The Future of Landscape Architecture

By Charles Birnbaum, FASLA, FAAR
Founder & President,
The Cultural Landscape Foundation

Architect Lawrence Halprin wrote of his Portland Open Space Sequence that he wanted the eight blocks of parks and plazas to contain “nodes for quiet contemplation, action, and inaction, hard and soft, yin and yang.”

Philip Johnson famously quipped: “All architects want to live beyond their deaths.” Given the right scale and materials (think the Pyramids at Giza), that desired immortality can last at least a few thousand years. But designers have another opportunity for lasting greatness that is less reliant on size and slave labor: having their work listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This designation, overseen by the National Park Service, following approval by relevant state officials, has worked fairly well for modernist buildings, Johnson’s included.

Landscape architecture, however, has fared worse. In fact, fewer than 2,500 of the 80,000-plus National Register sites boast any significant landscape design. A few modernist icons have won this coveted consideration—Dan Kiley’s work at the Miller House and Garden in Columbus, Indiana, and Thomas Church’s minimalist design for the General Motors Technical Center in Warren, Michigan, were both listed in 2000—but most others have had a hard time getting acknowledged.

A decade ago, Seattle’s Gas Works Park was rejected for designation because its landscape architect, Richard Haag, was still alive (an inconvenience in some preservation circles), leading the nomination’s reviewers to conclude that his career could not be fully assessed. This situation is not unique to Haag: Lawrence Halprin, who lived from 1916 to 2009, had none of his pioneering work listed by the National Park Service until 2010, when his Park Central Square in Springfield, Missouri, and Heritage Park Plaza in Fort Worth, Texas, were included.

Opinion about contemporary landscape architecture, however, does seem to be evolving. “Design icons, such as the Eames chairs and the Glass House, have helped solidify modernism’s significance among scholars and the public,”

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President’s Letter
Jennifer Judge, ASLA

I hope this newsletter finds all Chapter members enjoying their summer! After our experiences of Hurricane Sandy last fall, I hope everyone is able to spend time at our beaches and that they will survive another summer until they are able to be restored.

CRMC SAMP
As our shorelines become more affected by rising sea levels and the increased frequency of storms, I think it’s important that we become part of an initiative that is being brought to the forefront of active collaboration before many professional organizations and community leaders in supporting the Shoreline Change (Beach) Special Area Management Plan. As President of RIASLA, I am honored to have been invited by the Executive Director of Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council, Grover Fugate, to participate on the committee of this multi-year project. I would like to extend this invitation to all RIASLA members to become involved in this effort, as I feel it’s important for our profession to be part of the synergistic effort in helping improve our state’s coastal policies and practices in addressing these environmental issues.

ASLA Mid-Year Meeting
Other events to share regarding policies is our recent trip to Washington, D.C. for the Mid-Year meeting and Advocacy Day. Kurt VanDexter, Karen Beck and I attended this past April. We had the opportunity to meet with Senators Whitehouse and Reed’s office staff as well as Congressmen Langevin and Cicilline’s office staff as they were attending a National Security meeting during our Advocacy Day visit. We thanked them for their continued efforts and asked for their support for the Innovative Stormwater Solutions Act, Community Park Revitalization (CPR) Act and The Safe and Complete Streets Act.

“Considering that more than 80 percent of the U.S. population now lives in urban areas, it is critical that our nation’s leaders recognize the importance of quality of life in the communities where most American live,” says Barbara Tulipane, President and CEO of NRPA. “The CPR Act emphasizes the vital role local parks and recreation plays in shaping and improving the economic vitality, environmental and physical wellness of urban communities in the country.”

The Safe and Complete Streets Act is a Bill that was introduced but not enacted. Safe and Complete Streets Act of 2011 – would require each state to have in effect within two years a law, or each state department of transportation and metropolitan planning organization (MPO) an explicit policy statement, that requires all federally funded transportation projects, with certain exceptions, to accommodate the safety and convenience of all users in accordance with certain complete streets principles.

