



# Olmsted Medal Nomination

## NOMINEE

The Cultural Landscape Foundation

## NOMINATORS

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OLIN

February 28, 2023

American Society of Landscape Architects  
Olmsted Medal Nominations  
c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

We are pleased to nominate **The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF)** for the 2023 Olmsted Medal. Over the past 25 years, TCLF, a national education and advocacy non-profit based in Washington, D.C., has been elevating the value of landscape architecture, the role of the landscape architect, and the visibility of the profession's unique contributions to the built environment, our cultural identity, and our social wellbeing.

Since 1998, TCLF's principal programs, along with its conferences, advocacy, publications, and traveling exhibitions, have been influential and consequential in deepening the understanding of the cultural and natural systems that form the core subjects of our discipline. The quality and success of TCLF's work is evidenced by numerous American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) awards (see Supporting Material), many grants, and public accolades. This track record notwithstanding, perhaps its most prominent, audacious, and ambitious undertaking is the creation of the biennial *Cornelia Hahn Oberlander International Landscape Architecture Prize*, which, like the Pritzker Prize in architecture, includes a \$100,000 award and associated public engagement activities about the winner's work in the context of the discipline's vital relevance to today's culture (see illustration 1).

We have participated in various TCLF programs and initiatives since its inception (co-nominator Douglas Reed is a founding Board Member) and have known its current President and CEO, Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA, for more than three decades. We can point to numerous instances where the foundation's actions have had a major impact, but there are two related events that are worth highlighting. In 2014, New York City's Frick Collection announced an expansion plan that would result in the demolition of a rare, surviving U.S. public commission by the notable English landscape architect Russell Page. Through articles in the *Huffington Post* (to which Birnbaum was then a contributor), extensive press outreach, coalition building, and behind-the-scenes counseling of local advocacy organizations, TCLF made the garden the prime issue in the expansion plan debate.

The Page garden went from being a potential construction site to a recognized and protected work of art, Page went from obscurity to visibility, and the concept that landscape architecture had value received unprecedented recognition when the *New York Times* architecture critic Michael Kimmelman, in criticizing the proposed expansion, concluded: "Great public places and works of landscape architecture deserve to be treated like great buildings." Significantly, building-focused advocacy groups began to see value in designed landscapes, the public became aware of the virtue of something they took for granted, and the "newspaper of record" put landscape architecture on equal footing with architecture. This advocacy campaign and the desire to make the profession more visible and valued became the impetus for a years-long effort to create the *Oberlander Prize*.

#### BACKGROUND

The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF) was created by Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA, while he was a Loeb Fellow in 1997-98 at Harvard's Graduate School of Design. Birnbaum, a native New Yorker born in 1961, spent a decade in the private sector in New York City that included serving as a project manager

on the rehabilitation of two iconic works by the profession's founder Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.: Prospect Park in Brooklyn, NY, and the Emerald Necklace in Boston, MA.

He was recruited by the National Park Service to become the Coordinator of the Historic Landscape Initiative (HLI) in Washington, DC, and served in that position from 1992 to 2007. In 1995 ASLA awarded the HLI the President's Medal of Excellence. In 1996, Charles became an ASLA Fellow (the youngest in the ASLA's history, we believe); in 2007 he received the LaGasse Medal in recognition of his work in public service; in 2008 the President's Medal from Angela Dye; and in 2017 the ASLA Medal.

