

Place Based:

How Regional Firms are Leveraging Local Knowledge for Social Change

SUN - A04

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Conference on
Landscape Architecture
November 15-18
San Diego

Session

Sunday, November 17, 2019
9:00 AM - 10:00 AM / Location: 28DE
1.00 PDH, LA CES/HSW, AICP, FL

Synopsis - With the New Landscape Declaration, landscape architecture has staked its claim as a proactive profession. What are design firms doing to live up to the hype? This session will highlight how three firms from across the US are leveraging their local knowledge to build partnerships and support social change.

Learning Objectives

1. Learn about the history of design activism and what it means for landscape architecture today.
2. Understand how firms are leveraging local knowledge to support social change in their home communities.
3. Identify regional similarities and differences between firms' social impact strategies and tactics.
4. Examine opportunities to engage in design activism in your firm and/or home community.



The Panel

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Mia Lehrer, FASLA
Studio-MLA



Mia Lehrer founded Studio-MLA with a vision to improve quality of life through landscape. She has led the design and implementation of ambitious public and private projects including the Hollywood Park Racetrack redevelopment and its new LA NFL Stadium, the LA County Natural History Museum Gardens, Vista Hermosa Park, and many Los Angeles River-related projects. Mia is internationally recognized for progressive landscape design, advocacy for sustainable and people-friendly public places, and catalyzing work for a climate-appropriate future. She earned her Master of Landscape Architecture degree from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, and lectures and teaches around the world. Among recent accomplishments, she served on Obama's Fine Arts Commission and was honored with ASLA's LaGasse Medal.

Isaac Hametz, ASLA
Mahan Rykiel Associates, Inc.



Isaac Hametz is Principal and Research Director at Mahan Rykiel Associates. He collaborates with clients and strategic partners to study, imagine, and shape landscapes that enrich the human condition and support vibrant natural systems. His work emphasizes ecological integrity, economic uplift, and cultural identity. He leads the Design with Dredge program and manages the firm's design research portfolio including partnerships, projects, and publications. Prior to joining Mahan Rykiel Associates, Isaac founded and ran two non-profit organizations that utilized landscape as vehicle for civic engagement and design activism.

Isaac Cohen
Studio Outside



Isaac Cohen is an Associate at Studio Outside where he brings over a decade of experience working on park and urban public space issues. This includes working with communities around the country on advocacy and fundraising to build urban park, and on engagement and research into critical issues impacting the use of public space, ranging from the arts and creative placemaking to investigating segregation's impacts on park system development. Isaac has a Bachelors of Arts with honors in Studio Art from Vassar College and a Master's of Landscape Architecture from the University of Virginia where he was awarded as the University Olmsted Scholar.

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Alison B. Hirsch (Moderator)
University of Southern California



Alison B. Hirsch, PhD, FAAR, is Associate Professor and Director of the Graduate Program in Landscape Architecture + Urbanism at the University of Southern California. She is co-founder of foreground design agency (www.foreground-da.com), a critical landscape practice. She is a landscape theorist and designer, as well as historian. Both her design and written work focus on how understanding cultural practices and social histories and memories can contribute to the design of meaningful places. She is author of the book *City Choreographer: Lawrence Halprin in Urban Renewal America* (University of Minnesota Press) and is currently working on another book, *The Performative Landscape*, which emphasizes sociocultural dynamics as catalysts of physical design, challenging common conceptions that participatory or socially-oriented design processes must sacrifice the spatial, material and formal qualities of the landscape architectural project.

