

## **Honorary Membership Nomination Narrative**

Nominee: Shaun Saer Duncan

Nominee's Address: 2265 Grandin Road

City/State/Zip: Cincinnati, Ohio 45208

Phone: (h) 513.321.0007

Nominator: Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA

Please describe the nominee's achievements of national or international significance or influence and how they have benefited the profession of landscape architecture (no more than two pages, single-spaced, typed).

I first met Shaun Duncan 12 years ago while she was serving as a Trustee for River Fields – one of the oldest river conservation groups in America, based in Louisville, KY. Shaun was actively involved in their advocacy and outreach efforts. I was brought to town because of a massive construction project that threatened with demolition a series of Country Place Era Estate landscapes designed by the Olmsted Brothers, Ellen Shipman and Bryant Fleming among others. Shaun suggested that the Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF) partner with River Fields to convene a conference in Louisville to educate the public about the city's unrivaled heritage of landscape architecture – from Olmsted parks to estate landscapes by Jens Jensen and Arthur Cowell. Her goal was not to be a traditional “firefighter” preservationist, but to inspire the general public about the city's rich landscape heritage that was all around. Her love and enthusiasm for landscape and history is infectious.

The results: a year later a regional conference was hosted by the venerable Speed Museum of Art where Shaun co-chaired a sold-out conference attended by over 300. This was the beginning of Shaun's ever-growing fascination and romance with landscape architecture, which grows out of her foundational interests in historic preservation and gardening – surely the results of her childhood spent in New Orleans (most notably Audobon Park, which she boasts, “was designed by John Charles Olmsted”), and her education in Jefferson's landscape at the University of Virginia and Tulane (where she received a JD from its law school).

A little more than a year after this successful collaboration Shaun, joined the Board of Directors of TCLF and, for the last decade, has served as co-chair for the organization. Under Shaun's leadership, TCLF has grown from a volunteer enterprise, to an organization with five full-time employees, a \$750,000 annual budget, and over \$1.5 in assets. She has not only been a key catalyst in securing expert accounting and legal counsel, but she has been an active leader in many of the organization's most celebrated programs and initiatives.

For example, Shaun spearheaded our second Cultural Landscapes as Classrooms (CLC) module, *City Shaping: The Olmsteds in Louisville*. For this ASLA-award winning project, her role ranged from securing all of the local partners and leading the development charge (over \$100,000 was raised), to coproducing the *Olmsted Odyssey* gala where we honored The Dry Stone Conservancy, Kentucky Heritage Council, the Louisville Olmsted Parks Conservancy, and River Fields. Shaun's efforts on the CLC project and the Stewardship Excellence Awards promoted landscape architecture to the broadest possible public while forging new avenues for communication and alliances.

Shaun is also actively involved in the *Landslide* program; many of the sites that have been protected are the results of her efforts. This includes Louisiana gardens that were significantly hit by Katrina such as Longue Vue Gardens and Laura Plantation (2006: Spotlight on the Garden) and remarkable horticultural features such as the Baldcypress Grove at Spring Grove Cemetery, Cincinnati, OH and the Bamboo Groves of Jungle Gardens on Avery Island, LA (2007: Heroes of Horticulture).

It is, however, more than the individual projects that make Shaun worthy of this recognition it is her leadership and grace. Whether it is a board meeting, a letter to an editor, hosting a dinner or chairing an event, Shaun puts America's landscape heritage first, and will do whatever it takes to get you to see it, value it, and be a better steward. **TCLF's great success over this past decade has been possible because of Shaun's leadership vision and spirit.** I strongly urge the committee to look favorably on her application.





January 5, 2011

Ms. Carolyn Mitchell  
Coordinator, Honors and Awards  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20001-3736

Dear Ms. Mitchell:

With the greatest pleasure, I would like to nominate Mrs. Shaun Saer Duncan to honorary membership in the American Society of Landscape Architects. As the co-Chair of the Cultural Landscape Foundation she has made immeasurable contributions to the preservation of America's designed landscapes and to the education of students, the profession and the general public on the value of designed landscapes to our culture and environment.

I serve on the Board of the Foundation and have seen its amazing growth and influence under Shaun's leadership. From a prominent New Orleans family she has contributed much to that unique City, and continues her activities in her current home in Cincinnati where she is a board member of the Horticultural Society and a past trustee of River Fields, a conservation organization in Louisville, Kentucky.

A graduate of the University of Virginia with a law degree from Tulane, Shaun is an extraordinary person who through her work, family and community activity has demonstrated a vision of how one can make a contribution to a larger purpose. In her key role in the Cultural Landscape Foundation she has taken all her skill, grace and life experience to the purpose of creating a better understanding of how past, present and future designed landscapes can make us a better people and society.

Shaun is a champion of the landscape profession and by becoming one of us will add much to its highest goals and values. Please accept my nomination, with enthusiasm, for her honorary membership in the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Sincerely,

Kalvin Platt, FAIA

Affiliate ASLA

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Member of the Board, The Cultural Landscape Foundation

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31 January 2011

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

Re: Nomination of Shaun Saer Duncan, Honorary Member of ASLA

R E E D | H I L D E R B R A N D

Dear Trustees:

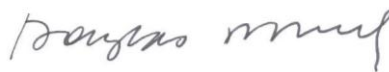
It is an honor for me to recommend Shaun Saer Duncan for honorary membership in the American Society of Landscape Architects in recognition of her devoted efforts to preserve culturally significant landscapes and to make citizens aware of our nation's landscape design heritage. For ten years I have had the privilege to serve alongside her as a board member of The Cultural Landscape Foundation, including as co-chair of its board of directors.

