women appropriate interpretation and decision-making powers. This is about nothing less than the question of who can claim creativity for themselves.

But where is the difference between designing men and designing women? "Star-architects" like Frank Gehry want to create and develop self-contained sculptures and create their "brands:" If you know one building, you know them all. Women, on the other hand, when designing are more interested in the relationship between people and the environment. For example, in the 1970s, due to increasing urban exodus, huge "green field" housing projects were developed. Since the planners did not know the nature of the construction site, landslides, floods, and even deaths occurred. To avoid such incidents, my office has, in 1971, developed the computer program CARLA, with which one can measure and describe also large construction sites - and this enabled designs that guaranteed security for future residents.

Women have done incredible things in many areas. The US wanted to send the first man into space - but he refused to get into the capsule, until a brilliant woman mathematician, whose competence he trusted, would calculate by hand key coordinates for the flight. Who knew about this before the 2016 movie *Hidden Figures* was released? The work of this woman was essential for the whole project but remained unnoticed.

Most artists and architects are about leaving their mark. Towards the end of my career, I realized that women do not appear in the history books, and that, no matter how good any woman was, no one would ever know her name or work. That motivates me to this day in my efforts to document the story of women. I work with historians on the transformation of American curricula. I also currently finishing my new movie: *Unknown New York - The City that Women Built*.

Why am I telling this? The fight for women in architecture is not over yet, the goal has not yet been reached. We have to show endurance. Through my work I am still learning - that's great. At the age of 89 it is still natural for me to go to work straight after breakfast. Further, I can choose what I want to work on. Life could not be better!

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