DESIGNING THE MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. NATIONAL MEMORIAL

The MLK Memorial is the first national memorial built in honor of an African American and the last memorial to be built on the National Capital Mall. This presentation will discuss the nature of memorials, the relationship of the MLK Memorial to the larger landscape and the challenges that were faced in implementation.

PRESENTERS

- Boris Dramov, FAIA, FAICP, Affilliate ASLA, ROMA Design Group
- Bonnie Fisher, FASLA, ROMA Design Group
- Marcel Acosta, Executive Director, National Capital Planning Commission
- Alex Krieger, FAIA, Member of the Commission of Fine Arts
- John Parsons, FASLA, former lead Landscape Architect for the National Park Service

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Establishing a broad conceptual foundation of knowledge of memorial design and the history of the National Capital Mall
- Providing insights into the design of a nationally prominent site that involves multiple parties, interests and approval agencies
- Addressing specific technical and site design challenges
- Developing a design that integrates the physical landscape and the symbolic significance of place
- Contributing to a deeper understanding of Dr. King and his contributions to expanding the meaning of democracy in America
**Moderator:** Boris Dramov, ROMA Design Group

1. Introduction of Panel Members
2. Overview of ROMA Design Group
3. The Competition Process
4. The Winning Submission and Selection

**Bonnie Fisher, ROMA Design Group**

1. Site and Context for the MLK Memorial
2. Symbolic Linkages and Connections
3. The Landscape Approach
4. Design Studies
5. Elements of the Memorial
6. In Construction
7. The Dedication and Memorial Today

**Marcel Acosta, National Capital Planning Commission**

1. Brief NCPC History
2. NCPC's Jurisdiction; Membership (Chart); Role in Memorials: Urban Design Review, Memorial Planning (Memorials and Museums Master Plan) and The Reserve
3. Issues of Commemoration in Washington, DC
4. Memorials as Part of the City Fabric
5. Balancing Public Space vs. Sacred Space
6. Historic Memorial Model, Current Memorial Model and Future Trends
7. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial: NCPC Involvement, Components and Perimeter Security
8. Exploring New Forms of Non-Traditional Commemoration in Washington, DC
Alex Krieger, Member of the US Commission of Fine Arts

1. The legacy and role of the Commission of Fine Arts
2. The scope of CFA review in memorial design
3. CFA relationship to other agencies
4. The CFA and the MLK Memorial - issues and considerations
5. Significant CFA comments
6. Responses to comments and the completed MLK Memorial
7. The evolving memorial landscape
8. Future design challenges for the CFA

John G. Parsons, National Park Service (retired)

1. Background
   • Planning and Design of the National Mall
   • Review of the Design Process of four National Memorials: Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Korean War Memorial, FDR Memorial and World War II Memorial
2. The Evolution of the Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial
   • Legislative History: The 14-year Effort to Authorize the Memorial
   • Site Selection: Review of Three Alternative Sites - Constitution Gardens, Lake and Terrace
   • The Design Review Process: Design Changes Resulting from the Public Reviews - Martyrs’ Walkway, Bridge and Water Wall
   • Design Comments on the Completed Memorial: The Stone of Hope Statue and Inscription
3. The Future of the National Mall
**SPEAKER BIOS**

**Boris Dramov, FAIA, FAICP, Affiliate ASLA, Design Principal for the MLK Memorial.** Boris Dramov is the President of ROMA Design Group, an interdisciplinary urban design firm comprised of architects, landscape architects and planners. The firm is based in San Francisco and undertakes projects in California and around the world, focused on the transformation of the post-industrial city, the creation of livable and sustainable communities and the design of vibrant public spaces. Under Boris' leadership, ROMA has established an international reputation for design excellence and commitment to the improvement of the urban environment. In 2000, ROMA submitted an entry, which was selected from more than 800 entries as the winning design in the international competition for the MLK Memorial in Washington DC. As the Team Leader for the winning submission, Boris then assumed the role as Design Principal for the subsequent design development phase of the project that was undertaken in a joint venture with Devrouax & Purnell, a local architectural firm in Washington DC and for the Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial Foundation.

**Bonnie Fisher, FASLA, Landscape Principal for the MLK Memorial.** Bonnie is a landscape architect and urban designer, who has worked on the planning and design of many significant public space projects in cities throughout the US and abroad. In addition to the MLK Memorial, Bonnie played a key role working with Boris Dramov on the transformation of the San Francisco, Portland, Vancouver BC, San Diego and Oakland waterfronts. She is currently working on the design master plan for the half mile long Santa Cruz Wharf. Right after the 1989 earthquake, ROMA helped Santa Cruz in the redesign of their devastated downtown area and the redesign of Pacific Avenue, the main street in this small coastal city. This year, ROMA received the Investors in America Award from Partners for Livable Communities.

**Marcel Acosta, Executive Director, National Capital Planning Commission.** As executive director of the National Capital Planning Commission, Marcel Acosta leads a federal agency that is committed to preserving and enhancing the extraordinary qualities of Washington, D.C. and the National Capital Region. The Commission oversees the planning and design approvals of major federal buildings, parks and commemorative works in the capital city. Current projects include the Southwest Ecodistrict Initiative, a forward looking approach to urban sustainability, and the Height of Buildings Master Plan. Marcel also serves on the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority’s Board of Directors, which oversees the region’s public transport system. The Commission’s Monumental Core Framework Plan was recently awarded the Institute Honor Award for Regional and Urban Design from the AIA and a Professional Honor Award for Planning and Analysis from the ASLA.

**Alex Krieger, FAIA, Member of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.** Alex is an architect and urban designer whose career has combined teaching and practice in working to improve the quality of place in major urban areas. He is a founding principal of Chan Krieger Sieniewicz, a design firm with disciplines of architecture, urban design, and public space planning, which merged with NBBJ in 2010. Alex is a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, and served as associate chairman of the Department of Architecture and chairman of the Department of Urban Planning and Design. He was appointed by the President to the Commission of Fine Arts, tasked with advising the federal government and District of Columbia "on matters of design and aesthetics, as they affect the Federal interest and preserve the dignity of the nation's capital".

**John G. Parsons, FASLA, formerly Associate Regional Director of the National Park Service.** John served as the Associate Regional Director of the National Park Service for 35 years where he managed the planning and development of the 80,000-acre park system in the National Capital Region. Through his service as Chairman of the National Capital Memorial Commission, John was primarily responsible for the siting, design and construction of more than 25 memorials, including the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, and guided the formation of an interagency task force that developed a master plan for memorials. John is a recipient of the LaGasse Medal, recognizing landscape architects who have made notable contributions to the management and conservancy of natural resources and/or public lands.