

Executive Committee
Board of Trustees
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye Street NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Re: Letter of Nomination for the ASLA Design Medal: Peter Walker

REED | HILDERBRAND

Dear Executive Committee Members:

I am honored to present the nomination for Peter Walker, Principal of Peter Walker and Partners Landscape Architecture, for the ASLA Design Medal. It is my personal view that there is no living landscape architect with a more widely recognized body of work. As a writer and critic, I have worked closely with Pete and have benefitted from his encouragement, guidance, and generosity. As a teacher, I have taught by his example, and I continue to utilize ample references from his built works and body of publications. Perhaps for these reasons I cannot claim complete objectivity in this nomination—but who among us can? We have all benefitted from his example and his effort to make landscape architecture known to the world. My career would have been markedly different without exposure to Pete’s shared wisdom and his works. I think that’s true for many of us, as some notable colleagues will attest.

I would like to cite a few key remarks from letters written in support of this nomination. Several of the writers indicated surprise that this honor had not already been bestowed upon Pete. Although he was awarded our society’s highest honor, the ASLA Medal (2004), and has also received IFLA’s Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe Gold Medal (2005) for lifetime achievement, the Honor Award of the American Institute of Architects (1992), Harvard’s Centennial Medal (2004), and the University of Virginia’s Thomas Jefferson Medal (2004), he has not been recognized with the ASLA Design Medal. But the timing is right, as I will explain later.

Laurie Olin FASLA (Design Medal, 2010) was “surprised to learn that he had not been honored by this meaningful reward already,” commenting that “Michael Van Valkenburgh [Design Medal, 2011] and myself, both of whom are younger, have built less, and have profited by his leadership, example, and insight.”

Linda Jewell FASLA writes: “Given Walker’s 55 years of extraordinary design work, I was shocked to realize that he had not previously received this award. The high quality of the work and its wide influence within and beyond the profession clearly demonstrate his qualifications.” Several writers cited Walker’s generous capacity for sharing his knowledge and outlook in design. Tom Oslund FASLA describes “the humanity in his design approach,” which is “self-evident, because that’s what is important to him as a designer and teacher.” As James Burnett FASLA recounts, for “over fifty years he has challenged convention and inspired our profession with groundbreaking projects.” And again, on the point of Walker’s humanity, Burnett says, “he is committed to advancing the profession and he loves what he does.” Together these statements convey the influence of a teacher and a leader who has helped the field to gain in credibility, capacity, and relevance. Moreover, they attest to his impact on generations of designers who themselves are accomplished and recognized.

Peer Recognition and Influence

The ASLA Design Medal recognizes designers who have produced a body of exceptional design work for a sustained period of at least ten years. In the case of Pete Walker, he might have earned this honor in each of five straight decades.

ASLA leadership awards the Design Medal to one of its members; our other primary means of peer recognition, by juries, is the national Annual Awards Program. ASLA records indicate that Pete Walker and his partners have claimed some forty-three awards in this program since 1971. This number is substantially higher than that of any person or firm. It includes recognition for projects by Sasaki Walker Associates; the SWA Group, while he was its chairman; the Office of Peter Walker and Martha Schwartz; Peter Walker William Johnson and Partners; the publishing imprint Spacemaker Press, which he established as part owner; and Peter Walker and Partners (1983 to the present).

It is worth highlighting just a few of the works acknowledged in these forty-three awards. The list includes such projects as the iconic modernist headquarters for the Upjohn Corporation; Foothill College (recognized a second time with a Classic Award); the Weyerhaeuser Company Corporate Headquarters (awarded a second time with a Classic Award); Harvard’s Tanner Fountain (recognized again by a Landmarks award in 2008); IBM Solana; his important book with Melanie Simo, *Invisible Gardens*; Saitama Plaza in Japan; the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas; and two groups of serial publications by Spacemaker Press—the *Landmarks* series and the *Land Forum* series—which were recognized with two President’s Awards.

These last two, I should point out, were part of another kind of influence on design: Pete Walker started Spacemaker Press for the purpose of soliciting criticism in the field, identifying writers and giving them a forum, and growing the presence of landscape architects' work in libraries and bookstores. This contribution helped grow the stock of literature in the field at a crucial time. Fifteen years later, the publishing world looks very different; Spacemaker Press played a role in naturalizing the business of design publishing for landscape architecture.

