

Q&A **five minutes** with



■ Clara Carnot, senior associate at Chris Dyson Architects, on how she got started in property, her top film and book recommendations, her number-one travel destination and the most ridiculous fact she knows

How did you join the property industry?

I fell into architecture almost by accident. I was not sure what to study after my GCSEs, and a career counsellor suggested that I go to an open day at the architecture school in Marseille, based on tests that showed strengths in maths as well as creative subjects. I loved the school, but what really convinced me were the physical models that the students had made - I thought they were amazing.

What does your job entail?

As a senior associate at Chris Dyson Architects, I lead a team of assistants from concept design through to completion across a range of projects. I get to work on buildings of all types and scales, from planning for Bishopsgate Goodsynd in London to private residences and the recent development of media offices on Old Queen Street in Westminster.

What do you like most about the property industry?

I like the collaborative nature of my job. Architecture is not something we work away at on our own. We need great clients who are on board with interesting designs, a great team of consultants to support us and great contractors to help us deliver the best version of the project. It really is a team effort in the widest possible sense.

And what do you dislike most about it?

The slowness of how some things get done. It should take time to design good-quality buildings, but further down the line, a lot of time is spent waiting for permissions, for funds to be released and

for various processes that can make things difficult both for our clients and the design team.

What would you change about the property industry?

The industry is slowly changing and becoming more reflective of the people we design for, but it could be more inclusive. This benefits everyone, because otherwise we are missing out on opportunities to have richer, more interesting places and buildings.

What barriers or challenges have you overcome?

Architecture is a field still dominated by men at certain levels, and being a young woman has come with challenges. At the beginning of my career, people would assume that I was an assistant or an interior designer rather than the architect leading a multi-million-pound project. In these situations, I felt I had to work harder to get people to follow my lead, and to trust that I have the right knowledge and experience to do the job.

What are you most proud of in your career?

I am proud of my growth over the past decade within the practice, and the great projects I have delivered with my team.

What do you value in people?

Honesty and hard work; people who are accountable and reliable.

What advice would you give someone starting a career in the property industry?

The industry is not what you think it is. You need to be resilient and willing to get your hands dirty. If not, perhaps consider a different career.



▲ I love Wes Anderson's movies as they are always aesthetically very pleasing, as well as really well written and directed with fantastic casts. If I had to pick one, I would probably go for *The Darjeeling Limited*.



▲ I loved reading *1Q84* by Haruki Murakami. I remember not being able to put it down. I am a big fan of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell and love Murakami's work, so *1Q84* is in many ways the perfect book for me.



▲ My number-one travel destination is Ladakh in India, which I visited with my mother a few years ago, and it has really left a lasting impression on me. The landscapes are truly breathtaking and the local population is so warm and welcoming - it was a very emotional experience. Although I would normally want to discover somewhere new, given the opportunity, I would go back in a heartbeat.



▲ The most ridiculous fact I know is that pistol shrimps generate tiny bubbles that rocket outwards like a sonic boom when they shut their claws. They use this as a power punch to stun and kill their prey, and the sound is so intense that it can interfere with submarine communications. I know this from my toddler's animal books - my partner and I tried to impress each other with facts, but we both knew what the source was.