It would define “complete streets principles” as federal, state, local, or regional level transportation laws, policies, or principles which ensure that the safety and convenience of all users of a transportation system, including pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit users, children, older individuals, motorists, freight vehicles, and individuals with disabilities, are accommodated in all phases of project planning and development.

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Hello All!

Hope this issue of the newsletter finds your practices busy but enjoying the summer and all that great Rhode Island scenery and seafood! What follows are updates on a variety of interesting topics. If you have any questions on any of them, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

**ASLA Annual Meeting**

Excitement is building for the 2013 annual ASLA Meeting in Boston. Despite the mid-November timing, registration for the annual meeting and EXPO continues to outpace the previous five meetings and is now over 1,150 registrants. Revenue for registration and tickets is at $273,725. As a point of comparison, the totals for the first four weeks of registration for 2012 (Phoenix) were 591 registrants/$38,800 and for 2011 (San Diego) 708 registrants/$44,170. Ticket sales are extremely high, particularly for the Gala and President’s Dinner.

The first Field Session to sell out was “The Residential Gardens of Keith LeBlanc,” and it is expected that the “Landscapes by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates” will also sell out soon. The top five states represented by registrants so far are: California, New York, Massachusetts, Texas, and Pennsylvania. Top countries represented after the U.S. are: Canada, England, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Brazil. Early indications are that this will be a truly international gathering. This meeting is too close to miss! Are YOU registered?

**ASLA Licensure**

ASLA is often asked, “How many landscape architects are in the United States?” Licensure is one way to track this number. The latest count (collected March-May 2013) is complete and the details are as follows: total number of licensees in the U.S. is 16,430. The number of licensees has risen 9.45% since 2008 (6.77% when adjusting for the implementation of licensure in Colorado, New Hampshire, and Vermont). The number of licensees has risen 2.29% since 2011.

However, 10 states had a net loss of licensees since 2008: Arkansas, Delaware, Indiana, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, Rhode Island and Wisconsin (bold indicates double-digit loss).

Since 2008, 14 states experienced a net gain of licensees exceeding 10%: Alaska, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Virginia.

Even more exciting, an additional seven states had a net gain exceeding 25%: Colorado, Idaho, Mississippi, New Hampshire, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming.

**Professional Diversity**

This summer, ASLA will inaugurate an effort to tackle the stubborn issue of the lack of diversity among landscape architecture professionals. In particular, African Americans and Latinos are seriously under-represented in the field and have remained so despite the best efforts of concerned landscape architects and educators.

To better understand why this persists and how the tide might be turned, ASLA will convene a Diversity Summit July 12–14 in Alexandria, Virginia. The goal of this gathering is to identify real-world obstacles and opportunities as experienced by those who have overcome them: African American and Latino practitioners with three to five years of experience. They have navigated the issues of awareness, study, employment, and sometimes licensure to become valued members of the profession. In sharing their stories, we hope to map some actionable tactics to help knock down some of the barriers. Following the summit, participants will act as an advisory group as ASLA tests their ideas.

**Professional Practice Networks**

Are you a member of an ASLA Professional Practice Network (PPN)? ASLA offers members 18 Professional Practice Networks (PPNs) to help support your practice and provide a forum to make connections outside your market. PPNs provide excellent opportunities for professionals in the same areas of practice to exchange information, learn about current practices and research, and network with each other – both online and in person at the ASLA Annual Meeting.

The current number of ASLA PPN members is 12,286. This is a slight decrease since last month, but an increase of 286 since the beginning of 2013. Four PPNs continue to have more than 1,000 members: Parks and Recreation, Residential Landscape Architecture, Urban Design, and Sustainable Design and Development (SDD). With 2,242 members, the SDD PPN remains the PPN with the most members.

Karen Beck, FASLA
kbeck@commonwealth-eng.com
The Complete Streets policy is not a federal mandate but under the legislation, states and MPO’s write their own policies to fit their local circumstances. Approximately 500 state and local Complete Streets policies have been adopted across the country. These policies promote the creation of more walkable and public transportation-oriented communities and as a result, encouraging healthy and active lifestyles, improved air-quality, in addition to providing important economic benefits to our local economies.