Design Practice and Design

Pete Walker routinely credits Hideo Sasaki with creating an approach to practice that would enable landscape architecture firms to fully engage planning and design matters in the post-war expansion in the United States. Sasaki built a robust model of practice; Pete Walker elaborated on that model and has evolved the model through successive practices since 1959. The variations he pursued in firm organizational structure led to more complex forms of ownership, operation in multiple cities, and practice far beyond American borders. Each successive venture—Sasaki Walker, SWA, his firms with Martha Schwartz and William Johnson, and eventually PWP—pursued alternatives to conventional design methods, issues of practice, conditions for ownership transfer, and means of employee ownership. In this way, Pete has helped to define design practice and business consultancy as inseparable from design itself. Nearly all our North American firms resemble in some manner the kind of structures that his firms enabled through their innovation and leadership. This is part of a legacy sometimes overlooked; it is documented in *Invisible Gardens* as part of a long lineage of practice types and as such represents a singularly important part of our heritage.

The National September 11 Memorial

Finally, let me address the timing of this nomination, which roughly coincides with this past fall's unveiling of the 9/11 Memorial at the former World Trade Center site—on the tenth anniversary of the most significant attack on American soil in our nation's history. The events surrounding the opening of the memorial—the anticipation, the solemn visit by President and Mrs. Obama, the presence of families who lost loved ones, the firefighters and police battalions—stirred for Americans a kind of binding emotional power that is special and rare. The physicality of the memorial—its scale, its mystery and drama, its powerful emptiness—are the outcome of a special collaboration between a young architect with a brilliant idea and a seasoned practitioner who had the depth and capacity to transform the idea into a palpable physical presence in the face of the most daunting political circumstances anywhere. Pete Walker was, in my view, the natural choice for this commission.

In the 1980s, scholars examined Pete Walker's works through the formal devices of "gesture, flatness, and seriality." These pursuits came from Walker's awareness of the power of commanding the ground plane through pattern, which he rediscovered, as he tells it, while studying the Baroque works of Andre LeNotre with Harvard students in France. This is a well-known story. He turned his realization into a decades-long investigation of how to make landscapes have presence, make nature visible, and make patterning and repetition—great traditions in gardens of all cultures—come alive as a way of organizing contemporary landscapes. Many of those mid-career Walker projects received recognition. They were edgy and strong, and at times experimental. And as his approach to these aspects of design matured, Walker's firm also developed expertise how to make altered nature really work.

Now, to return to the 9/11 Memorial. Because city and state leaders had decreed that it should also serve Lower Manhattan as a great park, the project needed to be much more than a memorial. To achieve a grand shaded space for reflection, the plaza possesses what may be the most technically sophisticated life support system ever built to ensure a healthy, durable life for 420 Swamp White Oaks. The project is visually flat, but it is robust as a living landscape. Given the complicated political context, the sustained and committed collaboration over eight years of difficult circumstances, and the technical challenges in making a successful park landscape over a vast and complicated roof—this was most complex project environment imaginable. As I watched my television on the morning of the opening, I was overcome with pride for landscape architecture's capacity to compass such emotion and conviction. The world can now be grateful that Pete Walker and his colleagues—in Pete's sixth decade of practice—accepted the invitation to join this commission, stayed with it and endured its challenges, and gave us a fitting response to one of our most tragic calamities. It may be *the great* commission of our time. But great commissions do not automatically yield great outcomes. In this case, the results exceed our expectations.

We award the Design Medal for sustained excellence and not for a single project, but that is not the point. I hope you share my enthusiasm for this nomination for Peter Walker, who has dedicated his long career to the pursuit of design in its every manifestation. Perhaps, as some think, it's overdue—but in another way, it is absolutely timely.

Sincerely,



Gary R. Hilderbrand FASLA FAAR
Principal, Reed Hilderbrand
Adjunct Professor of Landscape Architecture
Harvard Graduate School of Design

Executive Committee
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

RE: 2012 ASLA Design Medal, Letter of Endorsement for Peter Walker, FASLA

Dear Executive Committee Members:

It is an honor and a pleasure to nominate landscape architect Peter E. Walker, FASLA, to receive the 2012 ASLA Design Medal.

