

Ma Ry Kim, principal and design director at Group 70 International, was dreaming big by the age of six. As a first-grader at Enchanted Lakes Elementary School in Kailua, she witnessed a classmate's father build a small model. She learned the word "architecture" and says, "From that day I wanted to be an architect and I never wavered from that."

"Later, my granddad, being a very Korean man, asked, 'What is it in architecture that you do?' I said, 'Grandpa, I'm going to build buildings.' His response was, 'Gosh, it's too bad you're not a boy'—because this is a male profession ... I grew up in the shadow of that type of tradition."

As a 19-year-old student at USC, Kim says she had a transformational experience one day in design studio taught by Greek architect Panos Koulermos. "I resisted being there because he was so mean," Kim says. "One day he said to me, 'I don't know why someone with so much spirit designs such soulless buildings.' I was so upset, but it was a pivotal moment. That's the first time I realized that architecture was really about spirit, not so much about form."

After USC, Kim studied in France at the Centre D'Etudes D'Architecture Et Urbanism and the Architectural Association School of Architecture, London. She is a member of the United Kingdom's Architects Registration Board and the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Kim went to work for Gensler, an international design firm, at its Los Angeles office, and later relocated to its London office.

For the Dubai International Financial Centre, she designed the 15-story Gate Building with more than 500,000 square feet of office, retail and parking space; the Sky Gardens, a 45-floor tower featuring natural ventilation and five interior hanging garden atriums rising five to seven floors; and the Park Towers whose unique geometry and façade-angled design won the title of "World's Best" in the "Best Mixed-Use Development" category at the International Property Awards in London in 2011.

Kim also designed the Arco Towers Sofia in Bulgaria, the city's largest mixed-use project, the Canyon Shopping Center in St. Petersburg, Russia and the

almost \$3 billion redevelopment of 140 schools in Kent County, England.

Working with Gensler and Patrick Bellew, founding director of Atelier Ten, Kim helped design the Abu Dhabi Police Academy. Topped with a shield design, the roof surface has thousands of "eyes" that open and close in



Architect Ma Ry Kim, principal and design director at Group 70.

response to the temperature.

Creating the concept design for a shopping center that would take advantage of a new connection to the Trans-Siberian Railway in Novosibirsk, Kim says she learned about this area, nicknamed the "Chicago of Siberia." In a region where winter temperatures can plummet to -31 degrees, decisions can be a matter of life and death. Kim says, "with even small mistakes in planning and programming, somebody could die or entire neighborhoods fold; so every decision made carries a hundred times its weight."

Kim says one of her most amazing experiences was the 81.5-acre Ibn Hani Bay Resort in Latakia, Syria. The Mediterranean seaport is rich in religious sites, ancient history and culture, but work stalled when civil war reached Damascus, 200 miles to the northeast.

"Art Gensler use to say, 'Good design is good business' but if you're designing for profit per square foot and how much rent you're going to get, you are not going to get there," Kim says. "You need to design for place, for spirit, and that will lead to success. Clients are very savvy today. They understand that. It's a big shift from 20 years ago when I entered the profession."

Kim left Gensler to return home on medical advice that the Hawaii environment was more resilient for the health of a newly born twin son. She accepted a post as associate professor

and director of professional studios in the Doctor of Architecture program at the University of Hawaii.

Working with female students, Kim found some reticent to start a family, fearing the load of balancing a profession with household responsibilities. Admitting her biggest challenge is

being a single mother of five, this 41-year-old architect says, "I think the key is when you work you find measures to not be distracted. And when you're a mother, you're a mother. Learn how to separate your time such that you're not doing anything at 50 percent. It demands a lot of focus. I sleep really well at night."

Kim says she feels very blessed having met G70's Chairman Francis Oda when trying to open doors for her students. She says it was the only firm that hadn't asked her to join up to that point. "I think I'm young compared to my counterparts here," Kim says. "But after working 100-hour weeks for the last 20 years, I should be about 80 in architect years."

For her first design project with Group 70, Kim is teaming once again with Bellew of Atelier Ten on an undisclosed Department of Education Net Zero high school project on a Neighbor Island. She says Net Zero is not just generating energy with all its technology, but figuring out how the building lives most comfortably with the land.

"The profession is changing in a huge way," Kim says. "The world is flattening and technology is moving too fast. You need to design for place, for spirit, and that will lead to success. It's something I actually learned after coming back to Hawaii. It's like learning architecture all over again from a different perspective. Hawaii is amazing." 🏠