

Introduction: The 2009 Rudy Bruner Award



THE RUDY BRUNER AWARD

The Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence (RBA) is a national award for urban places that promotes innovative thinking about the built environment. Established in 1987, the Award celebrates urban places distinguished by quality design – design that considers form in conjunction with social, economic, and environmental issues.

The RBA is unique among design awards because it emphasizes the process of urban placemaking and multiple aspects of place. The RBA considers architecture in terms of the skill with which a design responds to its user, neighborhood, city and region. In exploring the story of each winner, the Award articulates how the place responds to the complex characteristics unique to its urban setting. In celebrating the winners, the RBA seeks to increase the visibility of each winner, and promote fresh thinking about the kinds of places that make our cities better settings in which to live and work.

With each cycle, the Rudy Bruner Award starts anew. Applications (more than 85 this year) are reviewed by a new Selection Committee. The Committee is challenged to identify places that achieve design excellence with nuanced responses to their users and urban settings. As they consider the applications, Committee members are asked to define their own criteria for urban excellence in light of their experience and expertise. In discussing the projects, they identify

Top: Inner-City Arts Executive Director Cynthia Harnisch accepts the 2009 Rudy Bruner Award Gold Medal

Bottom: Thomas Jefferson Center at the Community Chalkboard

the current challenges facing our cities, and develop a consensus on the kinds of urban places that make meaningful contributions to the built environment.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Because the RBA seeks excellence in places where it may not be expected, the criteria for submitting an application for the RBA are intentionally broad, encouraging applications from all sorts of projects. The few limiting criteria are that the project must be a real place, not a plan; it must be sufficiently complete to demonstrate its excellence to a team of site visitors from the Bruner Foundation; and it must be located in the contiguous continental United States.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

A new Selection Committee is named for each award cycle. To ensure lively and informed discussion, the Selection Committee is an interdisciplinary group of urban experts. Selection Committees always include the mayor of a major city as well as design professionals, developers, community organizers, philanthropists, and financiers. In their discussions, members of the Selection Committee explore a range of urban issues that relate to the most critical challenges facing our cities today.



The Selection Committee meets twice. In its January meeting the Committee selects five finalists from a field of about 100 applicants. A Bruner Foundation team then visits each of these sites for two to three days, exploring the projects and pursuing questions raised by the Selection Committee. The team tours the site, interviews fifteen to twenty-five or more project participants (including community participants), takes photographs, observes patterns of use, and collects secondary source documentation on the project.

Findings from the site team visits are presented to the Selection Committee at its meeting in May. The Committee discusses the relative merits of each project and awards one finalist Gold Medal status, a \$50,000 award. The other finalists are Silver Medal winners and each receives \$10,000.

Rudy Bruner Award winners are an exceptional group of urban places. Many winners are models for urban placemaking that successfully challenge conventional wisdom about what is possible. Most are products of hard-won collaborations among diverse groups of people, often with differing agendas. And all RBA winners have

contributed to the vitality of the cities and neighborhoods in which they are located. They operate strongly in their own contexts, bridging the disciplines of architecture, urban design, and planning.

Rudy Bruner Award winners are never presented as models to be replicated or as formulas to be transplanted to other urban settings. Instead, their value to placemakers resides in the innovative strategies they have used to meet challenges, which can be adapted to fit the unique qualities of other cities and neighborhoods. Each Selection Committee places great value on the new models of placemaking represented in the winners.

2009 SELECTION COMMITTEE

The 2009 Committee included:

- MAYOR DAVID N. CICILLINE, Providence, RI
- MICHAEL A. DOBBINS, Professor of Practice, College of Architecture, Georgia Institute of Technology, GA
- MARY HOUGHTON, President, ShoreLine Bank Corp., Chicago, IL
- GRACE E. LA, La Dallman Architects Inc., Milwaukee, WI
- JAIR LYNCH, Jair Lynch Development Partners, Washington D.C.
- MARTHA WELBORNE, Former Managing Director, Grand Avenue Committee, Los Angeles, CA; Principal, Zimmer Gunsul Frasca, Los Angeles



