

Board of Trustees
c/o Carolyn Mitchell, Honors & Awards Coordinator
American Society of Landscape Architects
646 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Trustees,

I am writing in support of the nomination of Kathryn Gustafson to receive the ASLA Design Medal. I respect Kathryn's work greatly because it represents a critical shift from post modern practice to a re-engagement of site at the human scale. Largely through the success of her work, a revived interest in the fluidity and thickness of the ground plane has become a hallmark of contemporary landscape architecture. Her design strategy uses the sculptural potential of terrain -- reinforced by seasonal phenomena such as light and wind and often enlivened by the performance of water -- to translate contextual relationships and client requirements into bold, sensory-rich site experiences. Her sense of scale is unmatched by other landscape architects today: to enter a Gustafson project is to immediately gage the motion of one's body against topographical movement, and to open one's senses to gradients of space-saturating plant, water and paving textures. She has achieved this to a large degree on sites once considered "difficult," such as the steep hillside of the Garden of the Imagination in Terrasson, France; or extreme, such as the vast interior of the Great Glass House of the National Botanic Garden of Wales; or heavily damaged, such as the renovation of industrial lands into the Cultuurpark Westergasfabriek in Amsterdam. At the same time, Kathryn's reinvention of public space has been applied with acclaim to high profile, opportune sites, such as the Princess Diana Memorial Fountain in London; the wonderful Arthur Ross Terrace at the National Museum of History in New York; and the promenade at the Marion Oliver McCaw cultural complex in Seattle.

Several years ago, I heard Kathryn say, "A bold intellectual stance and rich emotional palette are essential to creating landscapes that carry a sense of function, time and place." She has upheld this attitude in the wide range of projects her firm has designed and built around the world within a remarkably productive period. She stands as a role model for others in the design profession who strive to expand the scope of their work and the scale of their projects without sacrificing the integrity of a truly perceptive, highly responsible, and profoundly creative approach to the shaping of land for people.

I give Kathryn my strongest support and hope that the Trustees agree that her exceptional work deserves recognition at the stature of the ASLA Design Medal.

Sincerely,



Jane Amidon

The Museum of Modern Art

27 February, 2007

Board of Trustees
c/o Carolyn Mitchell, Honors & Awards Coordinator
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye St., NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Trustees:

It is a great pleasure to write in support of Kathryn Gustafson's nomination for the ASLA Design Medal. I have an extremely high regard for Gustafson's work, design ethic, and independence as a designer.

Gustafson has consistently produced extraordinarily beautiful designs for a wide variety of sites and conditions. The creativity and inventiveness evinced by her work is compelling, even brilliant. Her work demonstrates a refreshingly independent vision that seems to match her energetic, strong-willed, ambitious and conscientious nature. She is her own person and does not seem to succumb to fads or influences.

The artistic vision is paramount for Gustafson, but not at the expense of appropriate treatment of sites. Her work is original and responsibly and effectively pushes the envelope. Program (as in social functions) and landscape processes are unquestionably accommodated in Gustafson's designs, but they are not the principal subjects of her work. Gustafson's work is about experiencing an evocative beauty. One experiences Gustafson's landscapes on an emotional and sensory level, and indeed, this seems to be her primary goal – an ineffable beauty.

I have known Kathryn for about six or seven years and have had the opportunity to see many of her built projects, interview her in the studio, and collaborate on an exhibition, catalogue, and symposia for MoMA in conjunction with *Groundswell: Constructing the Contemporary Landscape*. Kathryn is a gifted speaker and advocate for landscape design. I have heard her lecture several times in New York, Chicago, Cambridge, and in Europe. She has an extraordinary capacity to captivate and move an audience of peers as well as the non-specialist.

I congratulate the ASLA for considering Gustafson for the Design Medal. She is a most worthy recipient. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide further information.

Sincerely yours,

Peter Reed
Senior Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs



Smithsonian Institution

Under Secretary for Art

Board of Trustees
American Society of Landscape Architects
C/O Carolyn Mitchell, Honors & Awards Coordinator
636 Eye St., NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Trustees,

I am writing to you in support of the nomination of Kathryn Gustafson for the ASLA Design Medal. I have known Kathryn from the work she has done here at the Smithsonian Institution's Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture, a Greek revival building originated in 1836, which serves as the home for the National Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The renovation of this third oldest Federal building in our nation's capital (originally built as the Old Patent Office Building) was undertaken over the past seven years. Kathryn's ingenious designs for the landscaping of what had previously been an open-air courtyard in the middle of this facility came about as a result of her collaboration with Foster + Partners (London, England), who designed the elaborate glass and steel-vaulted canopy enclosing the 18000 square feet of area that when it opens in mid-November of this year, will become the premier interior space for public assembly in Washington, D.C.

Kathryn has consistently demonstrated to all who have worked with her here at the Smithsonian that she is a highly gifted, innovative, and imaginative design artist. Her command of the details of the trees and plantings is most impressive, but the deeply felt and carefully researched nuances of how these living elements will thrive and radiate their dynamic colors, forms and play of light and shadow emanating from the sky-lighted ceiling, demonstrates a supremely sophisticated approach to integrating a vast space with soaring vertical heights with the pre-existing minimalist finishes of the architectural detail along with the neo-classical features of the Greek revival styled facades. Kathryn has incorporated "water scrims" where there once were fountains, in order to create a memory and trace of the role moving water once played within the original courtyard open to the sky.

