

**The Cultural Landscape Foundation**  
**Pioneers of American Landscape Design**

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**RICHARD HAAG**

**ORAL HISTORY**

**REFLECTIONS**

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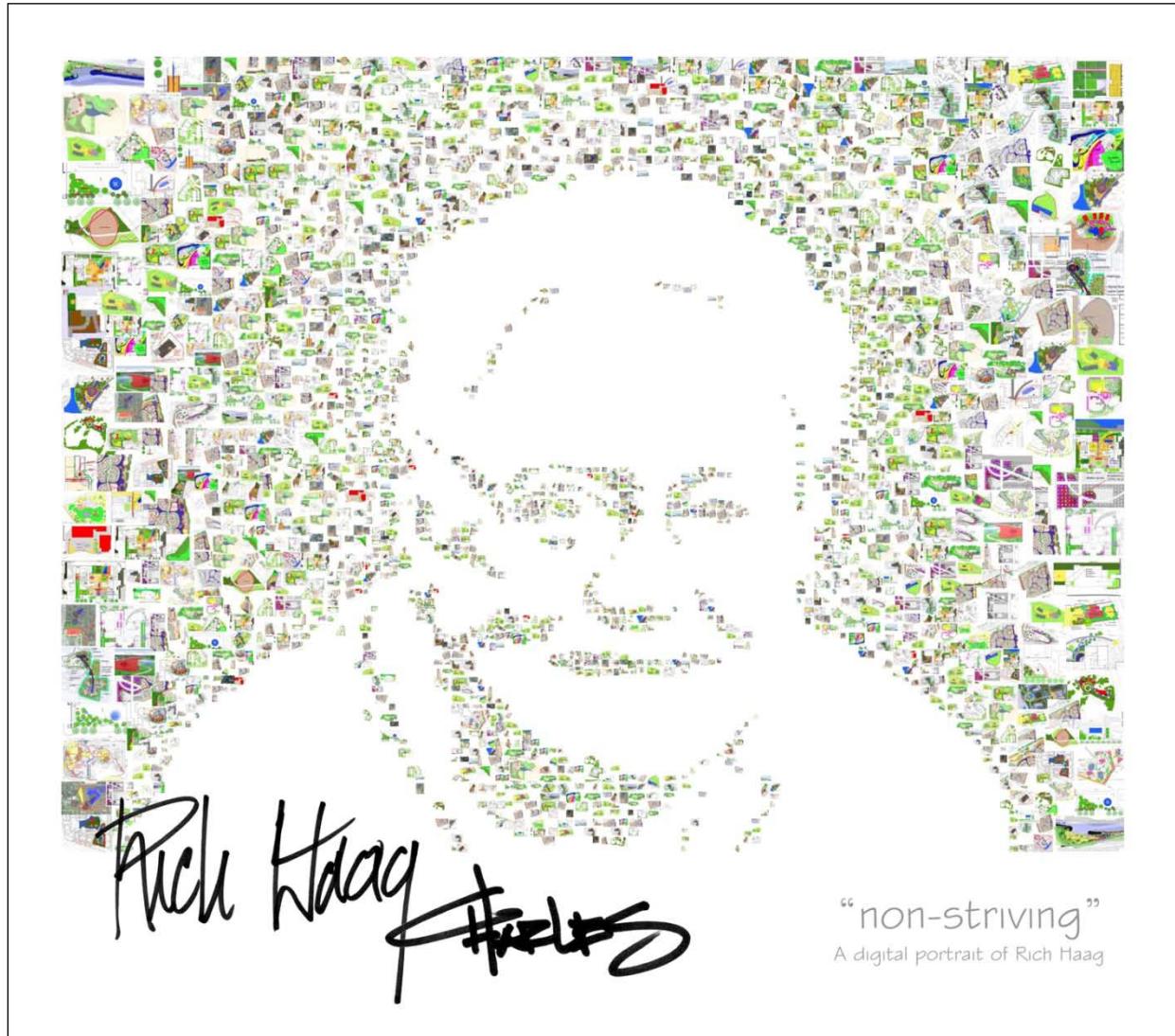
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Michael Van Valkenburgh

Thaisa Way

## Reflections of Richard Haag by Charles Anderson

May 2014



I first worked with Rich in the 1990's. I heard a ton of amazing stories during that time and we worked on several great projects but he didn't see the need for me to use a computer. That was the reason I left his office. Years later he invited me to work with him on the 2008 Beijing Olympic competition. In the design charrettes he and I did numerous drawings but I did much of my work on a tablet computer. In consequent years we met for lunch and I showed him my projects on an iPad. For the first time I saw a glint in his eye towards that profane technology.

