

Honorary Membership Nomination Narrative

Nominee: Robin Karson

Nominee's Address: P.O. Box 1323

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Nominator: Robert Page, FASLA

As founder and executive director of the Library of American Landscape History (LALH) and author of several books and more than one hundred articles about American landscape history, Robin Karson has made a significant contribution to the knowledge and understanding of the landscape architecture profession and its history. Her books include *A Genius for Place: American Landscapes of the Country Place Era* (University of Massachusetts Press with LALH, 2007); *Fletcher Steele, Landscape Architect* (Sagapress, 1989; University of Massachusetts Press with LALH, 2005); *The Muses of Gwinn* (Sagapress, 1985), and the new introduction of the LALH revised edition of *Fletcher Steele's Design in the Little Garden* (The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1924; University of Massachusetts Press with LALH, 2011). She recently served as co-editor for *Warren H. Manning, Landscape Architect and Environmental Planner* (University of Georgia Press in association with LALH, Forthcoming February 2017).

Founded in 1992, LALH is a non-profit organization whose mission is to foster understanding of the fine art of landscape architecture and appreciation of North America's landscape heritage through books, exhibitions, and online resources. Under Robin's leadership, LALH has established itself as a leading publisher of books that advance the study and practice of American landscape architecture—from gardens and parks to city plans. LALH books raise awareness about significant North American landscapes and the people who created them. The texts are written by the foremost historians in the field. Richly illustrated, they appeal to general readers as well as specialists. LALH books include the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) Centennial Reprint Series. LALH served as a major partner in the development of this ten-volume series commemorating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the ASLA. Each volume is of enduring importance to the profession and is reprinted from the original edition with a new scholarly introduction by an authority in the field that offers new insights into the work or biographies of the authors.

LALH also organizes exhibitions that reflect the subjects of its publications relating to American landscape history. These touring exhibitions reach large and diverse audiences in museums, galleries, and botanical gardens across the nation. In 2015, in partnership with the award winning Hott Productions of Florentine Films, LALH started producing a series of short films about important landscapes and their designers, *North America by*

Design. These documentary films are posted on lalh.org and YouTube, shown in university classrooms, screened at special events, and used at public landscapes to educate visitors.

LALH books, exhibitions, and films developed under Robin's direction have helped protect and restore significant American landscapes across the United States. For example:

- *The Gardens of Ellen Biddle Shipman* (LALH, 1996) revealed the hidden genius of one of the first American women landscape architects, leading to the discovery of many works by her, several of which have now been restored.
- *A Modern Arcadia* (LALH, 2002) has helped residents of Forest Hills Gardens determine design guidelines for updates to homes, grounds, and parks in the 1907 commuter suburb planned by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.
- *Fletcher Steele and Naumkeag: A Playground for the Imagination* (LALH film, 2012) was used by The Trustees of Reservations to build support for a \$2 million restoration campaign. Information from *Fletcher Steele, Landscape Architect* (LALH, 2003) has helped set priorities for the initiative.
- *The Best Planned City in the World* (LALH, 2013) illuminates the brilliance of the Olmsted and Vaux plan. Members of the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy are using the book and LALH film to rally support to recover park area lost to development.

Robin's work has been recognized with awards from the ASLA, the Foundation for Landscape Studies, the American Horticultural Society, and the Institute for Classical Architecture and Art. In 2004 she was named as a distinguished honorary member of the International Honor Society of Sigma Lambda Alpha for her "continued high-quality contribution to the scholarship of landscape architecture and the literature of landscape architecture history."

As founder and executive director of LALH, and through her own research and writing, Robin has committed the past 25 years to raising the awareness of the landscape architecture profession and some of its lesser known practitioners. To date, she has overseen the publishing of 35 books (new and reprint), numerous exhibitions, and five films. In addition, she is an accomplished author. This collective body of work has had a profound impact on our understanding of North America's richly varied landscape heritage. Through Robin's vision and leadership of LALH, she has contributed significantly to the study and practice of American landscape architecture, enhanced public appreciation of our nation's cultural landscapes, motivated stewardship of significant places and the environment, and inspired new designs that connect people with nature. In recognition of Robin's enormous service to the profession of landscape architecture and the 25th anniversary of LALH in 2017, it is a privilege to submit this nomination for honorary membership in ASLA.

13 January 2017

Honorary Membership Nomination
ASLA
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Re: Support for Robin Karson, nominee for Honorary ASLA

Dear Committee Members,

It's a pleasure to write in support of the nomination of Robin Karson for Honorary ASLA.

