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OF LANDSCAPE BOX 355734  
WASHINGTON ARCHITECTURE SEATTLE, WA 98195-5734

COLLEGE OF  
BUILT  
ENVIRONMENTS

March 2016

ASLA LaGasse Medal Nomination  
c/o Carolyn Mitchell  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

re: nomination of **Mia Lehrer**, Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects;  
President of Mia Lehrer + Associates,

Dear ASLA Executive Committee and Board of Trustees,

I join my colleagues in nominating Mia Lehrer for the ASLA 's LaGasse Medal, named for Alfred B. LaGasse, past executive director of the American Institute of Park Executives and executive vice president of the National Recreation and Parks Association. LaGasse was concerned with the proper management of the nation's public lands and the judicious use of the country's natural resources. Mia Lehrer FASLA exemplifies that leadership and commitment.

Mia Lehrer is the founding principal of the Los Angeles firm, Mia Lehrer + Associates. Born in San Salvador, El Salvador, she received her Masters of Landscape Architecture from the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University. After leading her own firm from 1981 to 1994, she was a partner in Peter Walker William Johnson and Partners from 1994-1997. In 1997 she founded Mia Lehrer + Associates and has focused her work on public and private-sector projects including complex mixed-use development projects, urban revitalization initiatives, and neighborhood and regional parks. As a designer she has applied landscape and urban design innovation and technical expertise on complex Design/Build infrastructure projects, and plays a significant leadership role in outreach and consensus building. Her design excellence and environmental leadership has enabled government agencies, communities, and stakeholders to create an interconnected system of meaningful open space through well-conceived projects. Her protection, expansion and conservation efforts on behalf of public open space in the Greater Los Angeles Basin are award-winning and legendary. Today she is internationally recognized for her innovative and responsive landscape designs and her leadership in advocating for sustainable and people-friendly public space.

Actively engaged in the public realm as a citizen and leader, Mia serves on a number of important boards, including the City of Los Angeles Landscape Architecture Board of Review;

[larch.be.washington.edu](http://larch.be.washington.edu)

T 206 543 9240

F 206 685 4486

the Northeast Los Angeles Open Space Coalition and Zoning Award Committee; the Landscape Architecture Foundation Board; the National Gardening Board; and the nationally important U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, among others. As a member of the US Commission of Fine Arts in particular, Mia advocates not only for the public realm as important, but for the critical role of high quality design. Along with Beth Meyer, the two landscape architects on the committee are charting new territory for the commission as they advise the President, the Congress and the federal and District of Columbia governments on matters of design and aesthetics, as they affect the federal interest and preserve the dignity of the nation's capital. These diverse roles give Mia a voice in the public realm that she has used to her advantage to advocate for communities across Los Angeles, California, and the nation.

While one could nominate Mia's work for any number of awards, this focus on the LaGasse Medal responds to Mia's own emphasis on her work in the public realm. Cheryl Barton has written that Mia is a "fierce, diplomatic, and tireless defender of public landscapes. She has a particular talent for bringing non-landscape architects into the conversation and inspiring them to be mindful about the broader values of public places and natural resources.... For the generosity of her 'probono' efforts and her tactful chutzpah, for her patience with the reality of incremental design, for her courage and political savvy to move into murky issues and build consensus between opposing parties, and for bringing this experience to landscape architecture students at the GSD and USC, she is truly an embodiment of the LaGasse medal!" (not submitted as it was 6th letter of support)

Mia began work in the public realm by engaging in pro bono work reflecting her belief in the importance of volunteering and public engagement. This value system is grounded in her background as a child raised in El Salvador in a family that emphasized community participation and leadership. Her father founded a land conservation and youth camping program aimed at helping disadvantaged youth. Her mother started a micro-lending program for women in the 1960s. As Mia's practice and her family grew, she led community initiatives to improve the local schools and volunteered with her children to help the local environment. One of these volunteer activities was for Friends of the Los Angeles River's (FoLAR) annual La Gran Limpieza annual river cleanup in 1971, where she met one of the cofounders, Lewis MacAdams. Lehrer's design lens would eventually be a manifestation of MacAdams dream of making the river accessible to all. In the decades since, Lehrer has shaped her firm to balance private work with that which contributes to the community.