Peter Walker is clearly worthy of this high honor as he has influenced multiple generations of landscape architects across the globe.

Peter has given a tremendous amount to the profession by supporting and creating publications like Spacemaker Press that promote and increase awareness for the field. Peter has taught and lectured extensively. He is an excellent teacher because he listens and encourages discovery. He is a great communicator and is clear with his analysis and criticism. Although I did not have Peter as an instructor, the greatest compliment I have heard is that he brings out the best in his students. He inspires them to go the extra mile and dig deeper for a well conceived solution. He strongly believes that a design should not only satisfy the needs of the users, but also be artful in the solution.

He has transformed the profession of landscape architecture in many ways through the years. He has created a body of work that is always groundbreaking and he jumps scales with ease. From Tanner Fountain at Harvard to major developments in Japan, China and Australia, Peter creates beauty through his design solutions. For over 50 years he has challenged convention and inspired our profession with groundbreaking projects. His love of Minimalism taught us that less *can* be more and can also be quite powerful and elegant at the same time. He grabbed the attention of the entire design and art community through his ordered landscapes. Peter has won every major design award offered for landscape architecture and many that cross over into other design related fields.

Peter has continued to encourage young professionals to believe in their design ability. I know of at least a dozen notable professionals that attribute a big part of their success to the confidence instilled by Peter Walker. This is perhaps his most important contribution; to help others. He is selfless and always available to talk or lend a hand. He attends the annual ASLA meetings and goes to a large number of events. He makes a point of being very accessible and connecting with as many people as he can during the programs. He frequently attends other major conferences and continues to be a strong influence in the design world both here and abroad.



Personally, Peter saved me from becoming an architect. During a collaboration between his firm and my previous employer, I had the rare opportunity to work with Peter. I was heading to architecture school when we began this collaboration and I realized that the profession could be much more than I realized. Soon after, I recommitted to the profession and I am very happy that I did. The next year I started my own own firm and have enjoyed 22 years of private practice. I look forward to seeing Peter each year at the ASLA conference and sharing mutual stories about our adventures. He is always encouraging and inspiring. I am honored to be his friend.

Peter Walker is one of the most significant landscape architects of our time. He is committed to advancing the design profession and he loves what he does. He is very generous with his time and he is great inspiration to all of us. I strongly endorse Peter Walker as the recipient of the 2012 ASLA Design Medal.

Sincerely,



James D. Burnett, FASLA





OLIN

To The Executive Committee:

Pete Walker deserves to be honored by the ASLA for his brilliant career as one of our most talented, productive and influential Designers of the past four decades. I strongly support his nomination for the Design Medal, and frankly was truly surprised to learn that he had not been honored with this meaningful reward already, and that individuals such as Michael Van Valkenburgh and myself, both of whom are younger, have built less, and have profited by his leadership, example, and insight as colleagues following in his footsteps teaching at Harvard's Graduate School of Design had received this medal before Pete.

Starting with early work such as Foothills College as he established the Sasaki Walker office in California through a long career and the establishment of a series of highly successful offices on his own noted for their outstanding award winning design of public and private work around the world, with exquisite work in Japan, landmark regeneration in Germany, commercial development, and explorations demonstrating that landscape design truly can rise to the level of great art as in his Tanner Fountain at Harvard, through long and fruitful collaborations with some of the finest architects of our era such as Fumihiko Maki, Frank Gehry, and Ricardo Legoretta, and most recently culminating in his remarkable and undoubtedly historic 9/11 Memorial, Peter Walker has consistently been a voice for the power of design and the landscape profession.

He has been and continues to be an influential and beloved teacher of design as well, both in the classroom and in practice. His work has consistently been clear, strong, well made, and beautiful. Pete is a designer's Designer and an inspiration to us all. I support his nomination for the ASLA Design medal with enthusiasm and without reservation.

Laurie Olin, FASLA

Carolyn G. Mitchell
Honors and Awards Coordinator
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye St. NW
Washington, DC 20001

RE: ASLA Design Medal

Carolyn:

I am writing this letter to support and nominate Peter Walker for the ASLA Design Medal. Pete's 55-year career represents an extraordinary dedication to Landscape Architectural design on three levels, design instruction, design publication and design practice. This trifecta is a rare occurrence and only comes around once in great while. Names like Laurence Halprin, Dan Kiley and Hideo Sasaki come to mind each possess a similar level of design ability, understanding and accomplishment.