We've come a long ways in landscape architecture scholarship since Robin's first major book, on the great designer Fletcher Steele, published almost 30 years ago. We had so few books at that time. As students and then teachers, we could not get our hands on enough good literature for the field. Today, we cannot get our hands *around* the massive and growing body of scholarship in landscape architecture, and we are all beneficiaries of this. It's staggering. And it's amazing to realize that Robin Carson has been a significant force over this entire time. Moreover, the arc of her publishing efforts in the field has grown constantly upwards. It continues to rise, with highly curated book projects and other enterprises bringing yet more interesting landscape figures to our attention, along with sharpened new perspectives on familiar ones.

In this vein, it's important to acknowledge the wider reach of the Library of American Landscape History, with serial books, periodicals, and symposia aimed at a wider shared knowledge of the forces that shaped the designed American landscape. This is Robin's legacy. She has built a connective, persuasive coalition that stretches across the US, bringing together leaders with diverse backgrounds and a common, driving commitment to knowledge in the field.

Thank you for the chance to comment and let me know if I can be of further help.

Sincerely,



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



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January 12, 2017

Honorary Membership Nomination

ASLA

636 Eye Street, NW

Washington, DC 20001-3736.

RE: Robin Karson's nomination for Honorary Member of the American Society of Landscape Architects

This is a letter of support for the nomination of Robin Karson, Founder and Executive Director of the Library of American Landscape History (LALH) to become an Honorary Member of the American Society of Landscape Architects. This nomination will recognize Robin's enormous contribution to the profession and its history through the LALH and her own research and writing. LALH will celebrate its 25th Anniversary in 2017 and an ASLA Honorary Membership for Robin would be a meaningful part of the celebration.

I can highly recommend Robin, without reservation as an individual who is committed to safeguarding our professions historical heritage and who has contributed in large measure to our profession's body of knowledge of its beginnings in America and the legacy of the profession through the years. Her understanding, vision, leadership, and stewardship have contributed greatly to the profession and the society.

I first became aware of Robin when she published *The Muses of Gwinn* in 1985. As a director on the Hubbard Educational Trust (now Hubbard Educational Foundation) I became even more aware of Robin's depth of scholarship, research, and writing when she applied to the Trust for a grant for her next book *Fletcher Steele: Landscape Architect: An Account of the Gardenmaker's Life* in 1988.

In 2000 she co-authored with Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA *Pioneers of American Landscape Design*, which "introduces you to the geniuses and more ordinary folk who brought about the key decisions that shaped American landscapes and public spaces"

In 2007 Robin publishes *A Genius for Place: American Landscapes of the Country Place Era*. In this lavishly illustrated volume, Robin Karson traces the development of a distinctly American style of landscape design through an analysis of seven country places created by some of the nation's most talented landscape practitioners.

Robin led the development of the ASLA reprint series which reprinted key writings by Samuel Parsons Jr., Robert Morris Copeland, H.W.S Cleveland, Martha Brookes Hutcheson, Frank A. Waugh, Wilhelm Miller, Charles, Eliot, John Nolen, O.C. Simonds, Garret Eckbo etc.

Robin's exhibitions have also added greatly to our profession's body of knowledge with the *100 Years of Design on the Land* which tells the stories of ten American places that include parks, garden suburbs, cemeteries, and gardens across the country being an outstanding example featuring specially commissioned photographs.

Robin has developed a series of documentary films about important landscapes and their designers which have been produced by LALH in association with award-winning Florentine Films/Hott Productions. This series is *North America by Design* whose goal it is to educate wide audiences about the fine art of landscape architecture and to reach out to everyone not just landscape architects.

As an educator I can appreciate the professional knowledge she has contributed to our landscape architectural programs across the country. I have been a teacher of landscape architectural history from 1972 to 2004 at Rhode Island School of Design and at the Radcliffe Seminars Certificate Program in Landscape Design and its successor programs from 1986 to 2013. I have also maintained a private practice concentrating in historic landscapes and public parks, as well as new parks. I became a Fellow of the ASLA in 1998. I have served as President of the BSLA (1988-1989) and Trustee for the Boston Chapter (2001-2007) and have been a member of the National Association for Olmsted Parks since 1981 and a co-chair of the organization (1992-1995).

In view of the above, it is without hesitation that I highly recommend Robin Karson as an Honorary Member of the American Society of Landscape Architects for her contribution to the profession's body of knowledge, for her stewardship of this knowledge, and for her willingness to share this knowledge with the profession as ASLA works to preserve, restore, reconstruct, or rehabilitate our landscape architectural heritage.