We have all learned a great deal from this master (mistress?) of landscape design. Her way of sub-dividing the floor space into paving patterns of exquisite granite of contrasting tones and surface textures was alone a marvelous achievement. Placing "planters" of white marble in and among the composition of geometric forms enables vignettes of space that afford intimacy of scale while creating an overall integration of materials that interface with the undulations and optical pattern of the lozenge shapes of the vaulting.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
SI Building Suite 107
1000 Jefferson Drive SW
MRC 041 PO Box 37012
Washington DC 20013-7012
202.357.7047 Telephone
202.785.2705 Fax

Kathryn has solved a complex design problem of knitting together the upper reaches (which are spectacular) with the ground level by graciously deploying the verticality trees to connect the human beings who will occupy the space at various times of day and night with the ebb and flow of skyscape that will pass above the sky's lights. She has realized an outstanding orchestration of materials, spatial rhythms and sounds, not to mention the smells and subtle motion that the vegetation will motivate and embody.

I cannot think of any other landscape designer who could have so ably and beautifully managed to stage a powerful and compelling *mis-en-scène* within this contained courtyard. I anticipate many extraordinary surprises from her work in conjunction with the spectacular Foster + Partners vaulting design. Without this effort, I am quite certain Kathryn Gustafson's genius, the Arlene and Robert P. Kogod Courtyard in the Reynolds Center of the Smithsonian could not have become the "masterpiece" that it will long be remembered as being.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ned Rifkin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "N" and a long, sweeping underline.

Ned Rifkin

Under Secretary for Art

Board of Trustees
c/o Carolyn Mitchell, Honors & Awards Coordinator
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye St., NW
Washington, DC 20001

Amsterdam,

Dear Trustees,

The first time I met Kathryn Gustafson it was a rainy and cold day in a typical Amsterdam winter. Kathryn came from Paris where she had been working on several different projects. I did see a picture of one of her projects, the one in the Dordogne in France, in a magazine. I wrote down her name and started looking for her, on the internet. Google didn't work like it does today, the only Gustafson I could find was a scientist in Sweden.

I finally managed to find Kathryn by calling the magazine's editor. I gave her a call and invited her to come to Amsterdam. I asked her if she would like to take part in a competition for a park design on the Westergasfabriek in Amsterdam, my project. She agreed. I also paid a lot of attention to the other four landscape architects, all Dutch. I needed five of the best landscape architects to take part in the competition. As soon as the procedure was in the hands of a jury there was nothing I could do except to hope for the best. I promised all of them that if they were going to win this competition I would do everything in my power to realise their project. And many things had to be done before the park finally opened.

There was this very interesting competition. We had a jury, a lot of neighbourhood discussions, an exposition and many discussions. In the end the winner was announced: plan C. No one knew that this was Kathryn Gustafson's plan. There may have been some that guessed it. I know that several members of the jury were sure that this design was done by somebody else.

Many discussions followed. The next thing we saw was a cast of a clay model. Kathryn always wanted to do a clay model and I had to agree. I remember travelling to London many times to meet the landscape architect in her new

office, together with Neil Porter her new companion in Gustafson Porter. We saw the park growing every month, but then only in paper.

The competition was done in 1997. The park opened in 2003. I left Westergasfabriek three years later after having been involved with that project for more than 15 years. A park is never finished and I go to see it at least once a week, to see what's going on, how it is being used, how things are working.

I sometimes remember that I went to London and I realise myself that at that moment I first stepped into that door of her new London office I probably was her only client. Now, many years later, Kathryn and Neil are working everywhere in the world and I cannot stop visiting their projects wherever I can. I liked Gustafson's design for the Westergasfabriek park the first time I saw it. I only started to understand her when I saw her finished work in Terrasson. That is a magnificent project in a region that is one big landscape park itself and doesn't need a park at all. The use of all the elements, sound, colour, water, light, it made me aware of what a park can be. Her project for Diana in London's Hyde park is also fantastic. After all the fuss of the first year it is a beautiful addition to a great park.

It is a joy to have the beautiful new Westerpark in Amsterdam. It was a privilege to work with Kathryn and Neil.

The Westergasfabriek park is Gustafson's perfect answer to the new life we already had developed in the buildings of the old gas factory. The park offers space for all different needs of many different people. It has large spaces and small spaces. It has many beautiful trees, water in all kind of forms, it offers nice views and is the perfect place to relax or to meet others.


When I am walking through Westergasfabriek with a group of guests that have invited me to show them the park I tell them of course about the competition, about all the years and the problems it took us to realise what we can see here today. It is a park that is loved by everybody. I think this is because Westerpark is in my words a feminine park: it is soft, it is rounded, it has nice smells, beautiful colours, a good sound, it is sometimes strong and hard but never flat or obvious.

Every good project is a great challenge between the client and the architect.

I have seen Gustafson's projects in London, Chicago and New York. I love them all but none better than my Westergasfabriek park. I can only hope that Kathryn

Gustafson will have the energy to make many more projects in as many other great cities.

Evert Verhagen.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several loops and a long, sweeping curve that ends in a small loop.