The inspiration to create TCLF emerged from three things: Birnbaum was overwhelmed by the very personal and visible emotional responses by audiences to a documentary, for which he served as executive producer (with ASLA) while at the Park Service, *Connections: Preserving America's Landscape Legacy*, narrated by the late Angela Lansbury. Second, he felt the governmental "top down" approach to education, outreach and advocacy was less effective than a "bottom up" grass-roots approach when it came to landscapes (at that time gardening and golf were America's favorite past times). And finally, in 1997 the web was emerging as a resource that could make the foundation's broad programmatic agenda widely accessible. He used his time as a Loeb Fellow to learn the skills needed for creating, operating, and managing a non-profit. He immersed himself in the Harvard and MIT communities, the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations, the Kennedy School of Government, and Project Zero at the Graduate School of Education. In 1998 he founded TCLF, which he ran for nine years as a volunteer. In 2007, the Foundation had a million dollars in the bank (then enough for three years of general operating expenses for two staff), and Birnbaum left the government to run TCLF full time. It first operated out of one room on the third floor of Birnbaum's house; today its office is on Connecticut Avenue in Washington, DC. To date, they've never touched the original million dollars and are today a staff of ten with a \$1.6 million annual budget and a web presence that in 2022 resulted in millions of page views.

#### EDUCATION and ADVOCACY

The four major initiatives at TCLF are: the *What's Out There* online landscape database; *Pioneers of American Landscape Design*; *Landslide*; and the *Cornelia Hahn Oberlander International Landscape Architecture Prize*. We'll describe them all in a moment, but it's important to know that what makes all these projects successful is their intellectual rigor, attention to detail, and accessibility. All these programs are designed to make the profession, its practitioners, and the profession's impact understood by a wide range of audiences from the public, to elected officials and decision makers, and specialists. Of equal importance to the success of these programs are broad, multi-disciplinary collaboration and the network of partnerships that TCLF has created. To ensure that TCLF's message is broadly delivered and its "followers" continue to grow, the foundation engages not only the landscape architecture community, but laymen, university faculty and students, advocates, allied organizations and non-profits, and allied design professionals, while also cultivating elected officials, civic leaders, and the media.

The *What's Out There* online landscape database is an unrivalled resource about cultural landscapes throughout the US (and into parts of Canada, France, Israel, and the UK), with more than 2,500 sites and 12,000 images. It's divided into 27 landscape types, dozens of subtypes, and sixteen styles, and each carefully vetted 250 to 300-word entry is accompanied by up to ten photographs. The database has been leveraged for the creation of print guidebooks (nearly 30 currently), to cities including Denver, Los Angeles, Miami, and Richmond and 21 extensive online city guides, including six done in collaboration with the National Park Service. The database has also been the foundation of free *What's Out There Weekend* tours in dozens of cities across the country (see illustration 2).



In addition, as part of the bicentennial in 2022 of the birth of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., TCLF produced a digital *What's Out There Olmsted* guide focused on the built legacy of Olmsted, Sr., and his successor firms, that currently includes more than 325 sites, more than 100 biographies of members of the Olmsted family and the firm's many employees, consultants, and collaborators, an extensive introduction, and several thousand images. Moreover, in October 2022, Timber Press published *Experiencing Olmsted: The Enduring Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted's North American Landscapes*, a publication of TCLF co-authored by Birnbaum, Arleyn Levee, Hon. ASLA, and Dena Tasse-Winter. The October 6, 2022, *Wall Street Journal* review noted: "*Experiencing Olmsted*, profusely illustrated and expertly annotated, allows us to admire the full range of Olmsted's vision."

The *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* project was begun during Birnbaum's Park Service tenure to chronicle the lives and careers of practitioners. The program has mushroomed and includes five extensive print publications (with three hardbound volumes that each took a decade to complete); an online, carefully vetted database that features more than 1,100 profiles of landscape architects and allied professionals; and at present seventeen on-going video oral histories series (awarded ASLA's 2010 Award of Excellence, Communications), with practitioners including Carol Johnson, Lawrence Halprin, James van Sweden, Laurie Olin, M. Paul Friedberg, Harriet Pattison, Joe Yamada, Shlomo Aronson, Cornelia Hahn Oberlander, William "Bill" Johnson, and others, a forthcoming one with inaugural Oberlander Prize laureate Julie Bargmann (see illustration 3). Each *Pioneers* oral history is divided into three sections – biography, history, and design – and parsed into one- to six-minute segments. They capture crucial information from amusing anecdotes to profound insights and moments of inspiration that might otherwise be lost. Professor and scholar Elizabeth Meyer at the University of Virginia says the oral histories are invaluable primary source material.