Sincerely,

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

Marion Pressley, FASLA, RLA



State University of New York
College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Department of Landscape Architecture

January 12, 2017

Honorary Membership Nomination

ASLA

636 Eye Street, NW

Washington, DC 20001-3736

Dear Colleagues,

It is an honor to support Robin Karson's nomination to be an Honorary Member of the American Society of Landscape Architects! I first met Robin in the early 1980s when she was doing research in the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry's (SUNY-ESF) F. Franklin Moon Library Archives Manuscript Collection for her book on Fletcher Steele, published in 1989 (revised edition, 2003).

Robin's interest in the Manuscript Collection continued through her support of a number of grant applications to catalog, photo copy and digitalize the collection thus making it available to a larger audience. Robin returned to the Fletcher Steele Manuscript Collection to do research for her Introduction to the 2011 reprint of Steele's 1924 book *Design in the Little Garden*.

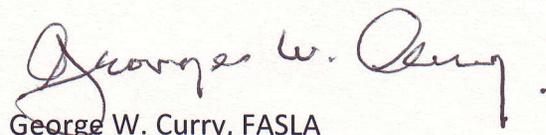
In 1992 Robin established the Library of American Landscape History (LALH). One of the first undertakings was the American Society of Landscape Architects Centennial Reprint Series. The project reprinted ten books in honor of the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the ASLA. The first reprint was *Charles Eliot-Landscape Architect* in 1999. Each of the books contains a new introduction by a well-established historian. These introductions are very well researched and written. Taken together these introductions provide the profession with new insights about its history and advance the study and practice of Landscape Architecture. The series made available to practitioners, educators and students ten important books that had long been out of print.

In the 25 years since the founding of LALH this non-profit organization has made an enormous contribution. Since 1992 thirty two books have been published and five films have been produced. In 2017 three new books are scheduled to be published: *Warren H. Manning, Landscape Architect and Environmental Planner*, edited by Robin Karson, Jane Roy Brown and Sarah Allaback; *James Rose* by Dean Cardasis; and *Lawrence Halprin* by Kenneth I. Helphend. These volumes and others will be part of the new Masters of Modern Landscape Design series.

The publishing of Fletcher Steele in 1989 and the establishment of the LALH in 1992 parallel the development of the Cultural Landscape Preservation (CLP) movement in the profession. The Department of Landscape Architecture at SUNY-ESF began its research on CLP in 1991. The addition of Robin's research and the books and movies of LALH have contributed to the understanding of the evolution of many cultural landscape resources and their preservation. A specific example is Mabel Choate's Naumkeag in Stockbridge, MA. Steele worked with Ms. Choate from 1927 until her death in 1958 on the design and development of the site. Robin's research and writing about Steele and his designs led to The Trustees of Reservation's successful restoration work at Naumkeag.

It is with great enthusiasm that I support the nomination of Robin Karson to become an Honorary Member of the American Society of Landscape Architects!

Sincerely,



George W. Curry, FASLA

SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor Emeritus
Co-Director, Center for Cultural Landscape Preservation
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UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

January 5, 2017

Honorary Membership Nomination
ASLA
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736.

Greetings:

I am pleased to offer my very strong support for the nomination of Robin Karson as an Honorary Member of the American Society of Landscape Architects. I have known Robin since 1990, when we jointly taught a summer course on landscape history and preservation at Chateau de la Napoule, on the French Riviera. Since then, Robin has made it a priority to stay in contact. I have greatly admired her dedication and leadership as Founder and Executive Director of the Library of American Landscape History (LALH).

For the past 25 years, Robin's leadership at LALH has provided a rare opportunity for scholars to share their knowledge of landscape architecture history with a broader community. Robin has been active in recognizing the impact of our profession on cities, private estates and the larger American landscape. She has been eager to publish books on landscape architects who are not well known, as well as those who are nationally and internationally revered and respected.

Importantly, through Robin's efforts, LALH also maintains a current and active website, providing easy access to the catalogue of LALH materials.

Throughout these years, Robin has engaged directors and advisors from across a broad swath of landscape architecture academics, professionals, and seasoned scholars. The result is a rich and diverse library of published resources that celebrate landscape architecture with a much-needed critical eye.

Robin Karson's efforts have greatly expanded knowledge about landscape architecture in our society. She deserves to be recognized as an Honorary Member of ASLA.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Z. Melnick, FASLA
Professor Emeritus
Director, Cultural Landscape Research Group
Former Dean, School of Architecture and Allied Arts

DEPARTMENT OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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