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Nancy Keatinge

the futurist



Not everyone would consider having the same business partner and life partner an ideal situation. But Nancy Keatinge, principal of Santa Monica, Calif., design firm Felderman + Keatinge Associates (FKA) feels fortunate to be able to work with her husband Stanley Felderman to grow the company that they started in 1991. "It's really great how we brainstorm and use each other as a sounding board," she says. "We take our work home with us every night, and we love it. Ideas are constantly germinating. We're always evaluating and reevaluating; it's the nature of our work."

Keatinge prides herself on running a firm that she sees as unique. "We really delve into the essence of who our clients are," she says. "There's no off-the-shelf-design. We always start with a clean slate, which is what keeps things fresh and interesting." Even if a client approaches her based on designs for another project, she would say to them, "Yes, that worked for them. But you are a different brand, and let's discover what works best for you." Keatinge feels most accomplished when she pushes clients beyond what is comfortable for them, provoking them to accomplish more than they thought was possible. Reiterating a mantra that her firm executes in all their designs, she says, "The risk in architecture is not in being different, but in remaining static." Keatinge feels the pressure to keep current, continuing to evolve and reinvent designs.

A successful professional who is currently juggling leading her design firm, building her

own home, and raising twin three-year-olds, Keatinge does not feel limited by her gender. But she admits she must be a good communicator in order to push her clients to explore who they are. "I remain confident, knowing I've been successful at doing this before," she says. "The challenge is getting clients to trust my judgement when I urge them to take another step forward. And inevitably those are our most rewarding projects."

Active in the Southern California region, FKA is in the process of working on diverse projects including a law firm, media center, and winery, as well as completing work in Singapore and Japan. FKA's progressive designs for the law offices of White O'Connor, Curry & Avanzado in Los Angeles help define the company brand through abundant use of glass, which projects a "feel of openness and community within the space," according to Keatinge.

Known for looking to the future for design inspiration, FKA's innovative approach inevitably will be relevant well into the 21st Century—a primary objective of the firm. "We are passionate about envisioning and embracing the future," Keatinge says, as she is motivated by the prospect of forging her clients ahead. Gratiified by the breadth of her accomplishments, Keatinge says, "My focus is on creating inspiring spaces that authenticate who our clients are. We co-create the environments together. I'm helping people to achieve more than they ever thought they could. And that's exciting to me." ■