If one were to select one project that exemplifies Mia's commitment to the public realm as well as her skill, talent, and knowledge of best practices, it would be her leadership for the Los Angeles River revitalization. As Gary Hilderbrand writes " I think the betting sites would lean heavily towards Mia Lehrer as the person best positioned to argue for an environmentally just solution. After the blather over famous architects grabbing the stage settles, Mia's voice will have continued to make sense and it will break through the morass. This is taking years of dedicated effort. She has the stamina and the conviction to make it happen." The L.A. River,

best known as a concrete flood control channel, is in the midst of slow but significant transformation. Since the height of its humiliation in the late 1980s when California State Assemblyman Richard Katz suggested turning the river into a freeway, the Los Angeles River has been revived as an important to the city both as a place and as a part of the ecosystem. In 1986 when poet and activist Lewis MacAdams founded Friends of the Los Angeles River (FoLAR), his primary goal was to remind the City of Los Angeles that it had a river. As Lewis wrote me in an email (he is too ill to write a formal letter of support), "I can't think of anyone I love and respect more than Mia. She is not only a social pioneer but a star in her field. If it were not for her, our river vision would not be where it is today. "

Twenty years later, the City of Los Angeles in conjunction with the US Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps), published the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan identifying 288 river-adjacent projects within the City's boundaries. Mia Lehrer + Associates has been integral in the decades-long effort, with a lead role in the revitalization and re-imagining of this urban river and its public landscapes. Additionally she and the firm have been involved in a myriad of Los Angeles River projects over the decades. The projects are framed by the firm's commitment to community-driven design, an ecological planning approach, and building opportunities for multi-modal connectivity, and exploring the potential for advocacy through private practice.

Mia understands deeply the potential of practice to shape decisions on urban watersheds over time, across scales, and across communities of participants and collaborators. Her commitment to the public realm is evident in so many projects including the Los Angeles Downtown Homeless Drop-in Center, the Silver Lake Reservoir Plan, Vista Hermosa Park, Piggyback Yards, and Baldwin Hills, all examples of her ongoing results-oriented work. She has, as Michael Maltzan notes "consistently demonstrated a deep and unwavering passion toward the creation of progressive public landscapes. Integrating constructed landscape, natural ecology, and community, Mia's leadership has shown that these complex contemporary concerns can be choreographed in ways that both produce places of great civic and social value for the specific locations, and also became models for us of the evolving form of public landscapes."

Mia's work in the public realm has been given many awards and has been published in books and magazines, too numerous to list. As Tom Oslund writes "She is truly a design force."

Yours kindly.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thaisa Way". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Thaisa Way Ph.D., ASLA  
Associate Professor, Landscape Architecture  
Adjunct Associate Professor, Architecture/ Associate Professor, History

# PWP LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

PETER WALKER, FASLA

February 1, 2016

DOUGLAS FINDLAY, FASLA

DAVID WALKER, FASLA

ADAM GREENSPAN

SANDRA HARRIS

CHRIS DIMOND, FASLA

JULIE CANTER

CONARD LINDGREN

JAY SWAINTEK

MICHAEL DELLIS

TODD MEAD

MARTIN POIRIER, FASLA

CARMEN ARROYO

STEVE TYCZ

JANET BEAGLE

EUSTACIA BROSSART

CHELSEA DEWITT

BRIAN GILLETT

HEATH HOUSE

LAUREL HUNTER

JUSTIN JACKSON

KAZUNARI KOBAYASHI

SU-JUNG PARK

CORNELIA ROPPEL

CHRIS WALKER

MONICA WAY

MI YANG

Jury for the LaGasse Medal of the ASLA  
The American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Regarding: Mia Lehrer Nomination for La Gasse Medal

Dear Jurors for the LaGasse Medal of the ASLA:

Mia Lehrer is what we used to call a person of affairs—that is, while she maintains a distinguished design and planning practice, she gives tirelessly to the public, lecturing, serving on distinguished boards, and educational activities.

I have known Mia since she was a student at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, where she received her MLA in 1979. At one time, we were partners and I have followed her career with fond interest.

Mia is continuously drawn to large public design problems with particular emphasis on ecological, political, and economic challenges. Her work on the Orange County Great Park Comprehensive Master Plan in Irvine, California, and the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan in Los Angeles, California, have received regional and national acclaim from institutions that include the AIA, the ASLA (National Honor Award in Analysis and Planning), the National Association of Environmental Professionals (Excellence in Planning Integration), and the National American Planning Association (Great Park) Focused Issue Plan Award.

Additionally, her office has prepared master plans for many regional and city parks, such as Hollywood Park (Specific Plan), Compton Creek Regional Garden Park, Barnsdall Park, and Baldwin Hills Parks.

Her award-winning projects include: Los Angeles Downtown Homeless Drop-in Center, Los Angeles, California; Ballona Promenade Park, Playa Vista, California; James M. Wood Community Center, Los Angeles, California; Nature Gardens at Natural History Museum, Los Angeles, California; Union Station Public Spaces, Los Angeles, California; and Temecula Border Patrol Station, Temecula, California.

As can be seen, these activities share a public orientation, a continuing interest in the ecological, social, and often the reparative solutions that are so important in this time of significantly intense growth.

