

Image by Dovilė Čiapaitė with Ashleigh-Paige Fielding.

## [Six women architects that "deserve to win the RIBA Royal Gold Medal"](#)

[Tom Ravenscroft](#) | [28 May 2020](#)

Women's collective [Part W](#) has selected six women that it believes are deserving of winning the [RIBA Royal Gold Medal](#), to help address the gender imbalance of past winners.

Nominations for the 2021 [RIBA Royal Gold Medal](#) are now open and [Part W](#) is campaigning for [RIBA](#) members to put forward women architects to help address the huge gender imbalance of the previous winners.

Since it was first awarded in 1848 there has only been one woman – [Zaha Hadid](#) – named sole winner of the medal.

"We want to share our nominations for the Royal Gold Medal with Dezeen readers in the hope that they will support our nominations or even better will make a nomination themselves – or via a friendly RIBA Member – to the RIBA by the 12th June 2020," said Part W members Hilary Satchwell and Sarah Ackland.

"We hope that readers will look broadly and carefully at their influences and not just decide that architectural authority just has one gender. These six are only a few of those that inspire us."

### **These women "have paved the way"**

Although Part W wants to encourage RIBA members to nominate any worthy women, this year the organisation is focused on drawing attention to five women architects and one collective of women architects.

Part W is encouraging members to nominate post-modern architecture pioneer [Denise Scott Brown](#); Pakistan's first female architect Yasmeen Lari, who was the [winner of the Jane Drew](#)

[Prize in 2020](#); Czech architect [Eva Jiřičná](#), American architecture professor Sharon Egretta Sutton; Scottish architect Kate Macintosh; and influential collective Matrix.

"These women have made significant contribution to how women practice today, they have paved the way for us and a future generation of women architects," said Satchwell and Ackland. "They deserve to win the RIBA Royal Gold Medal."

"These are not people about whom monographs or lavish articles abound as it seems that we just don't recognise, or record, those operating outside of, generally male, hero worshipping architectural culture in the same way," they continued.

"By addressing the balance of the very unbalanced list of previous Royal Gold Medal winners we are addressing the imbalance in practice, our leaders, our values and in our workplace, creating role models for women entering the profession and within the industry."

**"There is still a very long way to go"**

Part W believes that the women all meet the criteria set by RIBA to win the Royal Gold Medal.

"All of the nominations are supported by a range of evidence in the form of published articles, support from key architects, residents, community groups, and writers and examples of their work," explained Satchwell and Ackland. "We have done the research so that the RIBA Gold Medal committee understands their contribution."

Last year Part W launched [an initiative to crowdsource an all-female alternative](#) to the predominantly male RIBA Royal Gold Medal winners list. The 2020 award was [won by Grafton Architects](#), which is lead by Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara.

"Grafton Architects were actually on our alternative list for the 2021 win so we were thrilled when they won," said Satchwell and Ackland.

"But even last year's brilliant award to Grafton Architects only brought the percentage of female to male winners in the awards 172 year history up to a whopping 3.3 per cent. There is still a very long way to go."

Below are the six women that Part W are encouraging RIBA members to nominate this year:



**Yasmeen Lari, nominated by Alisha Morenike Fisher**

"The work Yasmeen Lari continues to make within the field of architecture is exemplary. At an urgent time where we really need safer and more dignified places built for everyone to live in which is not built on the exploitative practices of our planet, Lari continues to be a global innovator and teacher," said Fisher, who is co-founder of the Migrants Bureau.

"Lari's career began in the 1970s testing and developing models to withstand earthquakes and floods utilising local and natural methods. Proving thousands with sustainable livelihoods, the 'barefoot' model has enabled communities the autonomy to deliver and construct housing and community spaces."

"Awarding her the RIBA Gold Medal Award testifies not only to the positive impact architecture can have on the climate but also the infrastructure required to preserve culture, which can only broadcast the RIBA's values towards human life, our eco-system and the next generation of architects, design practitioners and educators like myself."



