

Architect firm lands itself a rainmaker

A cutting-edge shop lures Columbia's Chakrabarti

BY THERESA AGOVINO

Vishaan Chakrabarti, a planning and development insider involved in some of the city's higher-profile projects, such as the High Line, has joined SHoP Architects as the seventh partner of the cutting-edge firm.

"I'm just jumping for joy," said the 46-year-old, who will continue to serve as the director of the Center for Urban Real Estate at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation.

The native of Kolkata, India, joins SHoP, which designed Brooklyn's Barclays Center and the latest portion of the East River waterfront, as it strives to bring its talents to bigger projects such as skyscrapers and museums. SHoP partner Christopher Sharples said it would be especially satisfying to win such major commissions in the firm's home base of Manhattan. That means knowing the big developers and understanding the city's regulatory landscape.

"That's what Vishaan brings to the table," he said.

Mr. Chakrabarti does have a golden résumé. During his six-year tenure at architecture firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill, the graduate of Cornell University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of California, Berkeley, worked on developing the master plan for the World Trade Center site and the expansion of Columbia University's Morningside Heights campus.

Timing was right

After that, Mr. Chakrabarti was director of the Manhattan office of the city's planning department, where he served as design representative on the High Line project and helped negotiate the rezoning of Hudson Yards. He subsequently was an executive vice president at the Related Cos., where he worked on the development of Hudson Yards and the Moynihan Station project.

Mr. Chakrabarti said he has known the partners at SHoP for more than a decade, and they have talked on and off about him joining the firm. He said the timing was right because after three years, he is settled in his role at Columbia and is eager to get back to doing some design work. SHoP also shares his vision on the importance of technology and sustainability in design, as well as a dedication to good urban planning principles, said Mr. Chakrabarti.

"It's just a great fit," he said. ■

Partners hope to win bigger projects



VISHAAN
CHAKRABARTI