I first met Pete when I was a graduate student at Harvard's Graduate School of Design back in 1984, I can honestly say that encounter changed the trajectory of my professional career and has galvanized my design approach to the practice of Landscape Architecture. As a design studio instructor Pete's passion to inspire and challenge all his students to move far beyond conventional thinking was remarkable. The number of students he has influenced is perhaps impossible to count. However the family tree which starts with Pete in the center and branches out from there touches the likes of Martha Schwartz, George Hargraves, Ken Smith, Gary Hildebrandt, Marty Poirier, Julie Bargman, myself and countless others who have been inspired by Pete's rigor for design and his tenacious desire to extract the best out of his students and put each of them on a course of moving the profession forward through inquiry, creativity and experimentation. Any academic would settle for one of the names on the distinguished list of designers who are influencing the profession today. Pete's compassion for design and creative thinking has raised the awareness of the entire profession and by example has challenged us all to keep pushing ourselves to be the best we can possibly be to ensure that Landscape Architecture is the place for creative thinking and design innovation.

Pete has used the written word to also inspire design thinking within the profession. As a design publisher Pete has raised the expectations of the profession with his insight and curiosity of art, history, theory and critical design thought.

Publications such as Spacemaker Press that has chronicled designers and topics relevant to modern Landscape Architecture have inspired creative design offices around the world be it a architecture office, urban design, graphic design or industrial design office all have the series of Spacemaker volumes in their offices and refer to them frequently because of their content, discourse and enticing imagery. Other publications such as the *History of Modern Landscape Architecture*, *Modern Landscape Architecture a Critical Review* and *Invisible Gardens* are mainstays in most Landscape Architecture offices and academic libraries. These publications have created a bridge between academia and practice that have influenced numerous students and professionals. Again Pete's passion for design excellence is demonstrated in the care and execution of these important publications. The depth of design understanding present in each one of these publications is remarkable and their influence is profound.

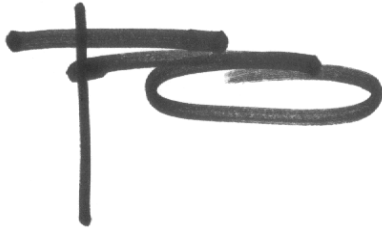
Pete is an innovative thinker and creator. His fascination with materials and experimental use of water, landform and plant materials have produced some of the most provocative projects in the profession. Pete's portfolio as a designer speaks for itself, from Foothills College in Los Altos Hills California to the IBM Solana Campus in Southlake Texas to the 911 Memorial at ground zero in New York City the work is unmatched. His ability to raise the level of design understanding, detail and innovation has contributed to the success of each project he has touched. The numerous design awards, international commissions and collaborations with notable artists and architects is staggering. I am not sure that any Landscape Architect has had the breath and depth of experience of projects and collaborators as Pete has cultivated over the span of his career. Pete's design influence is every where, all one has to do is pick up a recent design publication and it is very clear that his rigor for minimalism, simplicity and exquisite detail has shaped all our thinking and changed our expectations of what Landscape Architecture is all about.

To para-phrase Sir Isaac Newton "*If I have seen further it's by standing on the shoulders of giants*" Peter Walker is a giant and all of us have been fortunate to learn and be inspired by his writings and work.

I have been extremely privileged to be mentored and inspired by Peter Walker. Pete's generosity in design is notable he has enabled myself and many others to move our profession far beyond conventional thought through his dedication, his execution and the openness to share in his design discoveries with all of us. The humanity in his design approach and innovative solutions are self evident, because that's what is important to him as a designer, teacher and a person. These are the qualities necessary to achieve such a successful and impressive design career for the past five decades.

Peter Walker represents the model recipient for this prestigious award. There is no question that the ASLA Design Medal is more deserved based on the impact Pete has had on the profession of Landscape Architecture. I can only hope that the committee will make the right decision and award Pete the ASLA Design Medal for 2012. I appreciate your consideration of this letter of support and look forward to hearing the outcome of your deliberations.

Best regards,
oslund.**and**.assoc.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a vertical line on the left and a large, stylized loop on the right.

