



Adaeze Cadet. Photo by Michael Higgins

# PANTHERS SHAPE THE FUTURE WITH ADAEZE CADET

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BY JOHARI WILEY



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It is not enough for a building to merely stand – to take up space – to house us and our occupations. It must arrest one’s gaze. ... Adaeze Cadet (“A-day-zay Ca-day”) understands the art of architecture and through her designs as struck the balance between utility and aesthetic: between form and function.

The artistic capacity of buildings is lost on most. Buildings are everywhere and many are unremarkable. But, as the Design Principal at architecture firm HOK’s Los Angeles studio (she is the first Black woman to hold this position), Cadet has overseen the design of office buildings, apartments, hospitals, and hotels that are distinct in their beauty and efficacy. As an architect, Cadet assumes the role of an infrastructural curator and invites us into the gallery that is the skyline. Among her works are the West Hollywood Edition Hotel, the Jasper building in San Francisco, and Two Lincoln Tower in Bellevue, Washington.

A major addition to Cadet’s portfolio will be the UCLA Health Neuropsychiatric Hospital. Set to open in the Spring of 2026, this facility will act as an urban oasis within Los Angeles’ Mid-Wilshire neighborhood. An example of the way buildings may be used to solve problems, the hospital is being designed to cater to the needs of its healthcare professionals as much as its patients.

Long before Cadet began working with HOK, she was the de facto design principal of her elementary school classes’ Lego projects. Throughout her youth she maintained prodigious eyes for design until deciding, at age 9, to commit herself to a life of architectural study and practice. Thus, she began checking out books on architects and their techniques and read them with fervor. Through her studies, she realized there were few Black woman architects: Black women account for less than 1% of architects in the United States. Among this percentage were Norma Merrick Sklarek – the first Black woman to be licensed in New York and California. Another inspiration was Gabrielle Bullock – the first female architect Cadet saw in a leadership position at a large firm. Their influence only increased her zeal and instilled in her the revelation that she would serve as a trailblazer for Black women who seek to practice architecture.





Two Lincoln Tower. [www.liveattwolincolntower.com](http://www.liveattwolincolntower.com)





UCLA Health Neuropsychiatric Hospital. Rendering by ICON

Cadet was made more aware of the importance of inclusivity when she began her undergrad studies at Philadelphia University, now a part of Thomas Jefferson University. Following an encounter with a professor who made her feel like her work would not be accepted or understood, she decided to transfer to Prairie View A&M University's School of Architecture. Her experience at PVAMU furthered her realization of the range of talent and ideas that Black Americans – Black women in particular – offer to the world of architecture. She went on to become a two-time alumna of PVAMU – earning her Master of Architecture in 2005. Following graduation, she applied for her architectural license with the Texas Board of Architectural Examiners and passed all of the exams on her first attempt.

Today, Cadet continues her fight to extend representation for Black women in architecture. She is a member of the National Organization of Minority Architects, various AEC (Architectural, Engineering, and Construction) organizations, and is a mentor to several students at PVAMU's School of Architecture.



Bioterra Groundbreaking, Photo Courtesy of Longfellow



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Suggestions for alumni recognition?

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