



American Society of Landscape Architects

Medal Nominations

c/o Carolyn Mitchell
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Dear Colleagues:

It is my honor to nominate Shlomo Aronson for the ASLA Medal of Excellence.

Design for many can be measured in terms of a built project, a body of work, a signature vocabulary, and an ethos – Shlomo Aronson’s career certainly encompasses all of these. Collectively and individually, Aronson’s works have helped to create Israel’s contemporary landscape architecture identity. The evidence of his involvement ranges from grand gestures to discreet interventions, but all reflect his sensitivity to each site and his recognition that the hand of the practitioner needn’t always be evident. Indeed, it is that latter quality, that deliberate subordination that is so powerful, both in practice at the realized projects and as an inspiration/teaching device for other professionals.

But, there is another important and perhaps unprecedented component to his design legacy: Aronson has helped create an environment in Israel in which landscape architects and the profession are seen as the orchestrators as much as the source of big vision planning and design – not to mention an inherent recognition and understanding that systems-based planning is elemental and essential. This not to say architecture lacks prominence – one need only look at the glorious new addition to the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. However, the Israeli mindset eschews architecture/object obsession in favor of broad conceptual thinking, and Aronson has helped to create a welcoming environment for putting landscape architecture first – an important by-product of his decades of professional leadership and influential body of work.

I recently spent several weeks in Israel touring Aronson’s projects and filming an oral history with him. I came away overwhelmed by the breadth, site specific uniqueness, and excellence of his built design legacy, which spans four decades and has established a foundation for practice in a country with only 300 or so professionals.

First, I want to focus on a few examples of Shlomo’s built design legacy:

- At Ben Gurion University (Be’er Sheva), he transformed and humanized the hostile architecture and awkward proportions of the main arrival plaza with an arcade and grass enshrouded pavilions that shelter a stylized desert valley water channel. The scale is intimate and the environment relaxed, a welcome relief offering gentle transitions through the campus’ hulking architecture;
- He articulated a sinuous, understated and scenic road along the iconic Dead Sea, that provides excellent viewer superior vantage points of this famous water body. The road also

- delicately hugs the desert through which it runs, providing travelers with a constant almost cinematic tutorial/reminder of the area's unique landscape legacy;
- His perpendicular addition to Lawrence Halprin's Haas Promenade (in which he also collaborated in 1985) in Jerusalem, Sherover Promenade, is a grand cascading design that culminates with a panoramic view of the city; his design is both respectful of his predecessor and equal in its design ambition and execution;
- Israel's many archaeological sites provide very specific design challenges – some solutions are blunt and heavy handed, others seamless and organic. At the famous 2,000-year old Mediterranean port city of Caesura, Shlomo orchestrates an experiential narrative that keeps visitors focused on the impressiveness of this vast site, while occasionally providing vistas and other punctuating elements that address the sites archaeological, architectural and historical significance;
- Among the utilitarian and mundane – highway interchanges – Aronson created brilliant solutions that respected multiple concerns such as historic visual and spatial relationships and the integrity of an otherwise unmarked burial site.

His design legacy is prescient in its focus on sustainability, sensitive and sensible in its environmental approach, and esteems the natural surrounds as both backdrops/borrowed scenery and design inspiration. One American admirer (who is not in the profession) recently described Aronson as “the Olmsted of Israel,” which might seem hyperbolic, but is actually a reasonable corollary, certainly for the scope, scale and impact of his built works, his influence on the overall course and tenor of practice in Israel, and his elevation of the profession generally.

Though I've known of Shlomo's work from colleagues, monographs and other media, nothing could have prepared me for how fundamentally and totally impressed I discovered his work to be. I'm very fortunate, because of my years in the private sector, setting national policy at the National Park Service and as founder of an organization focused on elevating the understanding and renown of the profession and its practitioners, to have visited, seen and experienced thousands of landscapes. Shlomo's work ranks among some of the most impressive I've encountered and is absolutely deserving of ASLA's Medal of Excellence.

The timing for the jury's consideration is important. Shlomo is in declining health and the prognosis is equally dire. In addition, I did see several works, which are threatened for numerous reasons, and the awarding of this honor would strengthen efforts to preserve and make visible his design legacy.