The *Landslide* program was created to bring national attention to threatened and at-risk landscapes and landscape features. The Frick's Russell Page-designed garden mentioned earlier is one example. The program engages multiple audiences from the public to park and landscape advocates – this is a powerful and visible way of highlighting a landscape's significance, telling its story and that of its designer, and promoting a broader and sustained stewardship ethic.

Since 2003, TCLF have issued an annual thematic *Landslide* report accompanied by a richly illustrated online exhibition. For example, in 2008, *Marvels of Modernism* featured the Lawrence Halprin-designed Heritage Park Plaza in Fort Worth, TX (a threatened site that was saved, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and is now being rehabilitated thanks in large part to TCLF's efforts), Lake Elizabeth, designed by John O. Simonds in Allegheny Commons in Pittsburgh (another project saved, designated, and rehabilitated), and many others.

Significantly, under the *Landslide* umbrella, TCLF has organized and curated traveling photographic exhibitions. Initially, they were done in partnership with the George Eastman Museum of International Photography and Film, as well as *Garden Design*, *Landscape Architecture* and *American Photo* magazines. The exhibitions travel on average three to five years and are hosted by institutions such as the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, PA; The Center for Architecture, New York; Dallas Center for Architecture; various botanical gardens, and a host of other diverse venues.

Through *Landslide* TCLF has also focused on the legacy of several titans in the field. In 2013 *The Landscape Architecture Legacy of Dan Kiley* opened in Kiley's hometown of Boston at the Boston Architectural College and travelled to eighteen other venues before the novel corona virus halted public activities at all museums and cultural institutions. The foundation raised the funds, commissioned

leading photographers (who donated their services), built a website, produced an exhibition gallery guide and got bookings at multiple cultural venues including the National Building Museum in Washington, DC. The *Wall Street Journal* review said the exhibition “shows how modern landscapes often make a better argument for modernism than the architecture itself.”

In 2015 TCLF produced the traveling photographic exhibition *The New American Garden: The Landscape Architecture of Oehme van Sweden*, organized on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the duo’s influential book, *Bold Romantic Gardens*. The exhibition originated at the National Building Museum and featured photographs, select segments from the *Pioneers* oral history with van Sweden, prints, drawings, as well as furniture and other artifacts they designed. The *Washington Post*’s Pulitzer Prize-winning critic Philip Kennicott wrote that the exhibition, “gives a thorough sense of their accomplishment, their style and their influence. It is also the largest monographic exhibition the National Building Museum has devoted to landscape architecture, and it bodes well for yet more attention to this often-neglected discipline.”

In 2016 TCLF mounted *The Landscape Architecture of Lawrence Halprin*, which was timed to the centennial of Halprin’s birth (see illustration 4). This, too, debuted at the National Building Museum (where it is supplemented with drawings, dioramas, and other artifacts from the Halprin Collection at the University of Pennsylvania Architecture Archives), and was the subject of coverage in major dailies such as the *New York Times*, to influential international online sites including *Dezeen*, and many others. As with the other exhibitions, the net result is to show the power, impact, prescience, and diversity of landscape architecture to a broad audience.

*Landslide* reports and exhibitions since then have focused on the threats to open space (*Landslide 2017: Open Season on Open Space*), sites associated with civil and human rights (*Landslide 2018: Grounds for Democracy*), climate change (*Landslide 2019: Living in Nature*), women practitioners, timed to the centennial of the passage of the US Constitution’s 19<sup>th</sup> amendment (*Landslide 2020: Women Take the Lead*), landscapes associated with African American, Hispanic Americans, and Native Peoples (*Landslide 2021: Race and Space*), and the Olmsted bicentennial (*Landslide 2022: The Olmsted Design Legacy*).