I arranged for an iPad to arrive in his office on Christmas Eve in 2012. Cheryl, his wife, made sure Rich was in the office that day to receive it. His name was engraved on it along with the quote, "The cosmos is an experiment", a phrase he authored while I worked for him. He called

me that day to express his delight with that piece of otherworldly technology. He said he opened it, describing the packaging as beautiful. He said he spun the earth around on it in Google earth and it was amazing. To hear those words from a real maverick of this profession, especially one who looked at computers with serious suspicion, gave us both a reason to rejoice on that eve. I also remember a significant name change he anointed me with. When I started working for him I went by the name Chuck. One day he said I was more of a Charles than a Chuck so I started calling myself Charles. Recently, at another lunch, I told stories about my Ducati motorcycle commutes on the 110 freeway in Los Angeles, about me trashing a taillight and bumper with my knee. He then dubbed me "Charles the Intrepid". I like that very very much...

The attached image is the likeness of Rich I made from jpegs of my projects. A signed version was sold at the TCLF silent auction.

## **Reflections on Richard Haag by Lucia Pirzio-Biroli with Michele Marquardi**

Principals, Studio Ectypos Architecture, Mercer Island, WA

May 2014

As a Seattle native Rich Haag's landscapes have always been part of my sense of loci. As a young architect I admired his genius in finding that imperceptible space between what is natural and manmade. His grandeur was intimidating but I finally found the courage to write him a letter asking if he would allow me to interview him for an article in an issue of ARCADE called Working Landscapes. That opened the door to what has become a wonderful and fulfilling relationship between my husband Michele Marquardi, Cheryl Trivison, Rich and myself.

In 2005 our office, Studio Ectypos Architecture, was invited by Rich Haag and Associates to provide architectural support for the Orange County Great Park International Competition. We were short listed out of an impressive list of 30 internationally recognized firms. With Rich at the helm, we took a flat dusty 7,000 acre former Navy air base, awash for decades in jet fuel, and designed an urban park where auto-phylic Orange County could transition to a pedestrian focused live where you work play where you live, environmentally and culturally vibrant new paradigm in Southern California. The Orange County public, famous for their love affair with cars, embraced the design. The developers were terrified. We didn't win, but Rich's methodology of moving back and forth between the "Big Move" and its strong expression in detail generates a harmonic completeness in his projects. Concepts such as this continue to fuel Michele and me to this day.

Rich and Cheryl asked us to design the house they currently live in on North Capitol Hill in Seattle. The site is a tight corner lot with fabulous views of Lake Washington, the University of Washington and the Cascade mountains. We knew from the start that the project needed to fit their personal needs and at the same time be "quiet". It ended up being a backdrop for a densely planted copse that has neighborhood children and birds alike clamoring for blueberries in the height of summer. At first blush one doesn't realize the art of this thicket, this tangled mess of trees and bushes, but the more you look over time and through the seasons the more you realize the power of this beautiful 10' wide street corner strip.

In this age of flamboyant design rock stars that flash across our collective screens, Rich Haag is an enduring genius whose magical landscapes are rooted in a humane practicality with a splash of humor. Rich is a priceless gift to us in no small part due to the dedication and tireless work of his wife Cheryl Trivison. As she once said to me "I organize our lives." Cheryl is a shrewd business woman and devoted partner.

Michele and I are better architects for having had the privilege of working with both of them and being able to consider them friends at the same time.

## Reflections on Richard Haag by Luca Maria Francesco Fabris,

Architect PhD, assistant professor in Environmental Design, Politecnico di Milano, Italy

May 2014

### The Generous Maestro



I shot this picture during our visit at Bloedel Reserve, in 2009. I like this idea of Richard taking pictures of his most emotional and inspirational project, as a curious tourist could do. ©LMFFabris

The first time I encountered Richard Haag, he was a name mentioned on a Spanish architectural review, the *Quaderns Catalans*. It was 1995 and I was working on my doctorate about landscape architecture and the recovery of former industrial areas. In that 1992 article found at the Politecnico di Milano library and titled “*Zonas de ocio*” (Leisure areas), there was a little black and white picture of the Gas Works Park and some words about the project realized by Haag in Seattle. I had just come back from Germany after a period spent studying the policies and the strategies applied at the IBA Emscher Park and I was really thrilled to have read about a park that could be the first milestone of my research. How to learn more? No Google almost 20 years ago, nor emails . . . I remember I spent one hour on the phone with a helpful ‘international service’ operator who finally found for me a telephone number for ‘Richard Haag Associates’ on the West Coast . . . So, I had the number, but not the postal address . . . What to do? Maybe I could try with a phone call. Not giving a thought to time zones, I rang when in Seattle it was more or less one