Shaun is a true ally and advocate of the landscape architecture profession. Initially Shaun brought her formidable legal skills to the conservation mission of Louisville's Riverfields, one of the first river conservation groups in the country, as a board member. In 1999 she focused on the need to preserve the significant and threatened River Road estate properties of the area. During this period she and her fine work were identified by the then burgeoning Cultural Landscape Foundation in its efforts to recognize community leaders who were raising awareness of their local and regional designed landscapes. Following this introduction she began her steadfast commitment to the work of The Cultural Landscape Foundation, first as a board member and, in the last five years, as co-chair of the Board.

Under Shaun's board leadership, TCLF has grown its board membership to cover most regions of the country and to include persons from diverse careers; expanded its programs to express its core mission of landscape stewardship through education, including documenting the oral histories of landscape architecture's most prominent practitioners; and presided over the foundation's growth in assets of \$1.5 million. She leads with wisdom, enthusiasm and a thoughtful and gracious spirit.

Shaun and her work represent the highest ideals of our profession. Her accomplishments and her humanity, in the service of the values of our discipline, are nothing short of an inspiration. Thank you for your kind consideration of this nomination.

Sincerely,



Douglas P. Reed FASLA  
Principal



## RIVER FIELDS

March 4, 2011

### **To members of the ASLA:**

It is a pleasure to write this letter in support of the nomination of Shaun Saer Duncan for the position of Honorary Membership in the American Society of Landscape Architects. The national field of landscape architecture is seriously advanced by the leadership of Shaun as the long-term president of the Cultural Landscape Foundation (CLF).

It is rare in today's world for those who are gifted to contribute their time and talents to the progress of a charitable goal. Shaun is a woman of extraordinary professional and personal ability, vision, character and unusual inter-disciplinary intelligence who could choose to focus her creative energy in countless arenas. The landscapes in America are stronger because Shaun is a pivotal leader in CLF. It is unusual for a leader of these abilities to focus constructively and productively on one area for an extended period of time. Many of us who have worked in the non-profit fields for decades realize that long-term and committed board leaders are critical to the growth and health of any non-profit organization. The national profession of landscape architects should be enormously grateful that Shaun has chosen, instead, to focus all of her charitable time and intelligent talent in the service for CLF which has made and is making such a difference to the respect paid to cultural landscapes in America.

I first met Shaun standing in a beautifully preserved urban cultural landscape, at a home built on one of the famous Olmsted designed parkways in Louisville, Ky. When introduced to the vision and values of River Fields, one of the oldest river conservation groups in America, she became passionate about our work. For Shaun, passion means action. When Shaun acts she is humble and realistic, a hard worker and committed. This quality of leadership was a great gift to River Fields landscape work.

River Fields, founded in 1959, is different than many river conservation groups as it has historically worked to preserve the natural, cultural and scenic resources of the river corridor and watershed. This unique blending of historic preservation and land conservation and education efforts became Shaun's passion. She was a natural. Thanks to Shaun's tireless and ever creative and intelligent leadership, The

Cultural Landscape Foundation, River Fields and a host of other community partners successfully launched the nationally recognized symposium, "The Celebration of the Country Estates".

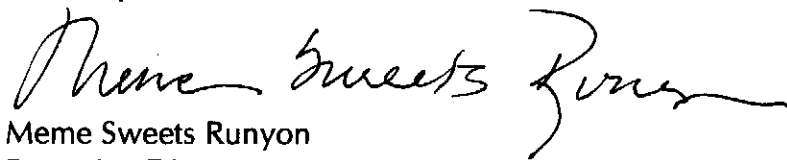
After accomplishing this feat, she moved forward as a trustee of River Fields to lead myriad effective initiatives to increase public awareness and support for the unparalleled landscapes of the Ohio River Corridor in Louisville. During this time, Shaun joined the Board of the Cultural Landscape Foundation and, as Charles Birnbaum's letter outlines, she is truly a national leader in moving his critically important organization to remarkable growth.

Shaun has a national vision for America. Her vision includes the fact that there is a spiritual the relationship between community and individual health in relation to land and history, landscapes, historic preservation and importance of preserving communities for future generations. She understands completely the role that landscapes have in developing and deepening the sense of place for both the public and for the development of healthy citizens, families and communities. As a beautifully educated woman with a law degree she integrates incisive thinking and creativity to help forward her national vision.

Every day, day after day, Shaun works toward the vision of respected and preserved landscapes. She wakes up in the morning; e-mails, calls and make connection for landscapes. As a board leader, she has played a key role in ensuring the sustainability for CLF. And finally she cheers local related non-profits on to protect their landscapes. Her creativity, positive attitude and gracious spirit gives invaluable strength and depth to this national work.

I have reviewed your list of honorary members to the ASLA. There is no question that Shaun belongs in this important group.

Sincerely,

  
Meme Sweets Runyon  
Executive Director