It is rare to see one person's broad impact on the land, certainly in the past 50 years, but Shlomo Aronson has demonstrated through his built legacy and his collective efforts to embed the importance of landscape architecture in the national psyche that such accomplishments are achievable. Therefore, it is an honor to submit this unqualified endorsement for Shlomo Aronson to receive the 2013 Medal of Excellence.

Yours sincerely,



Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA, FAAR
Founder + President

PWP LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

PETER WALKER. FASLA

DOUGLAS FINDLAY

DAVID WALKER

LIZ EINWILLER

ADAM GREENSPAN

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ASLA Board of Trustees
American Society of Landscape Architects
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Washington, DC 20001-3736

Regarding: Letter of Endorsement- Shlomo Aronson

Dear Trustees:

It feels as though I have known Shlomo Aronson all my professional life. He is a great friend and colleague, with whom I have much in common. We both studied at the University of California, Berkeley, and Harvard Graduate School of Design. We both worked for Lawrence Halprin in San Francisco, and we have both taught landscape architecture off and on for all of our professional lives.

However, here the shared experience ends, for Shlomo has, since 1969, practiced in Israel as the nation's first great landscape architect. He has literally shaped the field there, by working on the widest range of projects and investigations that any modern landscape architect could imagine. He has not only designed parks; he has also established the design basis for a wide system of parks. He has dealt with mineral extraction, archaeology, housing, botanic gardens, transportation, historic preservation, and medical institutions as well as institutions of learning, government, theater, and the arts. In short, there seems to be no type of national open space that has not been positively shaped by the work of his office.

As the premier landscape architect of Israel, he joint-ventured the Haas Promenade with Lawrence Halprin and went on to design its great extension, the glorious Sherover Promenade, from which one has a great sweeping view of Jerusalem.

In all this scope, the design quality has been uniformly high. These works, along with his extensive teaching, lecturing, and participation on national and internal juries, have affected a generation of young Israeli designers.

I am delighted to recommend Shlomo for the ASLA Medal of Excellence, without reservation.

Sincerely yours,



Peter Walker

PW/jb

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Nomination of Shlomo Aronson
Letter of Endorsement

Dear Trustees:

I cannot exactly remember the first time I was introduced to Shlomo or his work. However, I will always remember that time as the start of a strong professional relationship.

I went to Israel around 10 years ago to deliver a lecture. Whilst there, I was shown and made aware of the best of what Israel had to offer in terms of contemporary public realm landscape. I particularly remember the Caesarea Archaeological Park, the Jerusalem Carda Restoration, the Main Plaza at the Technion University in Haifa, the Suzanne Delal Dance and Theatre Centre in Tel Aviv, and the Gabriel Sherover Promenade. These places were, and still are special, not because they demanded to be looked at, but because they drew me inexorably into each site and insisted they be explored and experienced. I particularly appreciated how naturally they were embedded in the landscape – almost like an artifact from the future that had been unearthed through geological purposes.

This visit not only revealed Shlomo as the aesthete, but Shlomo as the man. I was deeply impressed by his generosity and knowledge of the land and its history. He is **the** most shining example of what a local person can achieve on a project – the original practitioner of acting locally and thinking globally. I personally believe Shlomo has redefined Israel's public landscape for the next 100-1000 years. The way we now see the contemporary Israeli landscape is exactly the way Shlomo dreamed it. He loves the land, and has lovingly redefined it for us and for many future generations to come. The love and deep understanding of this landscape and its people is viscerally understood by the observer.

Making a real difference, not only to a city, but to an entire country is an enormous contribution. We all know Shlomo has completed successful projects elsewhere. However, his collective work in Israel cannot be ignored as a site specific work of national scale. This is particularly applicable to Israel and no other. He has, and continually applies the highest design standards to his projects, irrespective of whether they are infrastructure works, urban plazas or parks. In Japan, they award national treasure status to their people. I truly believe Shlomo is Israel's equivalent.

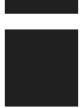


I am very happy I was asked to write a letter on behalf of Shlomo, and wholeheartedly endorse his nomination for the ASLA Medal of Excellence and truly hope he receives it.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martha Schwartz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "S" at the beginning.

