



THE WOMEN LEADING ROBERT BIRD GROUP'S SPECIALIST TEAMS!

At Robert Bird Group, powerful women are breaking through the glass ceiling and striving for success, with greater motivation than ever before. Inspiring females are proving to themselves and others around them, that they have the skills, knowledge, experience and passion to lead and develop teams on some of the world's most ambitious projects. Combining positive stakeholder engagement, adept commercial management of resources and specialist technical prowess, these women offer bright perspective to RBG's service offering. Our proactive Diversity & Inclusion Committee, working closely with the People & Culture Team and supported by the Leadership Group, has enabled a development platform that focuses on opportunities for women. With this platform we envisage sustained growth in female staff numbers, across all levels, for the foreseeable future. Below each gives her own insight as to what is it like to be a woman working in the construction industry.



LEADING EUROPE'S GEOTECHNICAL TEAM

Paola Caporaletti Associate Director

Paola has over 15 years' experience in the industry and has been with RBG for just over three years, leading the Geotechnical Team in the London office and more recently supporting the growth of the team in Dubai. As part of her role, she manages the geotechnical related aspects of numerous multidisciplinary infrastructure and building projects, both nationally and internationally. Under her guidance and supervision, the geotechnical team has grown into a dynamic team with a positive and inclusive culture, where everybody is invited to share and challenge ideas, learning from one another.

Paola has been fascinated by Leonardo Da Vinci's work and engineering inventions since she was a young girl, fuelling her passion for solving problems and finding solutions through her ingenuity. This, and her love for Maths, attracted her to engineering. Her love for geotechnical engineering and her passion for empowering the professional and personal growth of her colleagues, building relationships based on mutual trust, are the key aspects that keep her motivated.

Paola experienced first-hand gender bias at work, feeling judged and having to prove more than others, just on the basis of gender rather than her professional capabilities. It is vital that the industry keeps reaching out to younger generations with an inclusive approach. Only in this way, with a truly diverse and integrated environment, can the industry thrive forward.

Paola has learnt that the key drivers for enjoying what you do every day are to follow your passions, never stop learning and build enriching professional relationships based on mutual trust and respect.

Laura Legnani

Associate

After seven years with RBG and following her promotion in 2019, Laura is back working in the firm's ATS team as the team leader, to develop the unit using her reputation gained from experience on some of the most challenging structural projects in an engineer's repertoire. Her team takes on projects where standard design and construction approaches won't suffice and combines them with the company's stated specialty of being able to work out how to build the most complex structures. Looking after and promoting the growth of the engineers she works with, has revealed to be the most challenging aspect of her job.

Laura has been fascinated for a long time by the early engineering pioneers such as the Florence Cathedral dome designer Filippo Brunelleschi, who in the 1400s took on what was considered impossible to build and did it anyway. Laura's love for maths and physics was her drive when looking for a career; then, the ability to see and 'actually physically touch' the outcome of her work attracted Laura to engineering. She enjoys her engineering career and the feeling of being able through her work to make a positive impact to the environment we live in.

Laura was told at the start of her career not to worry about what she didn't know, but to go and find out. 'Never give up and keep pushing' has then become her mantra. She believes that true and sincere collaborations would enrich her and others, both professionally and personally, so her guideline to all people is to collaborate and interact with as many people as they can.

Laura has experienced first-hand gender bias at work. Women feel the need to work harder and justify to others that they deserve holding senior positions. She perceives the construction industry is still an 'old boys club' when it comes to roles of leadership and she therefore believes that diversity is the pivotal achievement to move forward all together, within the construction industry and as a society. Reaching out to the younger generations to break the old stereotypes, is the key action to build a more diverse and inclusive profession in the construction industry.

A portrait of Laura Legnani, a woman with long brown hair, smiling slightly. She is wearing a dark blue top with white polka dots. The background is a plain, light grey color.

