

PLACEMAKING FOR CHANGE:

2001 RUDY BRUNER AWARD FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

BRUNER FOUNDATION, INC.

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with

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PREFACE

Out of the scores of entrants for each cycle of the Rudy Bruner Award, it is always surprising to see which ones surface as the winners. As design professionals ourselves, we are often tempted to second-guess the Selection Committee. Inevitably, we're wrong. This is precisely the reason an independent third party Selection Committee is so important in a process like the Rudy Bruner Award. Human nature being what it seems to be, most of us are comfortable in our habituated beliefs and are generally loath to change. Without a new Committee for each round, this human attitude would result in a predictable process, slow to change, with easily anticipated — and not very expansive — results. Since the Award is dedicated to discovery, revealing structures and ideas hitherto unknown or marginalized, an independent, changing Selection Committee is critical to the process. This process fosters the kind of fresh thinking that keeps the Rudy Bruner Award in constant touch with innovative work. It drives the originality of the Award.

Each Selection Committee member is a talented professional in her/his own right, and each is a broad-based practitioner whose interest in the urban environment does not stop at a particular professional boundary. This overlapping of concerns and expertise, combined with independent professional excellence endows the Selection

Committee with an almost uncanny ability to root out creativity in the rough.

The Selection Committee proved their wisdom again this year in choosing five fascinating winners, all of them in the public realm: three in the arts, one greenway, and a small mixed-use development. Although they are at varying stages of maturation, the thoughtfulness that has gone into the creation of each is remarkable. It is always an amazing experience for us at the RBA to see how our initial understanding from reading the application relates to the actual project, and to talk with the people who have created these places and have made them work.

The Village of Arts and Humanities: Lily Yeh is trained in classical Chinese landscape painting. The place that is The Village of Arts and Humanities started as a mural exercise 20 years ago and is now a model cultural/educational center in one of our most troubled cities. Philadelphia has by one estimate 60,000 vacant lots and abandoned buildings, and more are abandoned each year. While its center is hot with development, many neighborhoods remain blighted. Lily Yeh has transformed the abandonment of buildings and their trash-filled lots into artistic opportunity, creating a sense of place through a process and work ethic far more complex than meets the eye.

New Jersey Performing Arts Center: Three years in advance of its opening NJPAC was already running one of the largest arts-education programs in New Jersey, a program that has since become one of the largest in the country. The director, Lawrence Goldman, was hired to run a state mandated arts complex, but turned it into an important educational institution and a multi-cultural performance venue creating a bridge between a predominantly black inner city Newark and New Jersey's affluent suburban communities. Go there on any Thursday evening in the summer, enjoy the music, and learn how different communities can come together through the universal language of art.

Swan's Marketplace: With an effort-to-profit ratio only possible in a non-profit, Swan's Market reminds us just how critical mixed-use is to neighborhoods where people live and work. It also reminds us that old buildings are important in maintaining a sense of history and place, and hence their preservation is important for community continuity and identity. The complexity of Swan's Marketplace also reminds us of how skilled professionals with a dedication to the inner city can make a difference in the urban environment

Lower East Side Tenement Museum: Most innovative programs seem to root in one place and grow, ideotropically, towards an established idea as they mature. The concept of a Tenement Museum sprang full-blown from the head of Ruth Abram. Looking for a way to bridge the self-interest and divisiveness that is prevalent today, Abram understood that the immigrant experience is a common thread linking most of us. Immigration is critical to our

national identity, and is prevalent in our family lore. If commonality is a bridge to tolerance, then the Tenement Museum is one approach in beginning to understand and accept our differences.

South Platte River Greenway: The South Platte River Greenway has reclaimed Denver's birthplace and restored an important piece of the natural environment in the midst of downtown Denver. The plan is a fascinating reverse-ground on the concept of nodal development. This length of greenspace in one of the fastest growing cities in Colorado is certainly a grandiose idea, though the Greenway is still a work-in-process. It remains for future generations to mould and judge the full extent of this ambitious project, but its scale and reach will ensure an important and memorable urban resource for generations to come.

It is this commonality of placemaking directed toward a greater good that the 2001 Rudy Bruner Award Selection Committee has recognized as a critical catalyst for improved quality of life in our nation's cities. It will be exciting to see just where the 2003 Committee sets its sights. And we'll keep you informed.

Simeon Bruner, Architect
Founder

INTRODUCTION

The Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence (RBA) occupies a unique position among national awards for the urban built environment. The RBA is dedicated to discovering and celebrating places that are distinguished not only by the quality of their design but also by their social, economic, and contextual contributions to our cities. Understanding that every urban place grows out of complex layers of social, economic, aesthetic, and personal interactions, the RBA asks some important questions. What kinds of places make our cities better environments in which to live and work? How do these places enliven and enrich the urban landscape? Do they contribute to or revitalize the local economy? Do they enhance community pride? Do they build bridges among diverse populations or create beauty and vision where none existed before? And perhaps most important, what can we learn from them?

