



RHODESIDE & HARWELL

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

Dear Friends:

It is an honor to recommend Charles A. Birnbaum FASLA, FAAR, for your kind consideration to receive the ASLA LaGasse Medal in recognition of his extraordinary contributions to the management and conservancy of natural resources and public landscapes.

Charles has devoted his professional career, countless volunteer hours, and his boundless energy and enthusiasm to promoting, preserving, and protecting our nation's cultural resources. Since 1992, he has been the coordinator of the Historic Landscape Initiative, a program of the National Park Service Heritage Preservation Services Program. As coordinator of this important program, Charles has provided national policy guidance, developed standards and guidelines, directed conference development and planning, published books and thematic journals, guided web development, coordinated with federal, national, and regional partners, and oversaw volunteers. In 1995, ASLA awarded the NPS Historic Landscape Initiative the President's Award of Excellence.

In 1998, Charles was selected as a Loeb Fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, during which time he founded The Cultural Landscape Foundation, a national non-profit organization dedicated to "stewardship through education" in Washington, DC. He serves as president of the Foundation, has recruited a nationally recognized board, and has raised more than \$2 million in funds to date. The Foundation has also had over three million annual web hits.

Before joining the NPS in 1992, Charles spent ten years in private practice with a focus on the preservation of historic landscapes. Representative preservation planning projects include Boston's Emerald Necklace Parks; Brooklyn's Prospect Park; Seattle's Lake Washington Boulevard; and Albemarle Park in Asheville, North Carolina. Charles also authored the cultural landscape reports for Andrew Jackson Downing's Springside and the Vanderbilt Mansion, both National Historic Landmarks.

Charles's projects for the NPS include the on-line technical series *Cultural Landscape Currents*, the publication *Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, and a public-broadcasting film *Connections: Preserving America's Landscape Legacy*, narrated by Angela Lansbury. Other NPS projects include a Preservation Brief titled *Protecting Cultural Landscapes* and three national database projects: *Pioneers of American Landscape Design: An Annotated Bibliography*; *Making Educated Decisions: A Landscape Preservation Bibliography*; and *A National Directory of Landscape Preservation Organizations*. He has recently served as guest editor for two editions of *Cultural Resource Management*, *The George Wright Forum*, and *Preservation Forum*, and has been a contributing editor both *Landscape Architecture* magazine and *Land Forum*.

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LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE & PLANNING

A gifted speaker, Charles has served as an instructor at The George Washington University, Center for Career Education and Workshops, Historic Landscape Preservation Program, and the Professional Development Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. Since 2000, he has led workshops for the National Preservation Institute. He has served as chair of the ASLA Historic Preservation Committee, co-chair of the National Association of Olmsted Parks and co-chair of US/ICOMOS Historic Landscape Committee, on the boards of directors of the Washington Architectural Foundation, the Jens Jensen Society, and the Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation.

Charles is a prolific author, documenting the history of our profession in *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* for McGraw-Hill (2000); *Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture I and II* for Spacemaker Press (1999, 2004); *Design with Culture: Claiming America's Landscape Heritage* for the University of Virginia Press (2005); and, the forthcoming *Pioneers of American Landscape Design II* also for the University of Virginia Press (2008).

In 1996, he became the youngest member ever inducted into the Council of Fellows. More recently, in 2004, Charles served as the Samuel Kress Fellow at the American Academy in Rome.

He received an Associate of Applied Science in Ornamental Horticulture from State University of New York at Farmingdale in 1978, and a graduated *cum laude* from the State University of New York College of Environmental Science & Forestry, studying in Syracuse and London in 1983.

Thank you for this opportunity to recognize the contributions of our very dedicated colleague,



Faye B. Harwell, ASLA
Potomac Chapter Trustee

Lawrence Halprin

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Re: LaGasse Medal
Letter of Support

To the Board of Trustees:

I am honored to write this letter to support the nomination of Charles Birnbaum for the ASLA LaGasse Medal. It is most appropriate to recognize his contributions to the management and conservancy of natural resources and public landscapes.

I have been continuously impressed by Charles and I feel he embodies extraordinary qualities. I am thankful that he has turned his considerable talents to an aspect of landscape architecture that has long been ignored in the landscape design professions – documenting and protecting historically significant pieces of our designed landscape. To Charles and to many of us in this profession, these special places are vital pieces of our cultural history and identity, and need to be treated to the same standards of preservation as historic works of architecture.

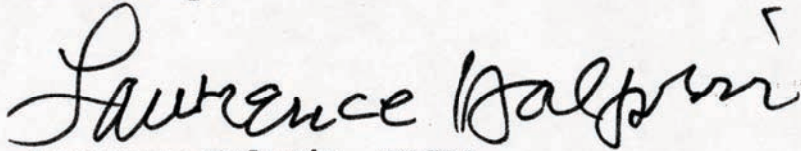
Once Charles discovered this need, he evolved a method of identifying the most vulnerable landscapes, drawing attention to the issues, and educating young people through his Cultural Landscape Foundation and website. Charles is articulate and creative in his outreach about the importance of open space in our communities. He has been extremely successful in raising awareness and inspiring community involvement in the preservation effort. Charles accomplishes much of this through his website, but his strong personal commitment and infectious enthusiasm have helped him build a dynamic network of support.

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The Office of Lawrence Halprin

The Cultural Landscape Foundation is leading the way in this exciting and vital effort. Using the website as a classroom can entertain and educate as it increases awareness, and can help students use all of their senses to understand how to be more involved in the cultural landscapes they inhabit. I hope that the ASLA sees fit to honor this energetic, passionate, and highly motivated individual.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lawrence Halprin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial "L".