**TEAM LEADER OF
THE ADVANCED
TECHNICAL
SERVICES (ATS)**



LEADING EUROPE'S CIVIL TEAM

Lisa Rapson Director

Lisa Rapson is the Director of the Civil Engineering Team in RBG. She has 20 years of experience and her expertise is confirmed by the three promotions she achieved, from Technical to Regional and to Discipline Director, in consecutive years. Her decision to become a Civil Engineer was linked to her desire to make a difference, to be able to influence and enhance people's lives and the local community. "As Civil Engineers we are able to do precisely that: we take a run-down area and regenerate it, creating enhanced environments for people to live in, to learn, to work and to just be.

We create communities and associated infrastructure that will remain long beyond the time that we will. Our present will become our future and, in time, our history." She feels proud that her visions and creations will touch so many people's lives, communities, built environments and improved their quality of being.

Here is her mantra, a statement that summarizes her exceptional commitment to the profession and the society: "Our legacy are the communities we build and the way of life we create for ourselves". This is a remarkable legacy example on giving back and making a difference. Despite of the beauty of its outcomes, Civil Engineering is a very challenging discipline. From master planning developments to strategic highways and access roads, delivering infrastructure projects requires various skillsets: geometric, drainage, earthworks and utilities design, in combination with complex stakeholder engagement.

The challenge is to achieve the balance in developing a profitable, sustainable and value engineered project, with cost and programme certainty, whilst fulfilling the aspirations of the client and the local community requirements. Lisa's role is focussed around project delivery, providing a high quality service to our clients. Thanks to her sustainable design for value approach and her technical expertise she is able to assist our clients

in project due diligence and design development through the various project's stages (pre and post planning, detailed design and construction). The role also includes the provision of strategic direction and vision to grow and develop the team; attaining and internally developing the appropriate skillsets to diversify and deliver projects across different sectors. This was her first goal when joining RBG: she had the vision of an enhanced team



delivering other workstreams, from infrastructure to master planning and highways. She identified the strategy to achieve her goal and prepared the business plan and roadmap for its success. Her passion for challenges, to make ideas happen and her ability to plan come together and have ensured her success on this endeavour.

During her extensive career in the industry Lisa has seen many changes. As a young engineer, she had to work harder to obtain the same recognition and acceptance as her peers. But to eventually earn their trust, respect, and recognition, made the journey all worth the while, as this embedded in her personality and attitude to work. In her opinion, history itself demonstrates the value that women have provided in the construction industry; starting with manufacturing to support their countries in challenging times to today, when women contribute to shape and build a new way of life and living. Women will always play a key role in industry alongside men.

She considers that the current challenges we all had to face over the last year have influenced how we approach our way of working. It has been a journey, a transition to a more agile and flexible way of working, away from the traditional office-based system to home and remote working. She believes this alternative approach must be developed and nurtured, to be able to encapsulate all the diversity and personal circumstances of our teams, aiding and enhancing the appropriate balance between work and personal life. Happy and healthy staff within the workplace, with their well-being and continued enthusiasm, will promote the required commitment and energy that we aspire to achieve within our profession and our industry.

Laura Bohill

Associate Director

Laura Bohill joined Robert Bird Group in 2015 as a member of the Bank Station Capacity Upgrade Project Team. Since joining RBG she has progressed to a Team Leader of a new Transport focused team which is part of the London Office Specialist's Division. Laura has held a key role in growing the London offices Infrastructure portfolio and capabilities through her involvement in the delivery of major infrastructure projects such as Bank Station Capacity Upgrade, Brisbane Cross River Rail, Boggo Road Station and successfully leading major bids to secure RBG positions on both Network Rail and Transport for London Design Services Frameworks, for which she now holds Framework Manager responsibilities.

From her own experience, knowledge in how infrastructure projects have the opportunity to make a significant positive impact to people's lives through improving the way in which we live, travel and enable communities to flourish and evolve around infrastructure projects is what brings Laura an incredible sense of job satisfaction and are what drives her commitment to the sector.

At project level, Laura enjoys the significant multidisciplinary, third party and stakeholder interfaces and challenges that her projects offer, bringing continual learning and interesting problems to be solved. At the same time striving to ensure adopted engineering solutions are practical and fit for purpose over the entire lifetime of the structures.

A portrait of Laura Bohill, a woman with long, dark brown hair, wearing a dark blue turtleneck sweater. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a gentle smile. The background is a plain, light grey color.

