



### Studio President

#### Sharon Exley MAAE ASID

In 1994, Sharon co-founded Architecture Is Fun, a Chicago design and research-based studio with a focus on play, public space and design for kids, families, and communities. She is a hybrid professional – a designer, educator, author, mentor, and firm president responsible for the design of branded interiors and day-to-day studio management. Before starting the studio with her partner, Peter Exley, FAIA, she worked for Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) Chicago and Boston and Moshe Safdie and Associates, Cambridge.

Sharon graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Master of Arts in Arts Education with Museum Emphasis. Sharon is an active member of the American Society of Interior Designers, serving recently as a juror for the ICFA Design Excellence Awards (International Casual Furnishings Association). In 2011, Sharon founded the woman-owned business, Fun Finders, a companion procurement company presenting a curated collection of distinctive products, objects of curiosity and custom millwork, decor and furnishings for clients and colleagues.

#### Award-Winning Educative Designer

With Architecture Is Fun, Sharon serves as educative designer on learning and play projects across the U.S. and in Canada and Rio de Janeiro. Sharon’s interior design work has been recognized with numerous honors and awards including the American Society of Interior Design Awards, International Interior Design Association Awards, and American Library Design Awards. Cited projects include the Frost Art Museum, Young At Art Museum, Evanston Public Library, Fountaindale Public Library, Weissbluth Pediatrics and DuPage Children’s Museum. In 2012, Architecture Is Fun was awarded the Benjamin Moore HUE Award for exceptional use of color in commercial architecture. Most recently, Sharon co-designed the St. Augustine Lighthouse and Maritime Museum projects, which utilize storytelling and sustainability as ways to share naval archaeology. As a co-leader in the studio’s trademark participatory process, Sharon has envisioned public space, play and branded experiences for The Field Museum, Chicago Children’s Museum, Calgary Public Library, Rio de Janeiro’s *Lagoon Explora* and Ronald McDonald House Charities.

#### Stewardship and Advocacy Leader

Inside and outside the studio, Sharon works with communities and non-profits to bring a vocabulary of design and architecture to children, students, and institutions supporting play and learning. She has presented teacher workshops at the Art Institute of Chicago, architecture workshops at the Museum of Contemporary Art and often teaches at Chicago’s public schools, bringing programs to students that cross-disciplines and integrate art into STEM initiatives. Sharon serves as a frequent thesis advisor and mentor for the School of the Art Institute of Chicago community and young design professionals. She was an active board member of Archi-Treasures, initiating a fundraising junior board that secured financial stability for the local non-profit. For her continued efforts, Sharon was awarded the *Gem of the Community Award*.

#### Thought Leader

Sharon is the author of multiple publications, several forewords, journal articles and a frequent guest speaker at conferences and guest author for a multitude of design and family-centric magazines, journals and publications.

*Designing for children carries a social responsibility beyond bright colors and scaled-down furnishings to achieve perceptible and informed environments for learning and play.*  
~Sharon Exley, MAAE ASID

*Sharon unearths and brings to light objects that invoke wonder and curiosity, inspiring kids and adults alike to learn and create!*  
~ Jenna Townsend, Interior Design Colleague

*My firm has worked on several projects with Sharon. One of her talents is finding the perfect furniture and millwork pieces, accessories and objects; all very unique or hard to find. She's doing what she does best and we benefit from it. Thanks Sharon."*  
~ Howard Kagan, AIA, Architect & Collaborator

*Interning and assisting Sharon on projects has been an incredibly enriching experience. The studio's expertise in innovative educative design is world class, and their dedication to their work is inspirational. The amount I've learned from Sharon in such a short time is a testament to her skills as a mentor and manager.*  
~ Dana Crawford, Interior Designer & Former Architecture Is Fun Intern

*I have had the pleasure of knowing Sharon for many years. She is one of the most resourceful and creative people I know. Undaunted by challenge, Sharon is rare -- she honors her commitments/projects with conviction from start through flawless execution/completion, no matter their size.*  
~ Kelly M. Martincin, Business Strategist

*I believe in creating beauty that's worth building a community around. Collaborating builds confidence in the power of play, art, and design to transform communities.*  
~ Sharon Exley, MAAE ASID



### Director of Architecture

#### Peter Exley FAIA RIBA:

As Architecture Is Fun’s co-founder with over 25 years of experience and managing over \$200 million of construction projects, Peter leads the design effort from initial concept through project realization. Prior to the start-up of the studio with his partner, Sharon Exley MAAE, Peter worked for *Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM)* Chicago and London, *Venturi Scott Brown & Associates*, *The Architects Collaborative* Cambridge and was Associate Partner at *DeStefano Goettsch* Chicago.

