Office Culture and Transparency: Building an Empowered 21st Century Design Practice

Striking balance between creativity and profitability takes a robust design culture and enlightened business practices. Success requires innovation in the design of practice as much as the design of projects. This panel brings together leaders of prominent landscape architecture firms to discuss strategies for cultivating innovative and financially productive enterprises.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
1. Learn how firms are challenging traditional models of decision making and accountability.
2. Understand the range of transparent business practices and their differential impacts on culture and productivity.
3. Discover how core values and clarity of purpose can inform business structure and culture.
4. Ascertain how firms are managing time to balance value and creativity.
Reed Hilderbrand practices landscape architecture as an art of purposeful transformation. Active since the mid-1990s, they have collaborated with artists, business leaders, curators, homeowners, politicians, and property developers to realize landscapes of cultural consequence. Their work connects daily life to the visible phenomena and the invisible systems of nature, in pursuit of beauty and clarity as well as ecological health and resilience. Transforming the land shapes lives and influences communities, projecting values of our era into the future—an act of cultural expression. By designing the land, Reed Hilderbrand seeks to extend and enrich human experience toward an optimistic future.

Reed Hilderbrand’s work incorporates the rational as well as the visceral to elicit a landscape’s poetic promise while resolving its objective requirements. Careful analysis of topography, hydrology, habitat, and the overall health of a landscape predicates bold decisions about its future. They apply equal emphasis to resolving a project’s enterprise and economic criteria. Through intuition and iterative study with clients, Reed Hilderbrand generate a clarity of expressive form using an economy of means that is rooted in modernist principles of reduction, abstraction, and the fluidity of flexible space. In all of their works, Reed Hilderbrand seeks values of simplicity, beauty, serenity, sanctuary, intimacy, and mystery.

Reed Hilderbrand has received significant national recognition, garnering over 70 awards from the American Society of Landscape Architects, its Boston chapter, and other design and preservation organizations. The firm’s 2012 monograph Visible|Invisible received an ASLA Honor Award for Design Communications. The American Society of Landscape Architects named Reed Hilderbrand 2013 Firm of the Year.
Coen + Partners is a renowned landscape architecture practice based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Through a process of collaboration, experimentation and questioning, the firm’s work embraces the complexities of each site with quiet clarity and ecological integrity. The practice has built a distinguished body of award-winning work that is widely-recognized as progressive and timeless, winning numerous awards for landscape architecture, planning, and urban design. In 2015, Coen + Partners received the National Design Award in Landscape Architecture from the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum to honor lasting achievement in American design. In addition, Coen + Partners is regarded by the AIA, the ASLA, the GSA Design Excellence Program and the editorial staff of influential publications such as Metropolis, Dwell, and Architectural Record. The New York Times architectural critic, Anne Raver, describes Coen + Partners’ work as having ‘pushed Midwestern boundaries.’

Coen + Partners offers a comprehensive suite of services including master planning, site design, programming, and project administration for urban, green roof, rural and multi-scaled residential, institutional, and commercial projects. In each area of emphasis, we expose and enhance in-situ systems while highlighting the concept through site-specific materials, deferential textures, and supportive plant palettes. Each of our built and in-progress works represents the site history, context, and the larger architectural vision. We collaborate extensively with top design talent to create site designs integrating programmatic, architectural and ecological goals with innovation and beauty.

Our work reflects an understanding of landscape, environmental advocacy, and fiscal responsibility that is unmatched in the landscape architecture community. We seek not to recreate nature in our work, but rather to redefine natural frameworks and transform them into innovative solutions for comprehensively designed environments.

Coen + Partners is known for our collaborative approach to design, with architects, engineers, clients and the public as critical partners. Our designs and process blend seamlessly with that of our partner disciplines. We have worked on a variety of complex, multi-stakeholder projects. Our core team is a small, tight-knit group of visionary designers and leaders who operate within a system akin to a round table or hive. This system values all opinion, full expression of idea, thoughtful disagreement, and significant testing of concept. Our media of choice is landscape, but our expression of this media is not possible without valuing internal and external collaboration.
Snøhetta values human interaction. All of our work strives to enhance our sense of place, identity and relationship to others and the physical spaces we inhabit, whether natural or human-made. Museums, reindeer observatories and dollhouses get the same care and attention to purpose.

For over 25 years, Snøhetta has designed some of the world’s most notable public and cultural projects. Snøhetta kick-started its career in 1989 with the competition-winning entry for the new library of Alexandria, Egypt. This was later followed by the commission for the Norwegian National Opera in Oslo and the National September 11th Memorial Museum Pavilion at the World Trade Center in New York City. Since its inception, the practice has maintained its original self-defined trans-disciplinary approach, integrating architectural, landscape and interior design in all of its projects. Snøhetta is currently working on a number of civic and cultural projects internationally including the expansion of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in California, the Times Square Reconstruction in New York City, the Willamette Falls Riverwalk in Oregon City, the Lascaux Caves Museum in Montignac, France the Calgary Public Library and Library Plaza, in Alberta, Canad and The French Laundry Kitchen Expansion and Garden Renovation in Napa, California.

Among its many recognitions, Snøhetta received the World Architecture Award for the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet, and the Aga Kahn Prize for Architecture for Alexandria Library. Since its completion in 2008, the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet has also garnered the Mies van der Rohe European Union Prize for Architecture and the EDRA (Environmental Design Research Association) Great Places Award, as well as the European Prize for Urban Public Space, The International Architecture Award and The Global Award for Sustainable Architecture in 2010.