**CO-TEAM
LEADER OF
EUROPE'S CIVIL
STRUCTURES**



Outside of projects, Laura was the Past Vice Chair of RBG London's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and was heavily involved during its inception, developing and implementing long and short term EDI goals and initiatives. Laura continues to have an active role in the EDI committee as a senior advocate and is the London Offices Belonging and Community Lead – responsible for developing UK strategies for Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Value aspects of the business. She is also an active member of Women in Transport, a networking group which supports and empowers women in the Transport Sector.

Outside of work Laura enjoys being active and spending time outdoors. Her career has taken her all around the UK and she has switched and changed sports and interests in relation to the location and community where she is living at that time – she enjoys walking, hiking, running, travelling/exploring and outdoor sports such as Gaelic football which she started whilst living in Manchester and continues to play in London.





CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERING TEAM LEADER IN BRISBANE

Bahar Radbod Principal

Bahar has been with RBG for over ten years. During this time, Bahar has led several complex projects worldwide, and she was recently promoted to Principal.

It was Bahar's love of problem-solving that initially attracted her to engineering. The challenge of balancing clients, business and working with her team inspires her, and she is very aware of her and her team's mutual impact on each other's growth and development. Bahar hopes to help build a better, safer and more accountable workplace.

Bahar believes that everyone experiences bias throughout their lives. Unfortunately, many are so deeply ingrained in our culture that we don't even realise they are there. When she returned from maternity leave, everyone was very accommodating, and although with good intentions, what she really wanted was just her old job back. Perception of her and her capability had shifted despite her ability as a proficient engineer had not.

Team leaders can significantly influence graduates and new engineers. Bahar understands that it is essential to encourage and help them along their career paths and achieve as a team.

Tsu Yan Wong

Senior Engineer

Tsu Yan has over 17 years of experience, specialising in residential and industrial projects. Initially, she began her studies in Architecture. However, Tsu Yan soon discovered that she preferred the hands-on and practical nature of engineering and, in its way, pieces of art. As women in engineering are uncommon, Tsu Yan saw this as an opportunity and something special, which motivated her to explore it further.

Tsu Yan feels the most challenging part of the job is people management, managing expectations, and things that may be out of her control. Nevertheless, the most rewarding part is recognition from peers and leadership and the ability to see her work across the city influencing people's lives for the better, fueling her to do more.

Tsu Yan believes that achieving gender parity starts at home, teaching children empathy and kindness. She hopes to encourage future generations of women in pursuing engineering.

Throughout her career, Tsu Yan has missed out on several opportunities. A lack of support from leadership can significantly hinder one's career progression and confidence.



**PROJECT LEADER
IN ADELAIDE,
SOUTH
AUSTRALIA**



CO-TEAM LEADER OF EUROPE'S CIVIL STRUCTURES

Cristina Costa Associate

After joining RBG 4 years ago, and being promoted to an associate in 2019, Cristina is now the co-team leader of Robert Bird Groups Civil Structures Team. Cristina's role is challenging as it requires trying to successfully lead a varied group of people with very different interests, expectations, aspirations, abilities. She believes that being an effective leader is the biggest challenge she must face, keeping the team effectively engaged working towards a shared goal in an environment of trust and collaboration. Before university, Cristina was doubting whether to study Architecture or Civil Engineering. After attending a few different open days, she found out that Civil Engineer were also Port Directors. Having a special connection with the sea, spending a lot of time sailing back in her hometown during high school, the possibility of directing a port sounded exciting, so architecture was dropped, and Cristina embarked on to the complex endeavour of becoming an engineer.