am, and I talked with a lady so kind that in a few seconds she gave me the Studio’s address and the fax number. Only while I was preparing the fax letter did I realize what time it actually was in Seattle, and I thought: ‘They have been so kind to answer, but what are they doing at their office at this hour?’ Can you imagine my reaction when, 30 minutes after sending my fax, I received back a fax signed by Richard Haag telling me he would send me all the materials on Gas Works Park I asked for. This was the first revelation of the great generous spirit of Richard, a character I discovered better and better when we met in person the first time in Seattle, in 1998, and then in Milan in 2006 and 2008, when he agreed to be the keynote speaker in two Congresses on Environmental Design. It was on this last occasion that he surprised me by accepting my proposal to write a monograph about his works in order to express his passion for landscape architecture. I remember we were in a taxi, under the typical Milanese raining fall sky, and I had in mind many arguments to support my request in writing, but he left me without words when, just after a brief silent moment, he said simply “Yes”. Working on this goal I

discovered the great quality of Richard Haag as a Maestro in teaching and dissemination: the fact that he likes you to talk and interpret his work more than being the first to explain to you the concept, the project and the results. The first time he brought me to Gas Works I was expecting a long discourse on the park, but he simply smiled at me, revealing to me that a solid friendship was born, and said: "So, here it is!" and then "What do you think?" The same happened in 2009, when I stayed in Seattle and visited with him all his works, public and private. We were just like two tourists experiencing for the first time parks and gardens, commenting about the method and the research of a designer we wanted to understand more. In this way, Richard permits you, without any kind of teacher-learner barrier, to reach his mind and to understand his art, and to share his immense knowledge. Like few others know to do.

## **Reflections on Richard Haag by Falken Forshaw**

May 2014

Hi Rich: Falken here. I hope this is finding you well. I am in Holland on a course about Vedic (ancient India) Architecture and Planning (Landscape included!). One of the participants, as we were introducing each other at the start, mentioned that she studied Landscape at the UW. I asked her about you and she started on about you and your wonderful designs, your skills as a teacher, and how well-known you are. Gas Works Park is famous throughout New Zealand where she resides now. She graduated in 1978 I think she said. I know you've had many students and it might be difficult to remember her: Betsy Stevenson; she claims to be one of your more difficult students. I just wanted to let you know that the ripples of your teaching and kindnesses have extended to Holland and met in two people honored to have had you as a tutor.

**Reflections on Richard Haag by Gary R. Hilderbrand, FASLA, FAAR**  
May 2014

Rich Haag brings me enormous joy. There are many things to love about this great man, his expressive Kentucky voice, the shaman's countenance, an alchemist's belief in the life-giving magic of soil, and a nurseryman's devotion to trees.

But here's what really stands out to me: Rich proved that we could have an activist practice in landscape architecture. It's an oversimplification to say that landscape architects are generally non-political; but in truth, they rarely promote their work from a challenging political stance. Either it's too risky, or they just don't take strong positions. Rich can turn a cause into a project, and he can enlarge a commission into a transcendent cause when that is needed. When he believes in something, he pushes for it. At Gasworks Park, he foreshadowed a generation's productive fascination with Robert Smithson's discursive lessons on the artifacts of resource extraction and industry. Somehow, he saw that coming. His built works have helped create a movement and broadened our cultural outlook on what it means to save something in the making of a work. We talk a lot about agency for designers these days. Rich practically invented it. Walking around those works with a few excited students and two earnest teachers, a few decades later, he was still conjuring and provoking, challenging what we see and inciting us to consider the power of activism for landscape architecture.

Long ago, Rich encouraged me to write. He said that good words could endure, maybe just as well as good landscapes could. I treasure that advice.

## **Reflections on Richard Haag by Jeffrey Hou**

Professor and Chair of Landscape Architecture, University of Washington, Seattle  
May 2014



### **DEMOCRACY & PUBLIC SPACE IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST**

On a sunny autumn afternoon back in 2008, I was hosting a group of undergraduate landscape architecture students from Taiwan on a tour of Gas Works Park. The icon park is always a great place to visit for students of landscape architecture and visitors from abroad. The story about how the park came to being is an inspiring and captivating one to tell. Compelled by what he experienced on the site, Rich went beyond the role of a typical designer and undertook a campaign to preserve the industrial relics. Instead of leaving the treatment of toxic residue to engineers, he incorporated it into the design. Ahead of its time, Gas Works Park is a work of civic activism and a progressive environmental ethic that defines the identity of Seattle. It stood as a reminder of the past of the city and its industry. With a panoramic view of the downtown skyline and Lake Union, it is also one of the most popular and well-used public parks in the city.