The *Cornelia Hahn Oberlander International Landscape Architecture Prize*, as noted above, grew out of TCLF’s advocacy efforts for Russell Page-designed viewing garden at the Frick Collection. The secret, multi-year effort to create the award began with discreet conversations with some board members and others. Among the informal advisers were Martha Thorne, Executive Director of the Pritzker Prize and the leadership of the Nasher Sculpture Center, which had recently created an international sculpture prize. TCLF mounted a campaign that raised a \$4.5 million endowment to support the biennial Oberlander Prize, its \$100,000 award, and the associated public engagement activities.

In 2019 a Prize Advisory Committee (co-nominee Gary Hilderbrand was a member), and TCLF’s Board approved naming the honor for Canadian practitioner Cornelia Hahn Oberlander, called the “grande dame of landscape architecture” by the *New York Times*, because her inspiring and trailblazing career in the profession exemplifies the critical values and ideals of the Prize--she is someone who embodies the Prize criteria of creativity, courage, and vision. The inaugural Oberlander Prize Curator, John Beardsley, an influential writer, curator, historian, and professor, assembled the inaugural international seven-person Jury, chaired by Dorothée Imbert, the Hubert C. Schmidt ’38 Chair in landscape architecture and the Director of the Knowlton School at The Ohio State University.

Over the course of several months in 2021 more than 200 nominations were winnowed down to a handful of finalists from which landscape architect Julie Bargmann was selected as the inaugural laureate. The announcement on October 14, 2021, received global media attention with feature coverage in U.S. from the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *PBS Newshour*, *NPR*, and dozens of others. The next day, the inaugural Oberlander Prize Forum, *Courageous by Design*, was held in New York City. It focused on the leaders in addressing the climate crisis in NYC – all women landscape architects. A year later, the second Oberlander Prize Forum, *Landscape Activism*, held in Dallas, focused on how landscape architecture is employed to address issues of race, gender, sexuality, and other issues.

In 2020, TCLF announced its *Race and Space* initiative, which focuses in part on the surfacing of long neglected and largely unknown stories about cultural landscapes associated with African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Peoples, and others (see illustration 5). TCLF is increasing the representation of these sites in the *What's Out There* database (thanks in part to a National Endowment for the Arts grant), and the *Pioneers* database, and has been hosting *Race and Space Conversations*, free, online panel discussions featuring practitioners, activists, stewards, and others addressing the present condition and future of sites across the US.

We have not given enough attention to TCLF's conferences. They have been very important in positioning landscape architecture as a leader in the remaking of cities, particularly in urban planning. The sold-out 2011 *Second Wave of Modernism II* conference at New York City's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), attracted attendees from around seven countries, and it quite possibly featured the greatest number of landscape architects as speakers/participants in a single event in the museum's history. TCLF's relatively recent and carefully curated conferences in Toronto (2015), Houston (2016), San Antonio (2017), Raleigh (2018), and Dallas (2019) have attracted mayors, city planners, municipal officials, and other key decision-makers. These are the audiences we must reach to increase our work, our influence, and our reputation. These conferences are consequential.

## CONCLUSION

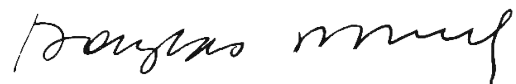
Since 1998, TCLF has evolved from a scrappy, volunteer-led organization with little money but lots of ambition, to an impactful and influential national foundation with widely respected educational initiatives, and a fiercely effective (and sometimes feared) advocacy arm that has saved more than 50 landscapes. Now with the *Cornelia Hahn Oberlander International Landscape Architecture Prize*, TCLF's reach extends projectively into the future of the discipline and its practitioners. TCLF's mission and the 25-year track record of its work are unique in our profession and in the larger culture—the foundation is raising awareness of our nation's landscape legacy, through the designed, vernacular, and ethnographic landscapes that make up our cultural identity, and it is promulgating the importance of what a landscape architect is and does.

We therefore respectfully propose that the Society confer on TCLF the prestigious Olmsted Medal.