Mia is also a tireless participant in the public discourse and institutional guidance. She serves on a number of important boards, including the College of Dance Theater, Los Angeles; the City of Los Angeles Landscape Architecture Board of Review; the Northeast Los Angeles Open Space Coalition and Zoning Award Committee; the Harvard University Alumni Council; the Landscape Architecture Foundation Board; the National Gardening Board; the *Harvard Design Magazine* Advisory Board; and the nationally important U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.

739 ALLSTON WAY  
BERKELEY, CA 94710

T 510.849.9494

F 510.849.9333

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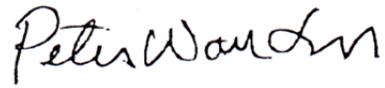
*Jury for the LaGasse Medal of the ASLA  
Mia Lehrer Nomination for La Gasse Medal  
February 1, 2015  
page 2 of 2*

In addition, Mia has taught at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and the University of Southern California.

Her lectures are too numerous to mention here, but she is a passionate public champion of the landscape architecture profession, ecological improvement, women's professional rights, and, of course, design with a capital "D."

I can think of no-one who better represents the ideals of the La Gasse Medal and I recommend her to you without reservations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Walker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Peter Walker

PW/jb

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**ASLA Honors and Awards Committee**

LeGasse Medal Nomination for Mia Lehrer

I'm very pleased to support Mia Lehrer for ASLA's LaGasse Medal. I must declare up front that she's been a great friend for twenty years. I've authored nominations and support letters in several categories in prior years, and the LeGasse is a particularly wonderful thing—we are lucky to have it. In my view, we don't have a stronger candidate for the LeGasse in our midst. She's a force to be reckoned with, and this is but one of her many powerful assets. Hot-blooded and passionate, warm and empathetic, she is really all about fairness, and she's not afraid to speak truth to power to make it so. She's an impassioned leader—one with great drive and a big heart.

For a long time I have enjoyed a persistent mental image of Mia crisscrossing the vast Los Angeles basin in a speeding car—a hybrid, for sure—as the people's smartest, strongest, and sometimes loudest, most demanding advocate. She's dedicated so much of her practice to parks and schools and streets, and, of course, the LA River. There's a lot of talk about the River these days, and the debate around who should lead design efforts has become strained. I think the betting sites would lean heavily towards Mia Lehrer as the person best positioned to argue for an environmentally just solution. After the blather over famous architects grabbing the stage settles, Mia's voice will have continued to make sense and it will break through the morass. This is taking years of dedicated effort. She has the stamina and the conviction to make it happen.

On the other coast, in my own neighborhood, Mia's constant advocacy for landscape architecture is demonstrated by her efforts on behalf of Harvard GSD. Her leadership as an alumna and frequent speaker and critic has been especially inspirational to women in the school—she's the most compelling role model for many women in our field. And while the benefits of this particular dedication of hers may be targeted to a specific audience (an important one—future women landscape architects!), I can say with great confidence that it stems from the same inner drive to build a richer, healthier, and more rewarding life for all people—not just the fortunate. And she believes design is the path to that life. She's right!

Don't pass up this chance to recognize a great landscape architect for this honor. Thank you for allowing me to make these comments in support of her nomination.



Gary R. Hilderbrand FASLA FAAR  
Principal, Reed Hilderbrand LLC  
Professor in Practice, Harvard Graduate School of Design

# MICHAEL MALTZAN ARCHITECTURE

February 29, 2016

Dear LaGasse Medal Award Committee,

It is my pleasure to write in support of the nomination of Mia Lehrer for the LaGasse Medal. I have had the distinct pleasure of working with Mia on design projects, of admiring her broad range of work on projects in multiple urban contexts, and most recently, teaching a joint Landscape/Architecture studio together with her in Los Angeles for Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

In all of those interactions Mia has consistently demonstrated a deep and unwavering passion toward the creation of progressive public landscapes. Integrating constructed landscape, natural ecology, and community, Mia's leadership has shown that these complex contemporary concerns can be choreographed in ways that both produce places of great civic and social value for their specific locations, and also became models for us of the evolving form of public landscape.

At the Piggyback Yards in Los Angeles we have worked together master planning the transformation of a rail yard into a new district adjacent to downtown. This project would knit together fractioned and separated districts in the city through an integration of landscape and mixed use development. Mia's thinking on how the Los Angeles River could become the catalyst of future urban form propelled the project toward a greater role in the debate around the river's emerging role as a coalescing civic armature winding through a dispersed region.