PARK(ing) Day
An upcoming event that will promote the need to advocate for the Complete Streets Act is PARK(ing) Day on September 20th – a collaborative effort between RIASLA and AIAri. It is being held in Downtown Providence. PARK(ing) Day is an annual worldwide event where artists, designers and citizens transform metered parking spots into temporary public parks. The project began in 2005 when Rebar, a San Francisco art and design studio, converted a single metered parking space into a temporary public park in downtown San Francisco. Since then, PARK(ing) Day has turned into a global movement, creating new forms of temporary public space in urban contexts around the world into parklets that contain softscape, sitting areas in all shapes and forms and interactive play spaces for children, reflecting the need to have livable spaces within our urban communities. Mark your calendar and come join us for this event! If you would like to participate please contact me at gravellyhilldg@yahoo.com or 401.465.8282. We are currently working out the logistics and details this month and are having a lot of fun collaborating with AIAri, the Downtown Improvement District, Providence Parks Department and the Rhode Island Foundation to date. We hope to see you there!

“Women in the Dirt” screenings
Lastly, we had two great turnouts for the “Women in the Dirt” film documentary that discussed the successful careers of seven landscape architects practicing on the West coast. RIASLA, Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and the American Planning Association (APA) RI co-sponsored the events at the University of Rhode Island and at RISD. We had a great turnout and enjoyed sharing this aspiring documentary. We will be hosting a third showing this September. Check back soon for the date!
The Future of Landscape Architecture

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says historical consultant Charlene Roise, president of Hess, Roise and Company. “Now, with renewed interest nationally in urban centers and a growing understanding of landscape architecture’s value through projects like the High Line, modernist landscapes are also gaining awareness and supportive constituencies.

Acquired by the city of Seattle in 1962, the site of Gas Works Park was used to produce gas and crude oil. Richard Haag’s 1975 design recast the industrial site as a grand park, replete with a play barn and picnic zones.

In November, Gas Works Park achieved a small victory when the state of Washington gave its approval for the 19-acre site, a brilliant synthesis of enviable topography and industrial heritage on the shores of Lake Union, to be considered for listing. Shortly thereafter, in January 2013, the park made the cut at the national level.

There’s more good news: M. Paul Friedberg’s previously endangered Peavey Plaza, in Minneapolis, a seminal project created in 1976 and a progenitor of the “park plaza” typology (a mix of American green space and European hard space), was also just listed on the National Register in early 2013. A national-level review is pending for Halprin’s stunning Portland Open Space Sequence—an intricately choreographed eight-block sequence of parks and plazas, created between 1966 and 1970 that recalls the nearby Cascade Range and Columbia River. In March, Arizona considers Garrett Eckbo’s Tucson Convention Center—a concrete abstraction created in the early 1970s and inspired by the surrounding desert and pine-covered mountains.

The tide is slowly turning for landscape architecture and its practitioners, especially as preservationists come to see that recognizing the designed outdoors can provide a more complete picture of modernism as a movement. And though it’s still too early to tell if these spaces will get the same consideration as the buildings, this recent activity is the start of a broader bid for immortality.

1970 opening of Portland’s Ira Keller Fountain

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By any measure, the landscape architecture profession is gaining ground and here's why: No field has shifted as quickly to address environmental concerns.

Landscape architects are leading projects, not just participating on design teams. Our practice is now recognized in all 50 states. While many of us—myself included—suffered setbacks during the recession, we are the envy of our colleagues in allied design professions. The federal Bureau of Labor Statistics tells us that landscape architecture was the first design profession to start hiring again after the economic crash—that was over two years ago, I might add. The agency now projects that demand for landscape architecture services will be far higher than for any other design service through 2020.