During her years at Robert Bird Group, Cristina has enjoyed being thrown in at the deep end, being assigned challenges and responsibilities to allow her to grow and develop as an engineer. Cristina has a fascination with the Aviation sector, as it cannot be split into buildings or infrastructure. Aviation has its own very specific design challenges, and she enjoys the specific challenges of delivering such a complex piece of engineering that facilitates mobility and connects the world. Cristina believes Engineering

and construction is for those who are passionate about it, independent of their gender. It is hard work but rewarding. She believes that women bring different attitudes to the work and contribute in a different way to the industry than men. She believes in an inclusive future for the industry, but changes need to start in early education, in education, at school but also at home. There is no such thing as subjects for boys or for girls. We need to ensure we give children the opportunity to decide for

themselves what they want to do. This is the only way we can have a diverse pool of resources for the industry to enrich thanks to new ideas and different backgrounds. For the people in the industry already, Cristina believes the biggest change is opening their minds to the diverse world out of there. There is a component of training and education to them too, to make them more open and willing to collaborate, as you can't change someone who doesn't want to change. Everyone needs to see the benefits for themselves and become champions of



diversity and inclusion. Cristina has been affected by gender-bias in the workplace in previous employment but did not allow the comments to put her down, because she decided to believe in herself and her capabilities. She continued working hard to demonstrate that she could get whatever she wanted in her career, despite her gender. Her outlook on the Engineering industry is still very much seeing it as a career for men, and even in

today's world, is surprised when people are shocked when she mentions her career. Her mantra is to 'Don't let anyone put you down, there is no reason why women can't be part of this industry as our work and contribution is very relevant to make it progress and improve. Women bring a fresh view and new ways of working. Believe in yourself and trust that you can do a lot in this world, every step counts!'

Keti Petrovski

Technical Manager

Keti has been with RBG for over 22 years. Over the years, she has had several promotions, and today she leads the technical team in Sydney. Keti has delivered a broad spectrum of projects across various sectors, including complex residential refurbishments, high-rise multi-million dollar developments, major infrastructure and commercial projects. Her team is made up of twelve technicians responsible for delivering BIM models and 2D documentation. Keti finds it challenging to coordinate resources across a plethora of projects. However, Keti loves being involved with prestigious, unique and elaborate projects worldwide and the gratification of seeing them come to life.

Keti feels that making workplaces more inclusive and diverse starts with each individual. Each person is responsible for their own actions, being accountable, showing empathy, and being aware of unconscious bias. Also, it is important to call out bias and provide support and equal opportunities.

Unfortunately, many experience prejudice throughout their careers. Keti hopes to pave the way for other women in the company and industry and give them opportunities to demonstrate their capability and leadership skills.



**SYDNEY'S
DRAFTING TEAM
LEADER**

Rhea Albelda

Principal Engineer

Joining RBG 9 months ago, and bringing 13 years' experience with her, Rhea leads our Middle East & North Africa (MENA) Geotechnical Team. Her role involves all technical deliverables, understanding and interpretation of ground conditions and identifying risks. Rhea finds the most challenging aspect of her role is informing clients, developers, and contractors the importance of geotechnical engineering, especially being a women engineer. Most of the time, what's above ground is seen as more important than what's underneath. Rhea's attraction to the engineering industry stemmed from her enjoyment of maths in her early years at school, and even with it being a male-dominated industry, she decided to pursue civil engineering. Fast forward to 2021, Rhea dedicates her time to informing external contacts on geotechnical engineering, which have led to exciting opportunities with some of the biggest developers in Saudi Arabia. She has also been nominated

by her colleagues for the Big 5 Construction – Women in Construction Award 2021. Rhea loves the unique project opportunities that come with geotechnical engineering, and her goal is to become a role model to all young engineers, especially to women engineering who may be afraid to speak out and share knowledge. She believes in promoting oneself and encouraging everyone women can be engineers, and their contributions are as important as anyone else's.

Rhea believes that changes to build a more diverse, inclusive construction industry starts with Women. Women should not be afraid to promote themselves and to acknowledge how special their roles are both in the industry and community, including promoting maternity arrangements without feeling ashamed of organising nursery assistance or asking for flexible work times. More importantly, she believes every company should give leadership opportunities not just to men but to look equally to women and

acknowledge that women can also lead in a male-dominated industry. Rhea is lucky to not have felt any serious gender bias while working in the construction industry. However, when attending panel meetings, she is often the only women in the room. She would always make sure she did not get intimidated and be clear with her role to ensure she was heard. Her mantra for women in the industry is to be confident enough to promote oneself. The campaign should start with us, and we should use our energy to change the diversity within the industry.



**LEADING MENA'S
GEOTECHNICAL
TEAM**



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