Gary Hilderbrand  
Peter Louis Hornbeck Professor in Practice  
Chair of the Department of Landscape Architecture  
Harvard University Graduate School of Design

Douglas Reed  
Principal Emeritus  
Reed Hilderbrand

Principal  
Reed Hilderbrand



## Supporting Material

**AMERICAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS AWARDS for THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE  
FOUNDATION -- Eleven National Awards in 25 Years**

2021 Honor Award in Communications, American Society of Landscape Architects, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, for *Landslide 2020: Women Take The Lead*;

2019 Honor Award in Communications, American Society of Landscape Architects, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, for *What's Out There Cultural Landscape Guides* with the National Park Service;

2017 Honor Award in Communications, American Society of Landscape Architects, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, for *The Landscape Architecture of Lawrence Halprin*;

2016 Award of Excellence in Research and Communications, American Society of Landscape Architects, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, for *What's Out There City Guides*;

2015 Honor Award in Research and Communications, American Society of Landscape Architects, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, for *Modern Landscapes: Transition and Transformation Series* (Princeton Architectural Press);

2014 Award of Excellence in Communications, American Society of Landscape Architects, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, for *The Landscape Architecture of Dan Kiley*;

2012 Honor Award in Communications, American Society of Landscape Architects, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, for *What's out There*;

2011 Honor Award in Communications, American Society of Landscape Architects, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, for *Landslide 2004-1010: The First Six Years*;

2010 Award of Excellence in Communications, American Society of Landscape Architects, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, for *Pioneers Oral History Series*;

2007 Honor Award in Communications, American Society of Landscape Architects, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, for *Cultural landscapes as Classrooms Series*;

2001 Merit Award, American Society of Landscape Architects, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, Historic Landscape Initiative, Library of American Landscape History, and Catalog of Landscape Records at Wave Hill and The Cultural Landscape Foundation for the book *Pioneers of American Landscape Design*.



## Olmsted Medal Nomination

1 - Landscape architect Cornelia Hahn Oberlander is the namesake of a biennial international landscape architecture prize created by The Cultural Landscape Foundation that includes a \$100,000 award and two years of public engagement activities. Photo by Susan Cohen.





## Olmsted Medal Nomination

2 - Weekends of free, expert-led tours of publicly accessible landscapes in cities throughout the U.S. were created as part of The Cultural Landscape Foundation's *What's Out There* database. *What's Out There Weekend San Francisco*, Dagget Park and Mission Bay, 2019. Photo by Alexis Woods.





## Olmsted Medal Nomination

3 - Opening of *The Landscape Architecture of Lawrence Halprin* at the National Building Museum, Washington, D.C. in 2016. The traveling photographic exhibition organized by The Cultural Landscape Foundation in collaboration with the museum also included Photo courtesy TCLF.









## Olmsted Medal Nomination

5 - *Race and Space* related events (clockwise from top left): Landscape Activism conference, 2022; advocates at Landslide site Rochester Heights, Raleigh, N.C., 2021; two images of advocates at Landslide site Carpenter Creek, Pensacola, FL, 2022; six participants in a *Race and Space* conversation, 2022. Photos courtesy TCLF.

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February 18, 2023

American Society of Landscape Architects

Olmsted Medal Nominations

c/o Honors and Awards

636 Eye Street, NW

Washington, DC 20001-3736

Dear Board of Trustees,

Landscape architecture at its best rises to the level of art. Works of landscape architecture can revitalize urban districts and shape community character. Our profession is a major force in the protection and enhancement of our environment. Our contribution to the well-being of our society is enormous but often unrecognized. There is an adage that “those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” This saying suggests that we must learn from our mistakes. While this is accurate, the opposite is also true. What can we learn from the accomplishments of history that offer guidance for the future?

What are the set of factors and players that come together to create success? How do these successes shape our collective identity as a profession? How might the celebration and communication of these successes raise society’s understanding of the contributions of landscape architects, elevate our stature, and increase the potential for future success? These are the questions that the work of The Cultural Landscape Foundation helps us to answer and the narratives the organization seeks to record. In so doing, the efforts of TCLF offer a vision of future success built upon the lessons of our history.