STUDIO - MLA

Los Angeles, CA

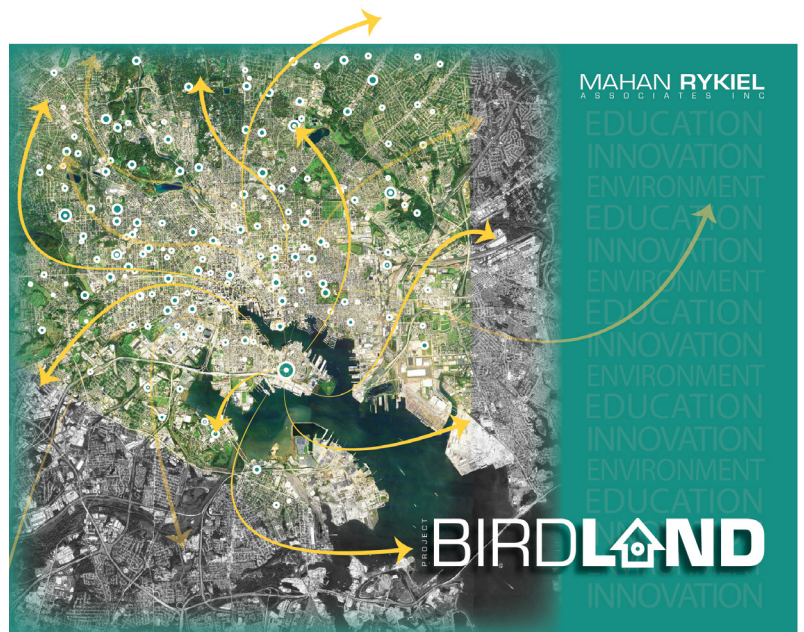
The Los Angeles River exemplifies Mia Lehrer's design ethic: she's in this for the long-term. Mia Lehrer first adopted the Los Angeles River as an advocacy project when she took her rambunctious young son to an early river cleanup in the 1990's. She fell in love with the urban wild and the passionate individuals coalescing around river revitalization. For over two dozen years, Mia and the firm she founded, Studio-MLA, have made significant contributions to this endeavor—first to the Los Angeles River Revitalization Plan and then to a number of follow-up planning efforts and implementation phases. The process engaged in these plans, and the implemented pieces that came out of them, reflects the possibilities of advocacy by design with active and significant community participation. The Los Angeles River work is exemplary of how Mia has shaped her firm to balance private work with that which contributes to the community. She and her team continue to practice with an advocacy ethic at all scales of design and planning.



Mahan Rykiel Associates Research Studio

Baltimore, Maryland

How can designers play a more active role in shaping a resilient and equitable society? Mahan Rykiel Associates is pursuing answers to this question through the work of its design research studio. The firm initiated the design research studio to enhance its creative and technical capacity to proactively engage communities, clients, and collaborators in projects that address climate adaptation, community identity, and economic uplift. It is grounded by the firm's more than three decade long relationship with Baltimore and Chesapeake Bay region, and energized by the opportunity of emerging design methods to positively influence project setting and project performance. It has and continues to be an evolutionary process for the firm, however, its focus has and remains on building trust, partnerships, and deep local knowledge to catalyze meaningful action with and for project stakeholders.



Presentation Overview

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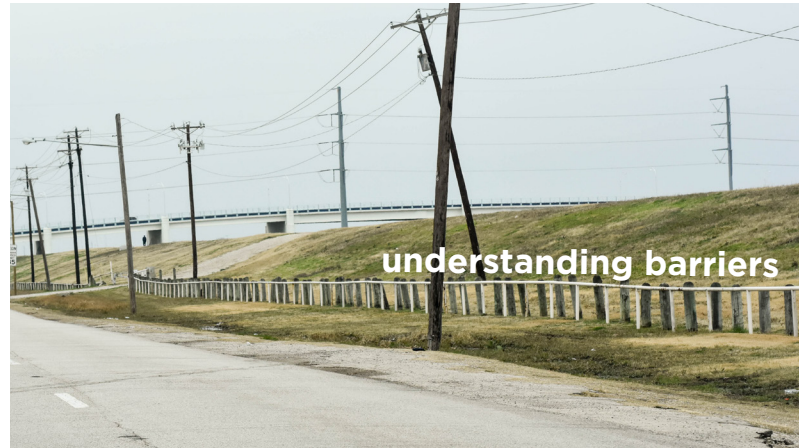
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Studio Outside

Dallas, TX

Studio Outside is in the early stages of identifying and implementing a social and ecological justice focus into its work. Particularly focused in Dallas and the North Texas Region, this work is critical now as we recognize our place in one of the most ecologically disturbed eco-regions and socio-economically divided cities in the country. As we strategically move forward we are focused on internal growth, utilizing the knowledge and passions of both design and support staff, and identifying where we can make the most impact. We see this work as part of expanding the role and capacity of our office, and landscape architecture as a whole, in shaping our city. We will share how we have been using research and engagement to tackle critical issues in both small design and large planning projects.



Notes

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Resources

www.mahanrykiel.com

- <https://www.projectbirdland.org/>
- <https://www.lafoundation.org/news/2018/10/dei-mahan-rykiel-associates>
- <http://studio-mla.com/advocacy-by-design/>
- <https://www.lafoundation.org/news/2018/12/advocacy-at-the-heart-of-practice-studio-mla>
- <https://www.studiooutside.us/home>
- <https://arch.usc.edu/people/alison-b-hirsch>
- <http://www.foreground-da.com/>

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