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The Executive Committee and Board of Trustees  
The American Society of Landscape Architects  
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Washington, D.C. 20001-3736

Letter of Support for Peter Walker's ASLA Medal nomination

I can think of few landscape architects who have contributed so much to so many facets of the profession as Peter Walker. He is an accomplished designer of dozens of exemplary projects, a dedicated and effective educator who changed the focus of design teaching nationwide, and a provocative publisher who demonstrated how to simultaneously celebrate and criticize designed landscapes. I support his nomination as the ASLA medalist with great enthusiasm, respect and indebtedness. While not a former student, I am a former colleague as we were on the GSD faculty together in the late 1980s and early 1990s. I have never met such a committed, demanding and generous colleague.

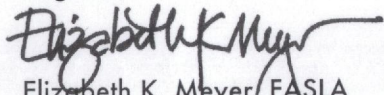
Peter Walker's impact on twentieth-century landscape architectural practice is paralleled only by that of Ian McHarg's. For Walker, like McHarg, not only provided an example of his theories and principles through design projects, he passed those lessons on to others through his leaderships of two respected and influential academic programs, Harvard and Berkeley. Whereas McHarg's contributions were focused on the relationship between environmental values and landscape analysis and planning, Walker's concentrated on the art and craft of landscape design. His meanders through the art galleries of Soho in the 1960s and 1970s introduced him to the power of Minimalist art to evoke powerful experiences through limited means. His travels abroad to Europe and Asia afforded him the opportunity to consider how geometry and artifice can reveal a culture's appreciation for the wonders of the natural world. These experiences filtered into his work, emerging not as simulations of sculpture or ancient gardens, but as thoughtful interpretations of those lessons to new contexts—the everyday spaces of parking lots, campus promenades, urban plazas, as well as the privileged spaces of corporate headquarters courtyards and Olympic grounds. These lessons permeated his design projects at every scale—from their innovative non-hierarchical organizational strategies of repetition and seriality to his invention of hybrid typologies, such as the "minimalist garden without walls" (Burnett Park, Fort Worth as well as IBM Solana, Westlake,) and the mist fountain (Harvard Science Center, north of the Yard), to the inventive detailing of tautened flat surfaces, such as parking lots and roof terraces, where the micro-topography of inches, not feet or stories, makes the difference.

Peter Walker inspired several generations of landscape architecture students to aspire to be artists and to realize that elegant beauty found in the designed landscape can be transformative. His voice was often challenged by those who conflated the obvious presence of the human hand in manipulating nature with an anti-ecological positions. In retrospect, those critiques sound anti-humanist and eco-centric, incapable of recognizing the garden as one of the most powerful metaphors for human's relationship to the natural world. Gardens and designed landscapes have the potential to represent a milieu's conception of its relationship to nature; they do so through the considered articulation of space and time. Peter Walker's designs remind us that this relationship is one of mediation, simultaneously altering the rhythms of natural time and accommodating the rhythms of everyday life.

As such, it is fitting he has been invited to design the landscape for the World Trade Center memorial in New York, perhaps the most important commission since the Vietnam Memorial twenty years ago. Such a project will require an artist and a warrior. I realize this term may be an odd, even inappropriate one to use given the terrorist events associated with the WTC. And yet, artist-warrior is inextricable from my vision of Peter Walker. Fifteen years ago at a memorable dinner spent with another young colleague at Harvard, Walker reminisced about his experiences practicing and teaching. In addition to that evening providing me with an incredibly rich account of the history of my profession, it impressed on me the necessity of teaching students more than what to do and how to think. Walker made it clear that we needed to inspire landscape architects to be warriors, to shed their pre-conceptions of landscape architects as laid-back nature lovers, reticent collaborators, and anti-urbanists. Given the small size of the profession, the narrow conceptions that the public had about landscape architecture, the enormity of unaccounted for, degraded sites and spaces between buildings that comprise the majority of our everyday experience, and the power of developers, bankers and engineers to reduce site design to the most banalities of *amenity* and *open space*, Walker identified the need for forceful, committed, tenacious, and persuasive practitioners and teachers. He demonstrated what it meant to assume leadership positions in the design of our messy middle landscape of sprawling megalopolises, neither wilderness nor dense city, but a challenging in-between. That evening he provoked me to find my own path to proud and relentless advocacy for landscape architecture's potential, and to inspire others to rise to the challenges that this laudable discipline and small profession require.

The University of Virginia will award the Thomas Jefferson Medal in Architecture to Peter Walker in April 2004. This is an award bestowed on Mies van de Rohe, Alvar Aalto, Jose Luis Sert, IM Pei, Robert Venturi, Vincent Scully, Frank Gehry, Ada Louise Huxtable, Jane Jacobs, James Turrell, Aldo Rossi, Richard Rogers, and Glenn Murcutt among others. In the thirty-eight years of the program, the only landscape architects to receive this prestigious prize are Lawrence Halprin (1979), Daniel Kiley (1987), and Ian McHarg (1995). This is a wonderful and timely opportunity for Walker's own professional organization to acknowledge what others, such as the University of Virginia and the Thomas Jefferson Foundation (Monticello), have commended—Peter Walker's contributions to landscape architecture and the larger international design community.

Regards,



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