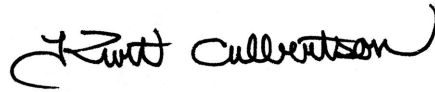
Certainly the advocacy by the organization has helped to ensure the preservation of important designs of landscape architecture – works of art. These are shining examples to our profession and to broader society of the contribution of the profession. Our awareness and knowledge of these accomplishments give us confidence to address pressing issues and to strive for excellence. TCLF Landslides initiative alerts us to the importance of preserving these works. Stewardship programs such as What’s Out There, remind us that the landscape is the shared setting of our communities, that everyone has a place in this setting, and that these places shape our collective memory.

TCLF also works to preserve vernacular landscapes and landscapes of conflict, such as battlefields and sites of racial conflict, that are also parts of our heritage. These are often landscapes of meaning for local communities and populations often underserved by our society. The organization has documented, examined, and highlighted the works and careers of women and people of color, celebrating the diversity and potential of our profession. In this way, TCLF has provided leadership in addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion within our profession and society.

By documenting the lives and works of significant practitioners through programs such as Pioneers, TCLF honors our heroes and offers a road map for those who wish to follow in their footsteps. The Cornelia Hahn Oberlander International Landscape Architecture Prize takes the profession one step further by globally acknowledging our greatest accomplishments [of our profession] and by raising awareness with the general public.

I have had the honor and pleasure of being involved with The Cultural Landscape Foundation from the earliest years of its creation. I have seen the work of hundreds of volunteers from cities and rural areas around the country who have contributed to the organizations success by researching and recording important landscapes, leading tours for interested citizens, lecturing on important topics, advocating for the preservation of threatened works, or lending financial support. From humble beginnings, TCLF is now an organization that will endure and prosper, providing tremendous benefit to the profession through its leadership, vision, and stewardship. It is for this contribution, that I heartily urge the recognition of The Cultural Landscape Foundation for the Olmsted Medal.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kurt Culbertson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "K" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kurt Culbertson  
Chairman Emeritus/Principal  
Design Workshop



Olmsted Medal Nominations  
c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

February 19, 2023

Subject: Support for The Cultural Landscape Foundation's Nomination for the Olmsted Medal

Dear Esteemed Jury:

As a landscape architect who is passionate about our profession and about the power of design to address the greatest challenges of our time, I am thrilled to offer my support for the nomination of The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF) for the American Society of Landscape Architect's Olmsted Medal.

A word first of introduction. I am a landscape architect with more than twenty-five years of experience planning and designing public environments. For two decades, my practice was with Sasaki - a legacy interdisciplinary design practice based in Massachusetts. At the beginning of 2018, I left Sasaki to launch Agency Landscape + Planning with my partner and urban planner Brie Hensold. Agency - as a mission-driven practice focused on issues of equity, inclusion, resilience and advocacy - is enacting in its work and mission our deep commitment to landscape as a catalyst and tool for positive social change.

I first came to know the work of TCLF as a young practitioner at Sasaki. TCLF came to the office to interview Stu Dawson, my once and forever design mentor, for their *Pioneers Oral History* series. At the time, Stu was in his final years of professional practice after a long and impactful career. It touched me deeply at the time that someone would recognize the value of capturing his story at that particular moment - and to do so with such professionalism, rigor and care. The result is a powerfully complete survey of Stu's life and work that captures his spirit and contributions for the world to cherish and remember for all time.

In the years since, my relationship to TCLF grew and deepened. I served for a number of years on the Board of Directors and now sit on its vast and impressive Stewardship Council. I have co-curated numerous events including the *Transforming North Carolina's Research Triangle* Conference in 2018 and the *Oberlander Prize Forum II: Landscape Activism* in 2022. I have spoken at multiple TCLF events and participated in two *Landslides: Women Take the Lead: Landslide 2020* and *Landslide 2021: Race and Space*. I served on the inaugural jury for the Cornelia Hahn Oberlander Prize, the world's first global landscape architecture prize that was bestowed on the incredible Julie Bargmann.

