

Heather Besemer- Schulz

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Profile

Architectural Designer | Creative Instigator | Material Explorer

She is an architectural designer and multidisciplinary artist working at the intersection of architecture, spatial design, digital media, photography, and branding. Moving fluidly between disciplines, she brings a hands-on, concept-driven approach grounded in curiosity and material exploration. Through storytelling, iteration, and design research, she translates ideas into spatial, visual, and experiential outcomes that are intentional, contextually responsive, and emotionally resonant. Her process is a continual dialogue with materials, space, and ideas, guided by a belief in design as both play and purpose.

Her nonlinear career path reflects openness, a commitment to continuous learning, and a drive to uncover new creative intersections. She thrives in generative environments where experimentation is encouraged and ideas take shape through collaboration and making.

Education

Pratt Institute – M.Arch, 2023
Cornell University – BA, Liberal Arts

Skills

Conceptual + Design Skills

Concept development, speculative systems thinking, systems mapping, cultural analysis, research-driven design, design strategy, narrative framing, program development, experience architecture, brand environments, visual identity systems, design curation, cross-disciplinary collaboration, creative direction, iterative design process, audience research, content strategy, grant writing & proposals

Professional Expertise + Leadership

Project leadership, budget and scope definition, timeline planning, team coordination, stakeholder collaboration, documentation workflows, event production, client presentation, pitch development, workshop facilitation, public speaking, course design & teaching, editorial writing, Miro, Google Workspace, Microsoft Office

Design + Fabrication

Rhino, Grasshopper, Revit, SketchUp, RhinoCAM, spatial modeling, schematic design, design development, construction documents, zoning and code analysis, consultant coordination, CNC machining, 3D printing, laser cutting, physical prototyping, material exploration, fabrication coordination, vendor coordination, installation planning, on-site supervision, AxiDraw

Visualization + Media

Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, After Effects, Premiere), Inkscape, KeyShot, Enscape, Capture One, Lightroom, advanced compositing & retouching, analog media, projection mapping, visual storytelling

Computational + Emerging Technologies

Python (for Rhino/Grasshopper), Blender, Meshmixer, PolyCam (3D scanning), TouchDesigner, MadMapper, Processing, MidJourney, Runway ML, Veras, Fotor

Environmental & Experiential Design

ClimateStudio, Ladybug Tools, environmental systems thinking, climate-responsive design, sustainable design strategies, climate adaptation, exhibition & interpretive design, visitor experience, spatial installations

Co-Founder | Vanity Project www.vanityproject.site

Brooklyn, NY | May 2024 – Present

- Spearhead concept-driven installations merging architecture, photography, and branding to create innovative multimedia experiences.
- Direct material exploration and prototyping initiatives to expand form and narrative possibilities in architectural installations.
- Orchestrate end-to-end project execution, from research and fabrication to public presentation and documentation.
- Lead cross-disciplinary creative teams, fostering collaboration between designers, fabricators, and stakeholders.
- Implement comprehensive architectural and material design strategies, integrating advanced visualization techniques.
- Establish creative direction for print, digital media, and exhibition platforms.
- Develop compelling narratives through artist statements and grant proposals, securing funding and establishing conceptual frameworks.

Graduate Assistant | Graduate Design Seminar

Pratt Institute | 2023

- Orchestrated guest lecture series, managing speaker outreach, scheduling, and event logistics for seamless program delivery.
- Developed comprehensive speaker profiles and contextual materials to support faculty introductions and course themes.
- Facilitated effective communication channels between students and faculty, ensuring clear dissemination of course updates.
- Implemented systematic documentation processes for student work, maintaining organized digital archives
- Provided detailed project feedback incorporating multidisciplinary perspectives in architecture and visual culture.

Senior Retoucher | Sony Music / RRD

New York, NY | 2009 – 2020

- Led high-end retouching and digital compositing projects, ensuring brand consistency across marketing materials.
- Enhanced visual storytelling through advanced color theory and digital manipulation techniques.
- Maintained cohesive brand identity across diverse marketing and promotional assets.
- Collaborated with creative directors and recording artists to develop visual narratives for album releases and campaigns.
- Led high-end retouching and digital compositing projects, ensuring brand consistency across marketing materials.
- Enhanced visual storytelling through advanced color theory and digital manipulation techniques.
- Maintained cohesive brand identity across diverse marketing and promotional assets.

Creative Professional | Various Locations

Ithaca, NY, New York, London, Dublin, San Francisco | 1997–2009

Retouching & Post-Production

- Executed high-end retouching for major publications including Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, Elle, W Magazine, Vanity Fair, GQ, Numero, Dazed and others
- Established post-production workflows for editorial and commercial projects, implementing advanced color grading systems.
- Strengthened brand narratives through sophisticated visual enhancement and composition refinement.

Photography & Creative Direction

- Directed full-scale photoshoots across editorial, fashion, and fine art sectors, managing pre-production to final delivery.
- Developed creative concepts with clients and stakeholders to align visual narratives with brand objectives.
- Executed technical photography in high-pressure environments, ensuring exceptional image quality and creative vision.

Creative & Technical Support

- Managed on-set operations for high-profile fashion and music shoots, coordinating lighting and technical requirements.
- Designed and taught comprehensive 12-week photography courses at Cornell University, covering traditional and experimental techniques.
- Developed innovative course curricula integrating technical skills with creative exploration in analog photography.