2009 AWARD CYCLE

In 2009, the Award received more than 85 projects for consideration. From these, the Committee selected five projects: Community Chalkboard in Charlottesville, VA, Hunts Point Riverside Park in the Bronx, Inner-City Arts in Los Angeles, Millennium Park in Chicago, and St. Joseph Rebuild Center in New Orleans. These projects are distinct, yet are united by the impacts they made on their respective neighborhoods and cities, including:

- Transforming and activating underused public spaces
- Creating places that help underserved populations
- Building spaces that developed through complex community dialogue

Left: Selection Committee members Martha Welborne and Mary Houghton review applications
Right: Selection Committee members Mike Dobbins and Mayor David Cicilline review applications

Selection Committee members Grace La and Jair Lynch review applications



2009 WINNERS

- **Inner-City Arts, Los Angeles, CA; Gold Medal**

Designed by architect Michael Maltzan, Inner-City Arts is a skillfully designed oasis for children in the Skid Row area of Los Angeles. Inner-City Arts provides art instruction and builds life skills for a large population of at-risk youth, and provides teacher training to LA public school teachers.

- **The Community Chalkboard and Podium: An Interactive Monument to Free Expression, Charlottesville, VA; Silver Medal**

The Community Chalkboard is an interactive monument dedicated to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Located adjacent to City Hall in a major downtown public plaza, the 54'-long slate chalkboard provides a venue for unedited written public expression. It has also created a new venue for public gatherings in Charlottesville, and stimulated an important public dialogue on the nature of free speech.

- **Hunts Point Riverside Park, Bronx, NY; Silver Medal**

Hunts Point is a new 1.7-acre park on the Bronx River. The Park grew out of a grassroots effort to reclaim the river for public recreation, and to create public open space for one of the most underserved neighborhoods in New York.

- **Millennium Park, Chicago, IL; Silver Medal**

Millennium Park is a new 24-acre park in downtown Chicago that provides dramatically designed indoor and outdoor venues for art, music and a wide variety of public events. Millennium



Park transforms an underused area in the heart of downtown Chicago into a public space that brings together Chicagoans and visitors from throughout the region and the world.

- **St. Joseph Rebuild Center, New Orleans, LA; Silver Medal**

St. Joseph Rebuild Center is a day center for homeless individuals in an industrial area of New Orleans. St. Joseph Rebuild Center is a well-designed semi-permanent facility that was built in response to the damage done by Hurricane Katrina. The Rebuild Center uses simple materials and creative architecture to provide a series of new spaces for homeless services. St. Joseph Rebuild Center provides a new model both for homeless services and for new space in disaster situations.



RUDY BRUNER AWARD BOOKS

Rudy Bruner Award winners are all real places in real communities, and each site has a complex story. These “back stories” involve struggle and perseverance, leadership and cooperation, tension and resolution. The winning projects are never simple, and for the most part, they come to fruition despite limited budgets, competing agendas, and political complications. The RBA has found that great urban places respond to challenges by enhancing the quality of design and extending the use of design beyond initial expectations.

In order to tell these stories, Bruner Foundation publishes a book that details the story of each winner and also includes a synopsis of the Selection Committee dialogue. All Rudy Bruner Award publications are available online at www.brunerfoundation.org; most RBA books are also available from the Foundation in hard copy.

AWARD PRESENTATIONS

Award presentations celebrate the accomplishments of each winning project and raise awareness of the issues addressed by each of them. Past awards have been presented at the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and in many of the cities in which winning projects are located. At the presentations, planners, community organizers, architects, and developers speak about their projects, and mayors are often present to recognize the contributions these projects have made to their respective communities.

Left: An Inner-City Arts entrance
Middle: Jefferson Muzzles Award drawing on the Community Chalkboard
Right: Children playing at Hunts Point Riverside Park
Bottom: Cloud Gate at Millennium Park

Courtyard at St. Joseph Rebuild Center

The books are part of the RBA's commitment to facilitating a national dialogue on the meaning and nature of urban excellence, and to promoting important new ideas about urban placemaking. They are a resource for placemakers, educators, policy makers, financiers, and community organizations who wish to use the creative thinking of RBA winners in their own communities. Bruner Foundation books are used in graduate and undergraduate programs across the country.