Peter graduated with a Master of Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, 1990 and a Bachelor of Arts First Class Honours in Architecture, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom in 1985. An advocate for education that is fundamentally educated, Peter carried an IPMA Level D Certification Management Training from the International Project Management Association and LEED AP certified. Peter completed the following Executive Education classes at Harvard University Graduate School of Design: *Museum Planning Practicum*, *Institute for Child Care Design: Early Care and Education Centers* and *Effective Education and Innovative Learning Environments*.

#### Award-Winning Architect

With Architecture Is Fun, Peter serves as the director of architecture on public space, play and learning projects, responsible for the day-to-day management of the design team. His work and service have been recognized with many honors and awards including AIA chapter awards for design and service with many education and accessibility awards. As a co-leader in the studio’s trademark participatory process, Peter has envisioned public space, play and branded experiences for The Field Museum, Burpee Museum of Natural History, Calgary Public Library, Rio de Janeiro’s *Lagoon Explora* and Ronald McDonald House Charities. Recognized for his collaborative spirit, Peter is sought after as lead designer, associating with fellow AIA members as a consulting expert to museums planning public space and branded environments, such as the J. Paul Getty Museum. His collaborative approach results in highly successful projects, with quantifiable success and economic impact to their communities.

#### Stewardship and Advocacy Leader

With an inward and outward focus, Peter works with non-profits to create architecture that speaks to communities. He conducts building workshops with families, tours children around Chicago’s notable buildings, and presents lectures about play and participation across the U.S. and beyond. Peter uses teaching as a living laboratory vital to their trademark educative design methodology. Peter has been an adjunct professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) for 25 years.

#### Thought Leader

Speaking, writing and mentoring young professionals, Peter shares his methodology and what he has learned. He contributes to national design magazines, museum and industry blogs, and journals to advance dialogue on design.

Peter serves the AIA in a number of roles, currently At-Large Director, AIA National Board of Directors. Prior roles include President of AIA Chicago, Strategic Council regional representative AIA Illinois, chair of the Public Awareness Campaign Subcommittee - Public Outreach Committee, and has acted as a liaison to the Young Architects Forum.

*It's all about looking at the world with child-like wonder and understanding.*  
~ Peter Exley FAIA RIBA

*The children who visit the Mid-Michigan Children's Museum may not know the condition of the former auto dealership before Peter accepted the project, but adults are impressed with the final \$6.2 million product. The re-purposing and reuse of this building fit within the economic revitalization plans for the city of Saginaw. The museum serves as a key anchor for the neighborhood and a catalyst for stimulating the local economy, attracting tourism and improving the quality of life in our community. We respect and appreciate Peter Exley for his commitment to quality and innovation.*  
~ Angela Barris, President and CEO  
Mid-Michigan Children's Museum

*As a returning SAIC Interior Architecture student, Peter must have had his hands full with me. I turned to him for professional and artistic guidance frequently, as he generously gave of his opinions, suggestions and time. He believed in me, encouraged me to strengthen my own style and direction and nudged me into examining both the profession of architecture as well as my place in it. Most importantly, he shared his passion for architecture and design with me from the start. In Peter, this is like breathing; it just comes naturally.*  
~ Jan Kolar, Architect & Graphic Artist  
Metropolitan Water Reclamation District,  
Former SAIC Student

*As a leader in the Chicago architecture community, he has helped me expand my network through the AIA Bridge program, as well as the always fabulous Chicago PechaKucha events. I know I can always turn to Peter when I need to discuss career decisions. I have never followed a traditional path and he understands there is more than one way to arrive at the destination. I feel fortunate to consider him a mentor as well as a peer and friend.*  
~ Traci Wile  
Organizing For Action  
Former SAIC Student