Boston is the perfect location for our first post-recession annual meeting. After all, it’s where ASLA was founded in 1899 and, much like our profession, the city is a marvel of resiliency and perseverance. Once a tiny seaside village, Boston has been gaining ground for centuries, emerging as one of the most interesting and engaging cities in the world. If you haven’t visited Boston in the past ten years, that’s reason alone to register for this meeting.

I hope you’ll join us in Boston!

Tom
For registration information, visit asla.org

Schedule of Events

Thursday, November 14:
9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.  TCLF Tour, Luncheon and Reception*
4 – 8 p.m.  Registration Open

Friday, November 15:
7 a.m. – 8 p.m.  Registration Open
7 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  Field Sessions Depart*
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.  LARE Workshops*
8 – 10 a.m  Education Sessions I
8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.  SITES Workshop
10:30 a.m. – noon  Education Sessions II
1:30 – 3 p.m.  Education Sessions III

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**ASLA Annual Meeting**

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**Friday, Nov. 15 (cont’d):**

- 7 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Field Sessions Depart*
- 3 – 5 p.m. Education Sessions IV
- 5:15 – 7:15 p.m. PPN Networking Reception*
- 8 – 10 p.m. Alumni Reunion

**Saturday, November 16**

- 7 a.m. – 6 p.m. Registration Open
- 8 – 9 a.m. Opening General Session
- 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. EXPO: Exhibits, Bookstore, Joblink Live, Learning Labs, PPN Meetings, and TCLF Silent Auction
- 9:15 – 10 a.m. PPN Meetings: Parks & Recreation; Sustainable Design and Development
- 11 a.m. – noon Learning Lab 1 (Esri) & 2 (Danver)
- 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Education Sessions V
- 1:30 – 2:30 p.m. Learning Lab 1 (Filtera Bioretention)
- 1:30 – 3 p.m. Education Sessions VI
- 3:15 – 4 p.m. PPN Meeting: Restoration & Reclamation
- 3:15 – 4:45 p.m. PPN Meetings: Water Conservation; Campus Planning; Landscape Architecture and Transportation
- 3:30 – 5 p.m. Expo Reception
- 4 – 5 p.m. Learning Lab 1 (Rain Bird) & Learning Lab 2 (Nemetschek Vectorworks, Inc.)
- 9 p.m. – Midnight ASLA/Landscape Structures Gala* (Boston Children’s Museum)

**Sunday, November 17**

- 7 a.m. – 6 p.m. Registration Open
- 8 – 9 a.m. General Session
- 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. EXPO: Exhibits, Bookstore, Joblink Live, Learning Labs, PPN Meetings, and TCLF Silent Auction
- 9:15 – 10 a.m. PPN Meeting: Digital Technology
- 9:15 – 10:45 a.m. PPN Meetings: International Practice, Healthcare and Therapeutic Design
- 9:45 – 10:45 a.m. Learning Lab 1 (Columbia Cascade) & Learning Lab 2 (RainBi)
- 10 – 10:45 a.m. PPN Meeting: Planting Design
- 11 a.m. – noon Learning Lab 1 (Perfect Garden Group) & Learning Lab 2 (Esri)
- 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Education Sessions VIII

**Sunday, Nov. 17 (cont’d):**

- 3:15 – 4 p.m. PPN Meetings: Landscape/Land Use Planning; Children’s Outdoor Environment
- 3:15 – 4:45 p.m. PPN Meeting: Historic Preservation
- 3:30 – 5 p.m. Expo Reception
- 4 – 4:45 p.m. PPN Meeting: Residential
- 7 p.m. ASLA Council of Fellows Investiture Dinner* (Westin)

**Monday, November 18**

- 7 – 8:30 a.m. Women in Landscape Architecture Walk
- 7:30 a.m. – 3 p.m. Registration Open
- 8 – 9:30 a.m. Education Sessions IX
- 10 – 11:30 a.m. Education Sessions X
- Noon – 1 p.m. ASLA Professional & Student Awards Ceremony
- 1:30 – 3 p.m. Education Sessions XI
- 3:30 – 5 p.m. Education Sessions XII
- 7 p.m. The President’s Dinner: Presentation of ASLA Honors and Installation of Officers* (Westin)