Lawrence Halprin, FASLA

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

Re: Nomination of Charles Birnbaum for the LaGasse Medal

Dear Trustees:

I write in support of the nomination of Charles Birnbaum for the LaGasse Medal.

Boy, this one should be easy. I believe this particular recognition for Charles relates specifically to his long record of accomplishment at the National Park Service. While many outstanding professionals with leadership abilities work in public practice, only a few break through governmental inertia the way this man has. No mistake about it, his stamina, his strategic initiatives, his leadership abilities, and his unequalled drive make him one of the true leaders of our public landscape and our cultural heritage.

Just a few examples suffice—the Historic Landscape Initiative, its newsletter, the *Pioneers* publications, the conferences, the foundation—what a record of achievement. Look at his contribution, and you can feel like an underachiever. Take a call from him, and just try to stay calm amid the blurring speed of thought and the urgency in his voice.

No debate here. He deserves this recognition; stay tuned for more.

Thanks for allowing me to comment.

Sincerely,



Gary R. Hilderbrand FASLA FAAR
Principal, Reed Hilderbrand
Adjunct Professor, Harvard Design School

Board of Trustees
c/o Carolyn Mitchell, Honors & Awards Coordinator
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Dear Trustees,

I believe Charles Birnbaum is **the** outstanding nominee for the ASLA LaGasse Medal in landscape architecture. I have followed his meteoric rise as the premier advocate for preserving the heritage of our profession for more than a decade. The Wave Hill symposium, about 2000, was an early indication of his zealous dedication to protecting our heritage. Think on this, the process of creating a great landscape would seem to be the ultimate experience. Trumping that is the process of recognizing and preserving, for future generations, multiple great works by multiple landscape architects. The cumulative effect of Charles Birnbaum's near obsession with the management and conservancy of public/private, designed and natural landscapes is beyond measure.

It is most appropriate for the Potomac Chapter to nominate Charles for the prestigious LaGasse Medal, the benefits to the profession, to the public are reciprocal and exponential.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rich Haag". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Richard Haag, Principal, FASLA, Hon. AIA

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C/O Carolyn Mitchell, Honors & Awards Coordinator
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Washington, DC 20001

Dear Trustees:

It is with great enthusiasm that I support the nomination of Charles Birnbaum for ASLA's LaGasse medal. His leadership in the area of historic and cultural landscapes has revolutionized the profession of landscape architecture. He has worked tirelessly to broaden the public's understanding of these resources, and helped to ensure the preservation of our irreplaceable landscape legacy.

It would be hard to find a candidate more worthy of this recognition. Charles is an outstanding public servant who has spent his considerable energy educating professionals and the public about the value of our landscape heritage. His work is respected nationally and internationally. His knowledge of the field is vast. He serves as a resource for professionals and laypeople, speaks and writes prolifically about landscape history, and has made a significant impact on the recognition, preservation and protection of our public lands and cultural resources.

His books, *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* (I and II); *Preserving Modern Landscape Architecture* (I and II) and *Design with Culture: Claiming America's Landscape Heritage* are seminal contributions to the field and have become invaluable tools for the landscape preservation movement. In addition, Charles has reached beyond the traditional audience for preservation and helped to develop a series of online programs for middle school students and their teachers called *Cultural Landscapes as Classrooms* which allows the public to go online and experience landscapes that are part of their surroundings, to understand how changes affect these special places and help them to become better stewards of their cultural heritage.

Through his work with the National Park Service he has designed more than two dozen national conferences. In addition, he authored *Preservation Brief 36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes*—which was the first time that an external program of the National Park Service recognized the term “cultural” versus “historic”. Published in 1994, this revolutionary shift paved the way for the publication of the *Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*. Published in 1996, the document is now part of the *Federal Register*, and is the national policy document on how to apply the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards* to landscapes. Not only is the term cultural landscape commonly used today, the *Guidelines* was awarded an ASLA Merit award in 1997. The following year the Historic Landscape Initiative, managed by Charles, was awarded the President's Medal of Excellence—the highest honor awarded by the jury that year.

Through the Cultural Landscape Foundation Charles has developed *Landslide*, an interactive, online resource highlighting threats to cultural landscapes and directing the public to those groups working to protect them. *Landslide* provides a history of each threatened site; presents its social, cultural, and artistic significance; gives a biography of the landscape architect or designer; and details the current threat. Moreover, *Landslide* connects the public to the preservation effort by providing links to the groups that are working to safeguard each site for the benefit of today and for future generations. program to call attention to our most endangered cultural assets. Through *Landslide* many significant works of landscape architecture have been saved.

Charles has also begun an oral history project to transmit knowledge across generations by gathering the voices of some of the profession's living legends and making them available to the public. Charles filmed landscape architects Dan Kiley, Ruth Patricia Shellhorn and Walt Guthrie before they passed away, and has recorded M. Paul Friedberg, Lawrence Halprin and Ted Osmundson.

In addition to this vital work, one of Charles' most important qualities is his ability to bring together people from many places and professions and inspire them to action with his passion for saving our cultural patrimony. Everywhere he goes he makes an indelible impression and is an incomparable ambassador for the profession of landscape architecture and landscape preservation. It is estimated that the lectures, publications, critical writings, web offerings documentary film produced by Charles have reached more than 10 million people.

Charles would be a perfect recipient of the LaGasse medal, and ASLA should award it to him.

Jan Rothschild
Vice President, Communications and Marketing
National Trust for Historic Preservation