THIS WEEK third-year student Joanna McLean shares research she has undertaken into the Leaky Pipeline — the phenomenon whereby women disproportionately depart from the path from architectural education to practice — before questioning its usefulness and how it relates to the as-yet unresolved fight for HE pensions.—EDS.

BEYOND THE LEAKY PIPELINE
Joanna McLean

"HAS THE BUILDING INDUSTRY fully accepted the role of the female architect?" asked the *Architects' Journal Women in Architecture Survey 2017*. 60% of respondents voted no. As part of my third year dissertation research, I posed the same question to Bartlett students, across all years and genders, to find out the student perspective. 52% of those asked voted no.

As gender issues persist and as women continue to leave architectural education, I saw it my mission to address these topics through my research and writing. By

exploring the existing body of architectural feminist writing, campaigning and activism, I became aware of the notion of 'The Leaky Pipeline', which illustrates the increasing leaks of women out of architecture throughout the pipeline of architectural education. Women make up 49% of Part 1 architecture students, 45% of Part 2, but only 26% of registered architects. Why? My dissertation, titled *The Leaky Pipeline: Explaining and exposing the enduring issues of women in architectural education*, sought to address this phenomenon critcally, laying out, simply and plainly, the stark reality of our architectural education system today.

The research involved interviews with various members of the Bartlett staff and student cohort to raise these discussions at my school, particularly given that many of us had not been part of a conversation relating to gender before the final year of

> *Shouting 'Zaha Hadid!' is just not enough.*
>
> —Bartlett student

our degree. My findings indicated that the key issues within architectural education are a lack of visibility, accessibility and integration of enduring gender issues within the profession and wider society. In response, it became crucial to raise awareness of these issues by making my research approachable and its dissemination accessible to fellow students within and outside of our learning environment.

The 'One Day Happening' hosted earlier this year in the Bartlett entrance lobby and organised by BREAK//LINE, a design research studio of staff and students in the Bartlett, rejected 'the purely individual endeavour' by encouraging collaborations between designers and thinkers who wouldn't usually work together. I used the opportunity to hold interviews and conversations regarding questions of gender with student passers-by, in an attempt to disseminate my findings and open this debate to others. A fellow student, Judit Ferencz, created reportage illustrations of my discussions, which were displayed in the evening exhibition and integrated into my dissertation. I presented this line of enquiry at one of the UCU Pension Strike Bartlett Teach-Outs, in support of the strikes and to continue to share my study and its critical findings. Beyond the Bartlett, I intend to continue my press for gender equality and the transparency of gender issues in architec-

tural education nationally.

My research was submitted the week before the UCU Pension Strikes commenced, and during the strikes I realised how astonishingly related these conversations are. Consider the open letter to the Equality Challenge Unit and all UK university leaders published on organise.org.uk (at the time of printing signed by 2100 signatories), which reminds us: *pensions are an important equality issue. The Chartered Insurance Institute has calculated, for example, that the average pension wealth of women in the UK by the age of 60-64 is one-quarter of the average amount held by men. Black and Asian pensioners are also at greater risk of living in poverty in the UK. It is likely that the proposed changes to the USS pension scheme will exacerbate existing intersecting inequalities related to gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability [...]* It is clear that gender issues are not only for women, as the strikes are not only for staff.

It is time to look beyond The Leaky Pipeline; to recognise the urgent need for

Has the building industry fully accepted the role of the female architect?

Is the current system for training in architecture equitable towards men and women?

■ *Yes* ▨ *No* ▢ *Don't Know*

collaboration rather than individualisation, to reach further than the competitive culture to which we are too accustomed, to step out of our comfort zones in conversation and to critically address these pressing matters. I do not want to defend my rights as a female, any more than my tutors want to defend their rights as staff. But the strikes posed an opportunity for our voices to be heard as a body of staff and students, standing in solidarity with one another. As students, we were 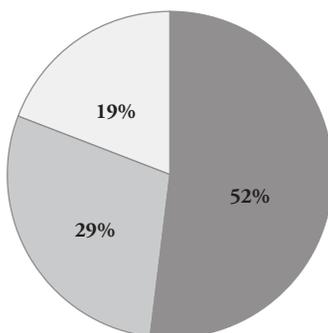simply supporting those who support us, standing by those who stand by us, and representing the true meaning, value and principles of our system of education.

> *I'm tired of hearing about Le Corbusier, when there are amazing women doing amazing things but aren't noticed or recognised.*
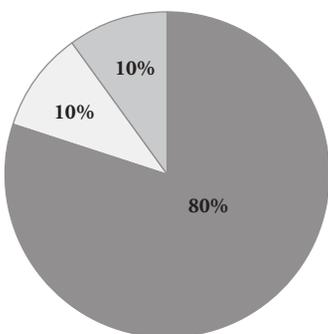>
> —Bartlett student

As dialogue and activism continue, the cross-contamination of these issues becomes increasingly explicit, revealing how imperative it is that these discussions exist across and between staff and students in every strand of what we do, that we continue to stand in solidarity and create a collaborative climate within which we can strive beyond our own agendas and instead all be advocates for change of the enduring issues that affect everyone.

Joanna McLean is currently completing her BSc in Architecture from The Bartlett, UCL.

Overleaf & top right: images by Judit Ferencz. Left: survey data collected by author based on questions from the Architects' Journal Women in Architecture Survey 2017, from 21 respondents split equally between male and female identifiers.