*Schedule subject to change. Unless otherwise noted, all meetings and events take place at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center at 415 Summer St. “Westin” denotes the Westin Boston Waterfront Hotel at 425 Summer Street.*

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— Upcoming Events of Interest —

**Through September 2**

Photomontage and Landscape Architecture Exhibit
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum., 280 The Fenway, Boston. Gallery Talk Aug. 15, 7 p.m. The exhibition gathers work from a select group of influential contemporary artists and a dozen of the world’s leading landscape architects. These composite views reveal practices of photomontage depicting the conceptual, experiential, and temporal dimensions of landscape. gardenermuseum.org

**July 10 – 9 a.m. to noon**

Certified Invasive Manager Recertification
To be held at URI Bay Campus, Coastal Institute, Hazard Rooms, Narragansett. Please register for this training if your 2-year certification expired in 2012 or will expire in 2013. For more information call 874-4096. Register online at [http://www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?EventID=1199570](http://www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?EventID=1199570)

**July 12 – 9 A.M. to Noon**

RI Wild Plant Society Walk
“What’s the Difference Between a Weed and an Invasive?” Walk the URI Kingston campus to compare weeds and invasives. Sometimes the difference is in the setting. Fee: $5 members; $10 non-members. Pre-registration required. For more information, 789-7497 or visit [riwps.org](http://riwps.org)

**July 15 – 6 P.M.**

RIASLA Excom Meeting
To be held at Blu on the Water, East Greenwich. All members welcome. For more information, contact President Jenn Judge at gravellyhilldg@yahoo.com.

**July 23 – 8 A.M. to 2 P.M.**

CTASLA Program
“Right Specs - Right Plants.” To be held at Planters’ Choice LLC, 140 Huntington Road, Newtown, CT; Program registered for 4.0 CEU credit hours with LACES and AIA-CES. For more information visit [ctasla.org](http://ctasla.org)

**August 11 – 10 A.M. to 5 P.M.**

2nd annual Green Market Festival
Sponsored by R.I. Nursery & Landscape Association. To be held at The Farmer’s Daughter and Landscape Creations of Rhode Island, 715 & 716 Mooresfield Road (Rte. 138), South Kingstown. For more information visit [rinla.org](http://rinla.org)

**August 20 – 6 P.M.**

RIASLA Excom Meeting
To be held at Oak Hill Tavern, North Kingstown. All members welcome. For more information, contact President Jenn Judge at gravellyhilldg@yahoo.com.

**August 24 – 10 A.M. to 1:30 P.M.**

RI Wild Plant Society Program
“Creating and Sustaining Meadows.” Co-sponsored with New England Wildflower Society. To be held at Tiverton Four Corners, Tiverton. Fee: $46 members; $56 non-members. Pre-registration required. For more information, 789-7497 or visit [riwps.org](http://riwps.org)

**August 27 – 9 A.M. to Noon**

Certified Arborist Recertification
Events of Interest

September 7 – 10 A.M. to 1:30 P.M.
RI Wild Plant Society Program
“In and Around the Rhode Island Desert.” To be held in West Greenwich. (Rain date Sept. 8.) Fee: $5 members; $10 non-members. Pre-registration required. For more information, 789-7497 or visit riwps.org

September 17 – 6 P.M.
RIASLA Excom Meeting
To be held at Whisky Republic, Providence. All members welcome. For more information, contact President Jenn Judge at gravellyhilldg@yahoo.com.

November 14 – 4:30 to 6 P.M.
Opening Reception
“The Landscape Architecture Legacy of Daniel Urban Kiley.” To be held at Boston Architectural College

McCormick Gallery, 320 Newbury St., Boston, MA 02115. For more information visit http://www.tclf.org/event/kiley-exhibition-opening-reception

November 15 to 18
ASLA Annual Meeting
To be held at Boston Convention and Exhibition Center. For more information, see page 7 or visit asla.org
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