

THE 2013 ASLA PROFESSIONAL AWARDS

BY BRADFORD MCKEE AND LISA SPECKHARDT

THERE WERE NO EASY TRIPS FOR ANYONE through this jury. The 2013 ASLA Professional Awards were chosen by a group of people with much to disagree on, though they had in common a low threshold of doubt, around which one seemingly facile move, one shaky boast, or one photo that seemed to try too hard would push a project aside. But among the 534 entries this year, the jury found beauty, urgency, honesty, and surprise among honorees that are quite diverse in their challenges, aims, and means.

The challenges are almost never single. In the Minnesota cemetery that earned the Award of Excellence in the General Design category, the designers grappled with how to inject life (yes) and new relevance into a sacred and historic space, and the answers are subtle and fearlessly modernist. You can say much the same of the redesign, in the Analysis and Planning category, of a 220-year-old city square in Raleigh, North Carolina—it is a rare American example of preserving without pickling. The restoration of the Sanlihe River through Qian'an, China, triumphs because it confronts a sliding scale of issues that are urban, social, hydrological, and horticultural and leaves none of them neglected.

There is a bracing harbinger in the Residential Design category. The winner of the top honor is a famous beach house in the Hamptons whose owners found it, as so many in the Hamptons do, alarmingly close to the ocean, which is more fickle than some may have believed. It is a daring adaptation. Like several of the winning projects this year, it shows an increasing understanding of the ambiguous relationship between land and water. It is scarcely the last project of its kind, but the upside is that it helps show the way.

A full list of team members and contributors for each project can be found on the ASLA website, www.asla.org.

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HONOR AWARD

**OTTOSEN ENTRY GARDEN,
DESERT BOTANICAL GARDEN**

In view of the red buttes of Papago Park in Phoenix, the Ottosen Entry Garden immerses people visiting the Desert Botanical Garden in the spectacular Sonoran landscape and sets them off into its 80 acres of natural wonders. This 1.6-acre area is meant to orient visitors and also serve as a place for ticketing, to start tours, attend special events, and enjoy some shade.

The entry garden is organized to take in views of the buttes and the city. It steps up from a basin to a mesa along a grid of paths. There are three main gardens. The lowest, the Basin Garden, holds the biggest specimen plants in striking compositions. The Canal Garden has a long channel of light and a water feature. The Terrace Garden holds a shaded space for tender succulents. The hardscape and intricate ornamental details are wrought from regional materials by local craftspeople. "This is Desert Modern in the way it makes spaces," the jury said. "And this is long overdue for focusing on the Sonoran Desert."

SPURLOCK POIRIER LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, SAN DIEGO
PHOENIX DESERT BOTANICAL GARDEN, CLIENT



SPURLOCK POIRIER LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, TOP; ADAM RODRIGUEZ, BOTTOM



HONOR AWARD

**BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN
VISITOR CENTER LANDSCAPE**

"The architecture and the landscape are speaking the same language," the jury said of this complex design, which centers around a 10,000-square-foot living roof of the new Brooklyn Botanic Garden Visitor Center. At the garden's northeast corner, the center and its landscape take people from the city through heaving and plunging ground to see how to catch stormwater—the roof, channels, swales, and basins—and return it to the ground. The educational value is central to its purpose.

The site is three acres. The new building fuses with a dramatic berm 25 feet high that holds a mature ginkgo allée, a straight path that acts as a visual foil to the flowing paths and plant masses around it. The site is sculpted by retaining walls and garden tiers, and original garden pathways course through the building. The berm's shape conducts stormwater to lower-lying areas. There are more than 40,000 plants; 90 species are new to the garden.

HM WHITE, NEW YORK CITY
BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN, CLIENT

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