Thomas R. Oslund FASLA, FAAR
Principal and CEO

The Executive Committee
The American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye Street NW
Washington, DC 20001-3236

Dear Committee Members:

It is my privilege to give my enthusiastic support to Peter Walker's nomination for the ASLA Design Medal. Given Walker's 55 years of extraordinary design work, I was shocked to realize that he had not previously received this award. The high quality of the work and its wide influence within and beyond the profession clearly demonstrate his qualifications for this recognition.

Like many landscape architects who were students in the 1970s, I first knew of Walker's design work through the published projects of the SWA firm and visits to Foothills College, Sydney Walton Park and other wonderful spaces designed by Walker and his colleagues during the 50s, 60s and 70s. As someone coming to landscape architecture from architecture, these early projects contributed substantially to my enthusiasm for memorable landscape architecture as a key component to improving the quality of urban, suburban and campus environments. I did not meet Pete however until 1985 when I began teaching at Harvard. We have stayed in intermittent contact since I left Boston in 1991 and we taught together at Berkeley from 1997-2000. Although I was never formally Pete's student, much of my insight into landscape architecture design has developed from examining his work, his writings and the publications produced by Spacemaker Press. I have also been fortunate to learn from him first hand through long discussions and debates that have challenged - and improved - my professional design work, my teaching and my research.

As every landscape architect knows, Walker's work has been widely recognized through awards and publications that portray powerful images in glossy photographs. But these works are far more than beautiful images. These exquisitely detailed landscapes are rich with innovative solutions to the technical and spatial challenges that all landscape architects must address. Whether the unique organization of parking at the Solano courtyards, the extensive support system of tree vaults at the 911 Memorial or the hazy water spray of the Tanner Fountain, Walker's projects pave the way for new methods of organizing and constructing landscapes, thereby providing precedents for all to use when

advocating new techniques or long-term investments in the landscape. His projects also provide wonderful on-the-ground experiences with comfortable places for diverse users to sit, walk and enjoy a landscape. My observations of Tanner Fountain demonstrate. Although I was not initially enamored with Tanner, walking by it nearly every day for six years revealed a constantly changing and nuanced landscape where anyone can pause to appreciate the wonders of water and stone at a busy intersection. A landmark design with an ambitious conceptual agenda that attracts countless designers and artists to visit, the fountain also hosts a wealth of everyday life. The carefully arranged stones serve young and old, individuals and groups, sitting and standing, intense activity and meditation. Within these stones I have seen scientists confer over data sheets, students balance picnic baskets and children invent endless games. Indeed, Tanner was the favorite destination of my daughter's day-care teachers who knew they had ready entertainment for toddlers by simply letting them loose to scramble over and around the stones.

Pete's ability to listen to many conflicting ideas and quickly respond with creative proposals is key to how he produces excellent design. It also makes him an excellent - although often unofficial - leader of any design team. He is as a suburb critic who quickly jumps from the intellectual underpinnings of a project to the challenges of building it or strategies to gain political support. These skills have served him and the profession well in his collaborations with many of the world's most prominent architects including Renzo Piano, Ricardo Legoretta, Helmut Jahn and Frank Gehry. His conceptual creativity, persistence and his congenial, but firm, leadership style have given the landscape an important voice in multiple architecture-driven projects where its role might otherwise have been ignored. He has also employed these skills to influence public officials and other decision makers on the landscape architecture's important contributions to the design of all habitable environments.

I believe Pete is as committed to being a teacher and mentor of excellent landscape architectural design as he is to producing excellent work himself. Since leaving his teaching position at Berkeley, he has continued to open his office to our students and to countless other young visitors for tours and workshops. In the office, he not only pursues his own ambitious design agenda, but he has mentored an impressive array of young designers. Unlike many firm leaders who lament, or even resent, the loss of good employees, Pete, much like a mother bird pushing her babies to fly, encourages and supports his talented former employees as potential competitors after they leave. Pete Walker deserves this award, not only for the recognition and consistently high quality of 55 years of built work, but also for his contributions as a publisher, teacher and mentor of excellence in the design of landscapes. He has pushed us all to be our best. We, as a profession, should at last acknowledge his contributions to raising the bar of excellence in design by recognizing him with the ASLA Design Medal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Jewell". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Linda Jewell, FASLA
Professor of Landscape Architecture



MARGARITA DELACORTE MEMORIAL



