Agency  
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After all these years and through each new engagement, I can see that my first experience of TCLF, Stu's Oral History, was deeply on-brand for the organization - one that has leveraged its own knowledge creation and unyielding passion for landscape architecture to make visible the value, impact and legacies of a profession that might otherwise go unseen or uncelebrated.

From its extensive database of practitioners, projects and endangered sites to its diverse programs, conferences and writings to its savvy with contemporary press, social media and communication outlets, TCLF's diversity of technique is as impressive as its reach and impact. What I have come to value more recently is how steadfastly it leverages those platforms to shine a light on the most relevant issues of our day. TCLF has delivered some of the most timely and rigorous discourse on women's rights and racial justice in our profession at a time each was under attack and attention was truly needed.

I enthusiastically support The Cultural Landscape Foundation for this recognition and stand ready to provide any further information needed. I cannot imagine a more passionate or effective organization in service of our profession - or one more deserving of this honor.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gina Ford". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gina" and last name "Ford" clearly distinguishable.

Gina Ford, FASLA  
Co-Founder, Principal and Landscape Architect  
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26 February 2023

**ASLA Olmsted Medal Nomination**  
**Letter of support for The Cultural Landscape Foundation**

Is there another organization that has done as much as advocating, educating and stewarding the designed landscapes of the United States as The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF)? The breadth and variety of their modes of stewardship is remarkable. From symposia, conferences, and walking tours to databases, oral histories, books and exhibitions, to a new prestigious international prize with funding commensurate to the Pritzker Prize in Architecture. Not close. As they mark their twenty-fifth anniversary, The Cultural Landscape Foundation has demonstrated their leadership, tenacity and integrity time and time again. The Cultural Landscape Foundation is well deserving of the ASLA Olmsted Medal 2023.

For a quarter century, this small non-profit has developed sustained and impactful community engagement and education programs that have enlarged the public awareness of the meaning and importance of all scales and types of designed landscapes. They launched an open-source internet data base of designed landscapes with associated metadata providing information about their location, creators and dates of creation that is a ready reference for practitioners and students of landscape architecture as well as preservation advocates.

As a landscape architect who has been involved in cultural landscape research, interpretation, design and preservation since the early 1980s, I have watched TCLF grow from an idea to a start-up to a respected and frequently consulted expert for determining the significance and future change options for admitted designed landscapes. Initially focused on increasing awareness of key 20<sup>th</sup> century landscape architects with their oral history project (these videos are invaluable primary source documents for our profession), TCLF like many organizations has evolved into a more inclusive advocacy group giving voice to the works of seminal women landscape architects—such as Carol Johnson, Harriet Pattison and Cornelia Oberlander, as well as people of color in our profession, and sites important to the African American experience, such as The African Burying Ground in Richmond, VA.

I have participated in several TCLF symposium over the past 25 years, collaborated with them on the What's Out There Virginia database, What's Out Their Richmond conference, and the Courageous by Design symposium. In 2009, I benefited directly from the advice, support and advocacy of TCLF when my town, Charlottesville, initiated a poorly conceived redesign of the 1976 Halprin Associates' Pedestrian Mall. TCLF's public statements did much to slow down that



process and change the trajectory of that project. We went on to receive a National Endowment for the Arts grant on the history and evolution of this eight-block pedestrian street, one of the most successful in the United States; to host three months of public events, exhibitions, walking tours; and to publish two scholarly articles and a design field guide. The City has started to planning a big 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Mall. The legacy of TCLF's advocacy is palpable in Charlottesville, and in the fifty-some communities where threatened designed landscapes have been identified as significant, preserved and sensitively modified, instead of unknowingly destroyed.