While this approach does not negate the significance of good design, it does alter the boundaries of urban architecture, placing new emphasis both on contextuality and on the underlying values and collaborative processes required to create an excellent urban place. It is this issue that is at the heart of the RBA: What constitutes urban excellence, and how can we learn from the creative thinking behind our winners in order to broaden our thinking about urban placemaking?

The criteria for submitting an application for the RBA are intentionally broad, encouraging applications from a wide variety of projects across the country. In the last two award cycles, over 40 states have been represented. It is no surprise, therefore, that the winners have been urban places that have made very different kinds of contributions to our nation's cities. Many represent new models of urban placemaking that have successfully challenged conventional wisdom about what is possible, and most are products of hard-won collaborations between diverse groups of people with differing agendas. All RBA winners have contributed to the vitality of the cities and neighborhoods in which they are located. By celebrating their success, the RBA highlights the intricate and challenging process of urban placemaking, emphasizing the complexity of the processes and values that produce significant urban spaces. Studying the varied stories of RBA winners, their histories, and their processes of development, we can discover creative ways to respond to some of our cities' most intractable problems.

THE SELECTION COMMITTEE

To ensure lively and informed Selection Committee discussions inclusive of multiple perspectives, each Selection Committee is made up of urban experts representing diverse disciplines. Selection Committees always include the mayor of a major metropolitan area

as well architects, developers, community organizers, philanthropists, and financiers. As the Selection Committee members discuss the applications, they consider a wide variety of questions:

- What kinds of places make neighborhoods and cities better environments in which to live, work, and play?
- How did these places come into being?
- What visions powered their creation?
- How did these visions become a reality?
- What obstacles had to be overcome?
- What makes these places important in their urban context?

In this way, the Selection Committee explores the dynamic nature of urban excellence and contributes to a broader understanding of the critical urban issues of the day.

THE 2001 SELECTION COMMITTEE

Craig E. Barton, AIA

*Department of Architecture, University of Virginia,
Charlottesville, VA*

John Bok, Esq.

formerly of Foley, Hoag, and Elliot, LLP, Boston, MA

Rosanne Haggerty

Common Ground HDPC, New York, NY

Allan B. Jacobs

*Department of Urban Planning, University of California at
Berkeley, Berkeley, CA*

Gail Shibley

*former Director of Communications, US Department of Labor,
Washington, DC*

Wellington Webb

Mayor, City of Denver, CO



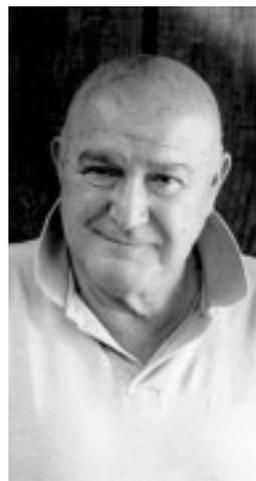
Craig E. Barton



John Bok



Rosanne Haggerty



Allan B. Jacobs



Gail Shibley



Mayor Wellington Webb

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ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Since the RBA seeks excellence in places where it may not be expected, eligibility criteria are intentionally few. First, the project must be a real place, not a plan. It must exist and be able to demonstrate its excellence to a team of site visitors from the Bruner Foundation. And the project must be located in the United States. Site visits are integral to the award process, and it is not currently possible to conduct visits to international locations.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

A new Selection Committee is appointed for each award cycle. The Committee meets twice: first to select the five finalists from a field of about 100 applicants, and then to select the Gold Medal Winner. Between these two meetings, Bruner Foundation staff research the



Mayor Webb and Allan B. Jacobs



Gail Shibley and John Bok



Rosanne Haggerty and Craig Barton



2001 Selection Committee at Work

finalists and visit each site for two or three days, exploring the projects and pursuing questions raised by the Selection Committee. The site visit team serves as the Committee's eyes and ears. The team members tour all parts of the projects, interview between 15 and 25 key participants (including "unofficial" community participants), take photographs, and observe patterns of use. This year's site visit team was led by Richard E. Wener, PhD, associate professor of environmental psychology at Polytechnic University in Brooklyn, NY. The teams included Emily Axelrod, director of the Rudy Bruner Award; Jay Farbstein, PhD and president of Jay

Farbstein and Associates; Robert Shibley, professor of urban design at the State University of New York at Buffalo; and Polly Welch, professor of architecture at the University of Oregon.

After the site visits, the team prepares the *Site Visit Report* and an extensive slide show that is presented to the Selection Committee when it meets again to review the five finalists in depth. With the site visit team on hand to answer additional questions, the Committee debates the merits of each project to decide upon a winner. In their discussion, Committee members explore the issues facing urban areas, and come to a deeper understanding of the kinds of processes and places that embody urban excellence.

2001 AWARD PRESENTATIONS

Because the RBA is intended to stimulate a national discussion on the nature of urban excellence, award presentations offer an important opportunity to raise awareness of the issues addressed by each winning project. Past awards have been presented at the US Conference of Mayors, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and in a variety of 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.