Her leadership and voice was equally important in the studio we taught together. Fluidly moving between the elements of landscape and architecture, Mia challenged the students to think more deeply, more profoundly, about what a public landscape means in a contemporary context. Over the course of the semester a number of political, economic and ecological leaders were invited to the studio to join the debate. Mia showed a deft navigation of the many complex issues these critics showed described, and she consistently found ways to contextualize those concerns with a discussion of landscape and urban history, current practices, and potential future ambitions for public space. In many ways this demonstrated to me Mia's key leadership capability, to synthesize real knowledge and precedent with the most

# MICHAEL MALTZAN ARCHITECTURE

creative approaches today, ultimately yielding planning ideas that both push us forward while building on the achievements of the past.

Mia is at the very top of a landscape and planning culture in Los Angeles that is bringing progressive, optimistic, sustainable, and aesthetic new form to the metropolis of Los Angeles, just as it is dealing with some of its greatest challenges as it evolves its future. Her impact will be felt for generations here, and given Los Angeles's influence in the debate around how contemporary cities will function and look, it is easy to see how the influence of her work and ideas will only continue to expand.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Maltzan', with a stylized, flowing script.

Michael T. Maltzan, FAIA  
Principal

10 March 2016

ASLA Board of Trustees  
ASLA Medal Nominations  
c/o Carolyn Mitchell  
636 Eye Street NW  
Washington DC  
20001-3736

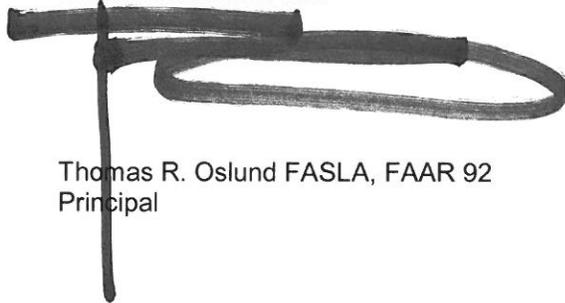
Dear Carolyn:

As a fellow of the ASLA I am writing this letter in support for Mia Leher, colleague and friend, for the ASLA LaGasse Medal. I have known and worked with Mia for the last 12 years on the CEO Roundtable, professional design juries, and as a design critic in the studios I have been a part of at both the Harvard's Graduate School of Design and the University of Southern California. Mia's energy and creativity are notable. She is truly a design force with a significant contribution to conserving the LA River as a natural resource for the city of Los Angeles.

Her practice in Los Angeles has consistently produced award winning and environmentally conscious public work that is sophisticated, elegant, and timeless. As a practitioner for over 30 years the time has come for Mia to be recognized for her passion for conservation, design, and public advocacy. Through her work, Mia has made an indelible mark on the profession of Landscape Architecture. This award would galvanize for Mia her relentless hard work and rigor that has produced some of the most thoughtful and environmentally responsible public work that inspires all of us.

I believe Mia has demonstrated through her work and the passion she has for the profession of Landscape Architecture that she is a deserving candidate for the LaGasse Medal. The search for the right person I know is difficult. However, Mia has the maturity, creativity and body of work that make her the right choice for the 2016 LaGasse Medal recipient.

Best regards;  
oslund.and.assoc. Inc.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas R. Oslund', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Thomas R. Oslund FASLA, FAAR 92  
Principal

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115 Washington Avenue North  
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612•359•9144  
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March 1, 2016

Selection Committee  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street  
Washington, DC

**CIVITAS**

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re: Reference for Mia Lehrer, Lagasse Medal Candidate

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a pleasure to offer my support for the nomination of Mia Lehrer, FASLA, for the LaGasse Medal. I have known Mia as a friend and professional collaborator for many years.

Mia has established herself as a leading practitioner nationally, a leading designer of regionally suited, sustainable landscapes; a leading designer of public landscapes for recreation and open spaces; and a leading civic activist in California for the preservation of intact landscapes, open lands and ecosystems. She has been a tireless professional and volunteer voice for the repair and restoration of the rivers and hillsides of southern California.

I have worked with Mia since 2007 on various efforts to bring ecological, hydrological and recreational benefits back to the Los Angeles River. While our work together led to a plan that has been celebrated for its inclusiveness, technical integrity and vision, Mia has probably tripled the amount of time she spent on the plan as a design consultant with her volunteer work, her vocal advocacy for river revitalization, her teaching and her community activities.

Mia has made a material contribution to the preservation of open lands, to the LA River and Ballona Creek through her astute and effective words and deeds. Rather than shy away from Los Angeles' difficult political world, she has made herself a regular in the political arena, maintaining the high ideals and vision that politicians so frequently set aside.

I applaud her achievements and commend her to you for this prestigious award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Johnson', enclosed within a hand-drawn oval shape.

Mark W. Johnson FASLA

1200 Bannock Street  
Denver, CO 80204  
T: 303.571.0053  
F: 303.825.0438  
[www.civitasinc.com](http://www.civitasinc.com)