Martha Schwartz
President MSP



Technion, Israel Institute of Technology
The Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning

The ASLA Executive Committee
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736
USA

To Members of the Committee:

I am honored to recommend the landscape architect Shlomo Aronson as the recipient of the ASLA Medal of Excellence.

It is now almost forty years since I first became familiar with Shlomo's work. His work in and around the Old City of Jerusalem was only the first spark. Then came the Negev Parks, the Conveyer Belt for the Dead Sea Works, the limans and the Kreitman Plaza of Ben Gurian University in Beersheba and many more projects throughout the country. Each of these projects was extremely sensitive to their surroundings, beautifully designed and carefully executed.

Shlomo's involvement in the Afforestation National Plan was a bold encounter with the large scale and a new definition of the role of design and design professionals in national and regional planning.

It was Shlomo's marvelous achievements in the Gabriel Sherover Promenade in Jerusalem that convinced me, then the City Engineer of Tel Aviv-Yafo, to ask Shlomo to design the Susanne Delal Dance Center Plaza.

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Technion, Israel Institute of Technology
The Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning

Shlomo's sensitive approach to preservation and highly creative solution made the Delal Dance Center a powerful anchor to the whole Neve Zedek Neighborhood Revitalization Project. The redefinition of urban public space as both a evocation of a beloved past and a hope for a new future was made clear without many words and explanation. One should simply be there to sense and make sense.

But, this was only our first collaboration. A decade later, while leading up the National Plan for Development Building and Preservation (NOP 35) together with Prof. Arie Schachar in the 1990s, it became obvious to us that Shlomo's contribution would be most significant. He identified a National Green Spine Corridor, and with the adoption of the National Plan, cultural landscapes were designated for preservation throughout the country.

Later, in his design of the two highway interchanges of Sha'ar Hagay and Ben Shemen, he made another breakthrough, sensitively integrating major road structures into the landscape to achieve new harmonies. This work was an inspiration for all subsequent highway engineering, notably serving as a model for the Cross Israel Highway Corporation.

Shlomo taught us, with the landscapes he created, the ways to overcome numerous pitfalls standing in the way of good design: bureaucracy, short-term market driven budget constraints and fashion. This was done through his keen ability to collaborate well with other professionals and decision makers. It was also achieved through his abilities to embrace time and scale divorced from convention and cliche.

In Shlomo's work, his deeply rooted ties to tradition, history and culture were never conceived of as a constraint but rather as an opportunity. They became spring boards for contemporary and very personal design solutions.



Technion, Israel Institute of Technology
The Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning

For all these reasons, and for his unprecedented contribution to Israel's landscape and to the design professions as a whole, I am pleased and proud recommend the landscape architect Shlomo Aronson as the recipient of the ASLA Medal of Excellence.



Shamay Assif

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Dr. Carl Steinitz

Alexander and Victoria Wiley Research Professor of Landscape Architecture and
Planning Emeritus at the Harvard Graduate School of Design

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Regarding: Letter of Endorsement for Shlomo Aronson

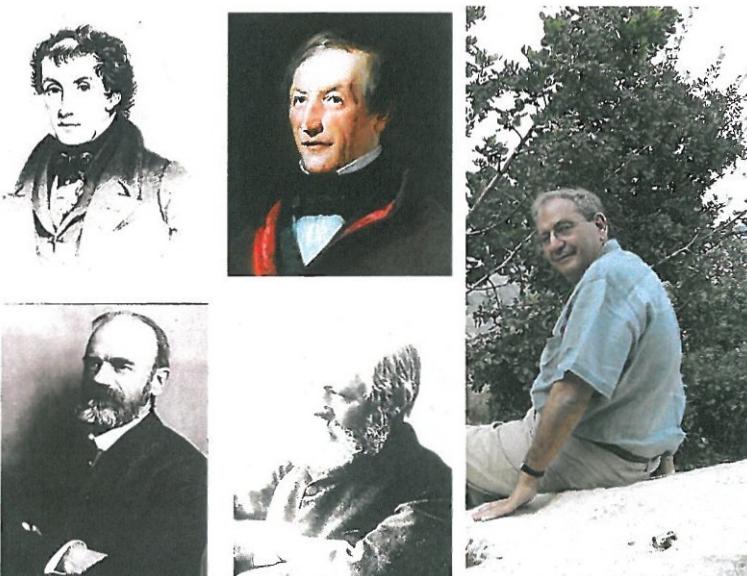
Dear Jurors,

I am pleased to recommend the award of the ASLA Medal of Excellence to Shlomo Aronson. I have known Shlomo and his work for more than forty years and I hold him in great personal and professional regard. His design work is remarkable in that it encompasses the full range of scales which landscape architects consider their professional territory, and in my experience (and I have seen much of it) it has always been of the highest quality.