This year's Gold Medal Award of \$50,000 was presented to The Village of Arts and Humanities in North Philadelphia. The presentation was first made at The Village and was attended by



Lawrence Goldman and Simeon Bruner at Silver Medal presentation at NJPAC

neighborhood residents and many of the individuals who have been involved in the project over its history. Silver Medal winners were each awarded \$10,000 at events in their respective cities, with local press and elected officials present to recognize their achievement. In June, The Village of Arts and Humanities was also presented to a special meeting, sponsored by the Mayor's Institute for City Design, at the annual meeting of the US Conference of Mayors, where over 60 mayors of American cities learned about the creative work being done in North Philadelphia.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

As part of its effort to facilitate a national dialogue on the meaning and nature of urban excellence and to promote important new ideas about urban placemaking, the Bruner Foundation publishes a book containing case studies of the winners at the conclusion of each award cycle. Each case study is prefaced by a "Project at a Glance" section that briefly summarizes the project and the Selection Committee discussion. This overview is followed by "Project Description," containing detailed accounts of the history, character, financing, and operation of each winning project. "Assessing Project Success" identifies the most important themes recognized by the Selection Committee, and describes the dialogue among Selection Committee members.

BRUNER FOUNDATION PUBLICATIONS

Bruner Foundation books are currently in use in graduate and undergraduate programs in universities across the country. The work of the Rudy Bruner Award and its winners has been recognized by the US Conference of Mayors, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Environmental Design Research Association. Recent articles on the RBA have appeared in *Foundation News*, *New Village Journal*, *Architectural Record*, *Design Book Review*, and *Architecture* magazine. See also the chapter on the RBA in Schneekloth and Shibley's *Placemaking: The Art and Practice of Building Community* (John Wiley and Sons, 1995).

Case studies contained in Bruner Foundation books are now also available on the Foundation's web site, www.brunerfoundation.org, and will soon be available, together with images of each winner, on CD-ROM.

Bruner Foundation books, some of which are available from the Foundation, include:

- 1987 Philip Langdon with Robert Shibley and Polly Welch, *Urban Excellence* (Bruner Foundation, Inc., 1990).
- 1989 Neal Peirce and Robert Guskind, *Breakthroughs: Re-creating the American City* (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers, State University of NJ, 1993).
- 1991 Jay Farbstein and Richard Wener, *Connections: Creating Urban Excellence; 1991 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence* (Bruner Foundation, Inc., 1992).
- 1993 Jay Farbstein and Richard Wener, *Rebuilding Communities: Re-creating Urban Excellence; 1993 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence* (Bruner Foundation, Inc., 1993).
- 1995 Jay Farbstein and Richard Wener, *Building Coalitions for Urban Excellence; 1995 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence* (Bruner Foundation, Inc., 1996).
- 1997 Jay Farbstein and Richard Wener, *Visions of Urban Excellence; 1997 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence* (Bruner Foundation, Inc. 1998)
- 1999 Robert Shibley with Emily Axelrod, Jay Farbstein and Richard Wener, *Commitment to Place: Urban Excellence and Community* (Bruner Foundation, Inc. 1999).

An earlier Bruner Foundation endeavor revisited the winners and finalists from the first four cycles of the RBA to learn how the projects have fared over time. Which have continued to thrive and which have struggled, and why? Partially funded by a grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, teams of Foundation staff and consultants, HUD regional staff, and past Selection Committee members revisited 21 projects. The conclusions these observers reached can be found in:

- Jay Farbstein, Robert Shibley, Polly Welch and Richard Wener with Emily Axelrod, *Sustaining Urban Excellence: Learning from the Rudy Bruner Award, 1987-1993* (Bruner Foundation, Inc., 1998)

Sustaining Urban Excellence is available through the Bruner Foundation or through the HUD User web site.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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

Emily Axelrod, MCP, is the director of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence. She holds a masters 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 by training. He leads a consulting practice in 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 the 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.

Polly Welch is an architect and professor of architecture at the University of Oregon and is currently on leave working in economic development in Boston. She specializes in environmental design as well as housing, universal design, and the human context of design. She teaches and consults on social and political issues related to design.

ACCESS TO OTHER RUDY BRUNER AWARD MATERIALS

All RBA applications through 1999 have been recorded on microfiche and are accessible through:

Interlibrary Loan Department
Lockwood Memorial Library
State University of New York at Buffalo
Amherst, NY 14260
Phone: 716.645.2812

An abstract and keyword identification has been prepared for each application and can be accessed through two major databases: RLIN/Research Library Information Network and OCLF/First Search.

In addition, the State University of New York at Buffalo maintains a web site with complete winner applications for all Rudy Bruner Award winners. The web site address is:

<http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/projects/bruner>

The Bruner Foundation also maintains a web site on the RBA. The site contains an overview of the RBA, visual images and summary

information on all past winners, recent case studies, a list of past Selection Committee members, publications, information on how to apply for the RBA, and brief profiles of each of the 2001 winners. The web site address is:

<http://www.brunerfoundation.org>

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