From 2012-2020, I gained new insights into the real time impact of The Cultural Landscape Foundation's public advocacy and stewardship of cultural landscapes. As an Obama-appointed member of the US Commission of Fine Arts, I participated in monthly public meetings about new designed landscapes *related to the Federal interest* in Washington DC. Often, TCLF staff wrote letters explaining the historic context and significance of a project—eg Paul Friedberg's Pershing Park on Pennsylvania that was designated the site of a new WWI memorial. Other times, TCLF spoke during the public comment session, and in doing so, shored up my points and position as the only landscape architect on the seven member Commission. When the Obama administration broke tradition and appointed two more landscape architects to the Commission, TCLF's testimony provided all three of us invaluable background about the history and significance of sites such as The Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden (designed by Lester Collins) and the Smithsonian Castle Garden (Sasaki Associates). When TCLF was in the room, everyone present—from the USCFA staff of historians, the project clients, architects and landscape architects and the representatives of various government agencies—heard an engaging, passionate, fact-filled and persuasive story about the importance of designed landscapes in general, and a lesson in how to read and interpret the design components, spatial configurations and environmental attributes of those historic landscapes.

Perhaps most impressive of all my experiences with TCLF was the two years I worked as a volunteer with them establishing the process and criteria for administering the International Oberlander Prize in Landscape Architecture. In November 2017, Charles Birnbaum asked me to lead an independent advisory group in determining the prize process; we spent close to two years on the details of that process. When the first jury deliberations went public in the Fall 2021 with its wave of global publicity for the winner, Julie Bargmann, and the profession of landscape architecture, I was ecstatic. Yes, Julie Bargmann's work through her firm DIRT is worthy of that attention. But none of it would have happened without the care that TCLF staff put into the content, format and delivery of the Oberlander Prize news. This new TCLF

program, over time, will have an extraordinary global impact on the public perception and awareness of landscape architecture.

<https://www.tclf.org/international-landscape-architecture-prize/oberlander-prize-advisory-committee>

<https://www.tclf.org/prize>

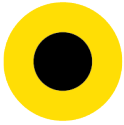
In my opinion, a position that has developed over the quarter century, The Cultural Landscape Foundation is an exemplar of environmental vision, stewardship and leadership. They have increased awareness of the designed landscape as a work of art and cultural product worthy of public education, advocacy and preservation. The material legacy of 20<sup>th</sup> Century design landscapes is very different today than it would have been without them. For that, we owe TCLF great thanks. And I hope, we can share that gratitude in the form of the 2023 Olmsted Medal.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth K. Meyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Elizabeth" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Meyer".

Elizabeth K. Meyer, FASLA, FCELA  
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# OLIN

American Society of Landscape Architects  
Olmsted Medal Nominations  
c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

To the Jury,

I write in support of the nomination of the Cultural Landscape Foundation for the Olmsted Medal.

The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF) has for several decades played a major role nationally in defending significant works of landscape architecture and raising the profile of the field in the consciousness of the public across America. This organization has been tireless, fearless, and altruistic in purpose and effect, fighting for public and private works, large and small projects, in every region. The field of landscape architecture, our professional society, and the American public are in its debt.

While buildings of mediocre and questionable worth are preserved and fawned over, for decades landscape designs of remarkable merit, originality, and beauty have continually been bulldozed with impunity. Twenty years ago, if one said, "cultural landscape", people stared blankly. TCLF has done more to change this than academia, the popular press, or any other organization. Tireless in fundraising and promulgation of news, information, educational material, public events, exhibitions, lectures, protests, and testimony, TCLF has battled and succeeded, more often than not, in defending, saving, and advocating preservation of a wide diversity of cultural landscapes in America. Their public education, civic vision, and aesthetic advocacy work is ongoing.

I think this organization and its continually evolving Board, staff, and supporters is a worthy candidate for the Olmsted Medal.

Sincerely,

Laurie Olin, FASLA, Hon AIA, Hon RIBA, FAAR, AAAL, AAAS