The following is an edited excerpt from an illustrated talk that I gave in Jerusalem in January 2009 at a conference on landscape design held in honour of Shlomo Aronson. Please consider this as part of my letter recommending that he receive the ASLA Medal of Excellence.

FIVE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS; In honour of Shlomo Aronson

Very few landscape architects have had professional careers that encompass the highest level of design quality across the diversity of challenges implied by the full range of scales of professional interest to landscape architecture. Very few have had the opportunity. But some have, and I will show a very small set of projects made by each of five persons, all of whom I consider to be outstanding landscape architects: John Claudius Loudon, Peter Joseph Lenne, Frederick Law Olmsted, Warren Manning and Shlomo Aronson.



Shlomo Aronson is the fifth landscape architect. His work is the focus of this letter nominating him for the ASLA Medal, and I will be very brief – and visual— in describing the broad range and quality of his work in design.

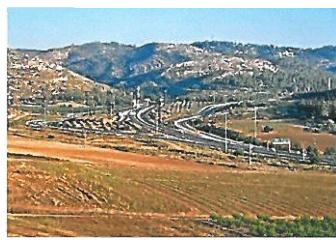
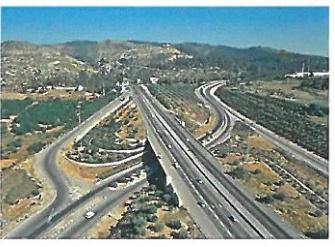
There are many public places, and many parks.



There are many special places, of entry and focus.



There are many infrastructure designs.



There are many forests.



And there are very important contributions to planning the national landscape.



Loudon, Leone, Olmsted, Manning, and Aronson: What do they have in common?

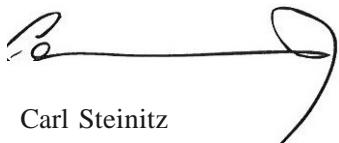
They are all well known, and justifiably so. A long and full professional career unites these five, a career which includes many private and public projects, but they are better known for their public landscapes.

They have worked across the full range of the scales of professional practice in landscape architecture. They were not afraid of the challenges of very large projects and they were decisive in the planning and design of these landscapes, as designers must be. And they varied their methods of design to fit the scale of the problem and changed those methods as the scale changed. They all wrote about their work, less about what they did and how they did it, and more about the more important question of WHY they did it.

Consider applying a proportional index, recognizing that Israel is a relatively small country when compared with England, Germany and America. One can fairly say that proportionally more Israelis and tourists have directly experienced a design of Shlomo Aronson's than the English have experienced Loudon's, the Germans have experienced Leone's, or the Americans have experienced the designs of Olmsted and Manning.

Everyone has benefited from the work of these five landscape architects: their countries and their peoples, and their professional colleagues and collaborators. In Shlomo's case his colleagues and friends consider him with immense respect, both as a person and as a symbol of what landscape architects can accomplish through their professional practice. I am honored and happy to be among them. Shlomo Aronson is fully deserving of the recognition of being awarded the ALSA Medal of Excellence for a lifetime of outstanding achievement in the design of significant landscapes, and across the many scales of landscape architecture.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C.S." followed by a stylized surname.