THE RUDY BRUNER AWARD WEBSITE

The Rudy Bruner Award website has become a primary access point for RBA history and resources. The site contains case studies and images of every RBA winner, summary profiles, and links to winner websites. The site also includes profiles of Selection Committee members and news about ongoing RBA activities. It is also the location for the Rudy Bruner Award application, which is now offered only through the website, and no longer in printed form.

We encourage you to visit the website to learn from the experience of our winners, and to use their stories to create excellent urban places in your own communities.

<http://www.brunerfoundation.org/rba/>

ACCESS TO OTHER RUDY BRUNER AWARD MATERIALS

A digital archive of Rudy Bruner Award winners is also available at <http://libweb.lib.buffalo.edu/bruner/>. The Rudy Bruner Award Digital Archive (RBADA) includes award winners' original application materials. Projects are searchable by keyword in seventeen categories including housing, historic preservation, art, land use controls, commercial development, and transportation. The University at Buffalo site is coordinated through The Urban Design Project, directed by Robert Shibley and developed by the staff at the University at Buffalo's Lockwood Memorial Library. It is a valuable tool for students, practitioners, and others interested in various aspects of the urban built environment.



Rudy Bruner Award presentation at Hunts Point Riverside Park with RBA Founder Simeon Bruner (center), Commissioner Adrien Benepe (center right), and Majora Carter (far right) with community members and staff

BRUNER LOEB FORUM

Established in 2001, the Bruner•Loeb Forum brings together two of the preeminent national programs dedicated to the urban built environment. In the Bruner•Loeb Forum, the Rudy Bruner Award partners with the Loeb Fellowship Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Design to present two forums per year in cities around the nation. The Forum is an interactive program, designed to apply the experience and expertise of RBA winners and Loeb Fellows to challenges facing our cities, and to create dialogue among a diverse group of stakeholders. In so doing, the Bruner•Loeb Forum fosters a national dialogue on the most important urban issues of the day.

For more information please visit: www.brunerloeb.org

RBA RECOGNITION

The work of the Rudy Bruner Award and its winners has been recognized by organizations across the country, including the Mayors' Institute on City Design, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Environmental Design Research Association, and, *Partners for Livable Communities*.

Articles on the Rudy Bruner Award have appeared in *Foundation News*, *New Village Journal*, *Architectural Record*, *Design Book Review*, *Architecture* magazine, and most recently *Next American*

City. See also the chapter on the RBA in Lynda Schneekloth and Robert Shibley's *Placemaking: the Art and Practice of Building Community* (John Wiley and Sons, 1995), and in the McGraw Hill compendium on the state of the art in urban design, *Time Saver Standards for Urban Design*, published in 2003, edited by Don Watson, Alan Plattus, and Robert Shibley.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Emily Axelrod, MCP, is the director of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence. She holds a master's degree in city planning from the Harvard Graduate School of Design and has worked in urban planning in both the public and private sectors in San Francisco and Boston.

Jay Farbstein, PhD, FAIA, is an architect and the president of Jay Farbstein & Associates. He leads a consulting practice in Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo, CA, specializing in helping public sector and private clients develop and document their requirements for building projects as well as in evaluating the degree to which their completed buildings meet those requirements.

Robert Shibley, AIA, AICP, is a professor at the School of Architecture and Planning at the State University of New York, Buffalo. He is also a founding partner of Caucus Partnership, a consulting practice on environmental and organizational change. At the University at

Buffalo, he is a former chairman of the Department of Architecture and now serves as the director of The Urban Design Project, a center in the school devoted to the study and practice of urban design.

Richard Wener, PhD is associate professor of environmental psychology in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Polytechnic University in Brooklyn, New York. He has done extensive research on the effects of built environments on individuals and communities.

For more information, please contact:

Bruner Foundation
130 Prospect Street
Cambridge, MA 02139
Phone: (617) 492-8404
Fax: (617) 876-4002
Email: info@brunerfoundation.org

2009 RUDY BRUNER AWARD: Gold Medal Winner
Inner-City Arts
Los Angeles, California

