



INTERVIEW WITH ARCHITECT OLIVIA E. SCHIMEK-HICKISCH MSC

Do you think your profession is diversified enough?

Yes, certainly, and that's my favorite aspect of architecture. It touches so many different areas from art and creativity to engineering. Every day I can discover something completely new, immerse myself in it and incorporate it into my work. I am happy because my office carries out so many different types of projects in all areas of our discipline, so I can really enjoy this variety in my daily work.

What fulfils you most in your profession?

Positive feedback from clients or users. All I want to achieve as an architect is the creation of pleasant living and working spaces for people. This is my basic motivation and most important driving force, and is decisive for all my decisions in the planning and construction process. People should feel comfortable and relaxed in my buildings and enjoy the materials and colours around them.

How have your customers and projects benefited from your commitment?

We usually act as general planners and therefore offer the highest quality the work in every department. This means that we can optimize economic and ecological aspects in every phase of a project and pay attention to quality. I also have strong convictions about energy efficiency and innovation, where we try to implement every project afterwards. Customers see us as a competent partner who successfully implements their project.

How do you live the feminine? Do you see it as an advantage or a disadvantage?

I feel that the feminine, especially in my male professional environment, is absolutely positive and an advantage. Thankfully, I have never experienced a situation, in which "a woman" would have brought me a disadvantage. On the other side, I approach some things differently and my contribution is experienced as enrichment. Based on this experience I can only recommend to every woman to enter male domains, when she finds her "vocation" there. Competence and Engagement, ultimately personal satisfaction in his work, are a prerequisite, but this also applies to the two genders.

What does this order of women mean „Silberner Hexenbesen am Goldenen Band“? Why was it awarded to you by the City of Linz?

Behind this award is a very serious and committed women's politics. The Linz Women's Office and the Linz Women's Committee want to encourage all other women by awarding this prize to "extraordinary" women, show them with role models and positive examples that one can successfully follow one's own path. In my case, two essential aspects have certainly led to this award: for one thing, because I'm just doing a male job and for other thing, because I am engaged in women's politics in this area. I founded a women's committee in our professional association and so we have created the opportunity, to enrich a previously largely male-dominated professional representation with the female factor.

And I also see it as an enrichment, because it is not about the opposition of the genders, but about enhanced cooperation.

Power - powerless. On which Side do you stand?

In my actual professional situation I am on the "power side" or better expressed in a positive way, I am a decision maker. As an architect, you are the decide in many situations: In the creative process, for my employees, on the building site for the executing companies and craftsmen, etc. But sometimes I feel "powerlessness" in particular situations and these are exactly those moments, where gender plays a decisive role. Then I am confronted with this "glass" wall or ceiling, that restricts us women because of our gender. And these situations still exist far too often. We are in order to generate an awareness and in the best way to demolish them. Positive and equal coexistence of both genders is to be achieved.