Carl Steinitz

Alexander and Victoria Wiley Professor of Landscape Architecture and Planning, Emeritus
Graduate School of Design Harvard University

Honorary Member, ASLA



Beit Shalom Park, Stone Detail (1978)



Dung Gate (1985)

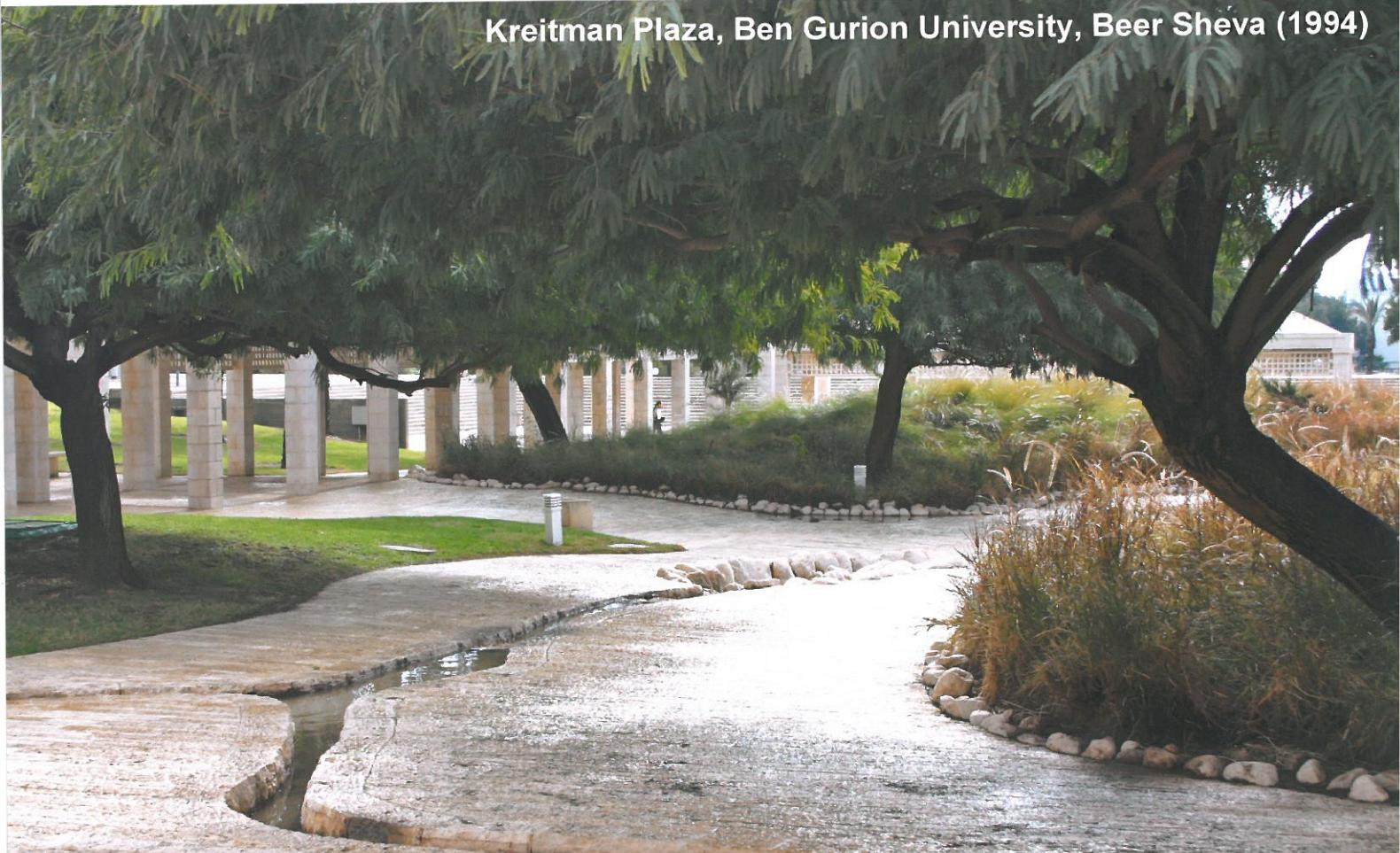
Conveyor Belt for the Dead Sea Potash Works (1986)







Kreitman Plaza, Ben Gurion University, Beer Sheva (1994)



Sherover Promenade (1989)





Caesarea Archaeological Park (1992-2006)



Shaar Hagai Interchange on the Route between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem(1995)



Built Design



Direction of Terminal

Ben Gurion International Airport (2004)



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OLIVE TERRACES

ROADS



Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum (2005)

