

EXCLUSIVE: Tribeca architecture firm's office cleaner says staffers molested her, demanded to 'see the puppies' in shocking suit

By Victoria Bekiempis

They treated her like she wasn't human.

Staffers at a world-renowned architecture firm routinely treated a former Filipino office cleaner as an animal — calling her a “monkey” and describing her breasts as “puppies” — along with forcible fondling, a lawsuit filed Friday in Manhattan Federal Court alleges.

Trinity Sunaz worked at Despont Studios from December 2014 to January 2017. She felt forced to quit because a male accountant allegedly “yanked her head and thrust it into his crotch,” her suit claims.

He also routinely “grabbed Ms. Sunaz's breasts and would also slap Ms. Sunaz's behind without her consent when she was unable to avoid him,” the suit claims.



Trinity Sunaz poses in a conference room in the offices of Wigdor LLP on Wednesday in New York. Sunaz is suing her former employer, the architectural firm Despont Studios, for sexual harassment.

(Alec Tabak/for New York Daily News)

The man also commented on her body, telling her, for example “take your bra off so I can see the puppies.”

“I was confused and embarrassed and sad at the same time,” Sunaz, 36, told the Daily News in an exclusive interview. “I felt like I'm not human — I'm such a loving and kind person, I didn't deserve that.”

Sunaz, of Jersey City, N.J., has been out of a job since quitting. She is the sole provider for her two children, a 10-

year-old girl and a 15-year-old boy.



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The Tribeca-based firm — which has worked on high-profile projects such as the Statue of Liberty's centennial restoration — did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the allegations.

Another cleaner subjected Sunaz to ethnic slurs, she claims.

That other housekeeper "repeatedly referred to Ms. Sunaz as a 'monkey,' told her that her son is a 'monkey,' Repeatedly told her that her 'whole family is monkeys,' and constantly called her ugly," the lawsuit charges.

Sunaz has been out of a job since she felt forced to quit.

(Alec Tabak/for New York Daily News)

"Upon information and belief, the reason (she) treated Ms. Sunaz in this manner is because she holds animus towards Ms. Sunaz on account of her Filipino ethnicity and considers Filipinos as 'monkeys.'"

"No woman should have to go to work and worry for her physical safety, and we intend to hold the company responsible for its now repeated failures to address employee complaints of harassment," commented David Gottlieb, Sunaz's lawyer, and a partner at Wigdor law firm.

In January 2016, a former Despont architect sued the company, claiming she was fired after complaining about pregnancy-based discrimination. That case has since been settled.