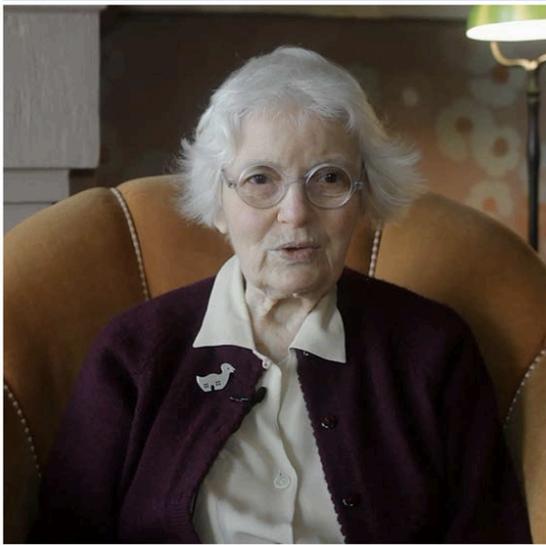
Portrait by [Ivan Jones](#)

### **Kate Macintosh, nominated by Hilary Satchwell**

"Kate Macintosh's life-long contribution to the advancement of architecture is remarkable. Her work has so often led the way - across public housing design, social theory, education, women's rights and tenants' rights," said Satchwell.

"From public housing architects, to policy makers, students, critics and residents, the immensely wide-ranging and continual positive impact of her work is astonishing," she continued.

"In 2015, architecture critic Rowan Moore described Kate as "one of Britain's great unsung architects of social housing". Kate is a truly remarkable architect and campaigner who has strongly influenced the direction of public housing."



**Denise Scott Brown, nominated by Sarah Wigglesworth**

"Denise Scott Brown has been a game-changer as an architect, urban planner, writer and educator. Her work has, in particular, fundamentally changed our understanding of the relevance of cultural and economic forces to form within everyday and popular environments," said Part W member architect Wigglesworth.

"Brown is highly unusual in accomplishing these things both within architectural education, where she has been a pioneer of collaborative working and within practice. Her brave and inspiring work raising awareness of the barriers faced by women in our profession has frequently reflected her own marginalisation," she continued.

"Her work has made a conscious virtue of the liminal position in architecture, presenting a new understanding of the mainstream by celebrating the vernacular and commonplace traditions that are overlooked in orthodox histories of US architecture."



Photo of Matrix member Anne Thorne, courtesy of Part W

**Matrix, nominated by Harriet Harriss**

"Matrix Collective undertook ground breaking work during a period of great political change in the UK. They held both architecture and the government to account, demanding equality, empathy, and justice in spatial design and society at large," said Part W member [Harriss](#) who is dean of the Pratt Institute School of Architecture.

"They offered a compelling counter-argument to the values of a mainstream male-dominated profession and encouraged a generation of women to imagine that a career in architecture could be available to them. They also gave voice to the end-user, something that many architects still seem to struggle with, even now," she continued.

"Although it's been decades since they closed, their legacy continues - not only in the work of the founding members, who are now all leading educators – but in creating a blueprint for the many public engagement oriented practices who are leading the field today."



**Sharon Egretta Sutton, nominated by Yemí Aládérún**

"As an architect, activist, international educator, public scholar, collagist and printmaker, Sharon Egretta Sutton has made invaluable contributions to her community, her profession, her country and to many others internationally," said Part W member and RIBA Council member Aládérún.

"Her life's work has focused on community-based participatory research and design in disenfranchised communities. Her commitment to this vital but unglamorous sector of architecture is humbling. She is an inspiration to all those who are interested in improving people's lives through architecture and other city-making professions."



### Eva Jiřičná, nominated by Christine Murray

"Eva Jiřičná is a worthy recipient of the Royal Gold Medal for her extraordinary contribution to architecture in the face of significant challenge and setbacks that would have deterred many," said Part W member and former editor of the Architects' Journal Murray.

"Jiřičná pioneered the use of structural glass, redefined the architectural interior and established a new language for retail, expanding the discipline of architecture into an area that many of us would recognise on the high street today."

### Comments

-  **Milton Welch** · 4 days ago · edited  
Well, there is no shortage in fashion statements at least.  
^ | v · Reply · Share ›
-  **alex** · 9 days ago  
The decision to show photos of the women, rather than photos of their amazing work, is surely part of the problem!  
1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›
-  **LaoluRG** · 10 days ago · edited  
Quite the list. Glad these discussions are being had.  
^ | v · Reply · Share ›
-  **buildings** · 10 days ago · edited  
For someone who is not familiar with work of any of these architects, it would be more instructive to show images of some of their worthy projects than their portrait photos.  
1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ›
-  **Tim Gough** · 10 days ago · edited  
This is a great list – hard to chose between them. All great for different reasons.  
^ | v · Reply · Share ›