As we were leaving the park, Rich happened to be greeting park users next to the children's play area. He was in the park that day as a member of the Friends of the Gas Works Park to seek public support for renovation and repair of the playground. Much like the early 1970s, Rich is still actively engaged in park advocacy in Seattle. Over the years, he has worked to fend off attempts of encroachment and privatization of Victor Steinbrueck Park by nearby restaurants and acquisition of the site by private entities. The park was the only downtown public open space with panoramic views of the Elliott Bay when it was first opened in 1982. It

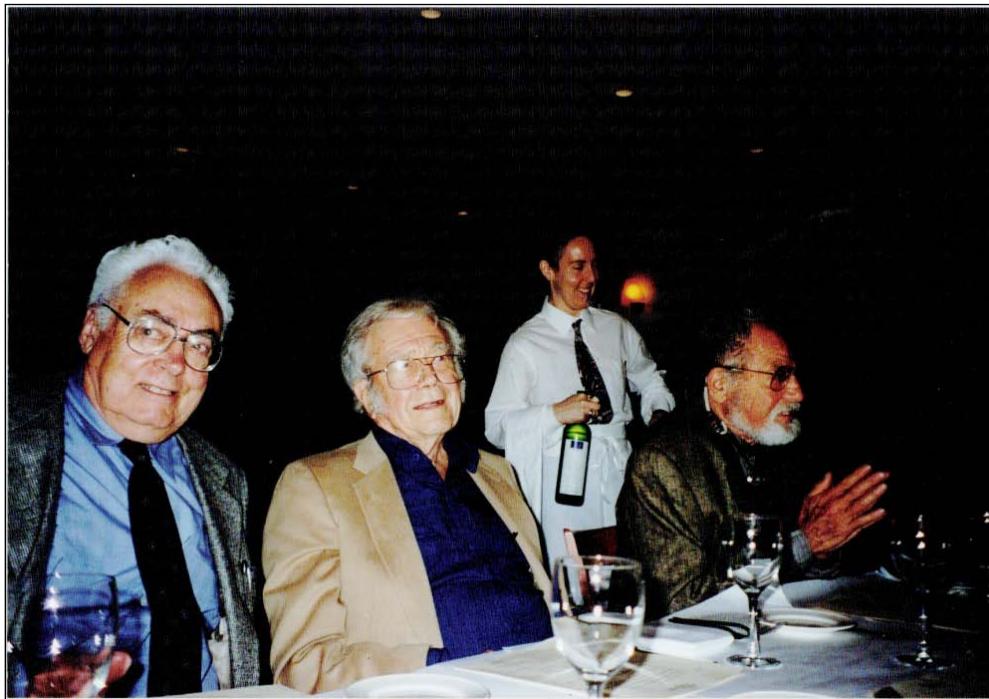
was named in honor of Victor Steinbreuck who led the campaign in preserving the nearby Pike Place Market, another significant and iconic public space in Seattle. More recently, when the Fun Forest at the Seattle Center was to be demolished to make way for the Chihuly Garden and Glass, Rich also sought to fend off commercialism and privatization of the Seattle Center, the site of the 1962 Seattle World's Fair.

Aside from park design and advocacy in Seattle, Rich's legacy in the Pacific Northwest also includes the founding of the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Washington, where his influence is still palpable. Our program's current focus on Urban Ecological Design builds on Rich's vision of parks and open space as the keystone of a democratic society. Through design/build projects, students and faculty work in sites in Seattle ranging from community gardens to rooftop terraces of low-income housing projects to make green space accessible to underserved communities. In recent years, we have broadened our reach to communities abroad, through service-learning projects in war-torn regions in Bosnia and Croatia and slum communities in Guatemala and Peru, building therapeutic gardens, schools, playgrounds, and community capacity.

To this day, Rich still takes our students on a tour of the Gas Works Park every year, rain or shine. He also comes to almost every public lecture at the department, and is almost always the first in the audience to ask questions! About a year ago, out of nowhere, a large poster of Rich appeared on the studio window with the caption "Rich Haag is watching you..." The poster is still there in the studio while others have come and gone. Perhaps the poster may finally come down one day, but I know that Rich's influence has been instilled in the department, and that the stories of projects like the Gas Works Park will continue to inspire future generations of landscape architects to undertake visionary and uncompromising actions. His wisdom, candor, and passion in building and protecting democratic spaces have set a path for us to follow.

## Reflections on Richard Haag by Linda Jewell

May 2014



*Rich Haag, Garrett Eckbo, Lawrence Halprin, University of California, Berkeley, 1999*

I first met Rich when Laurie Olin introduced us at the ASLA meeting where Rich received the Presidential Award for Gas Works Park. Although totally star struck, I felt I already knew Rich from the numerous “Rich stories” Laurie and Bob Hanna passed on to me when we were working on Penn’s College Hall Green. These second-hand nuggets of professional wisdom prompted me to refer to him as my professional grandfather, a term that I’m not sure he appreciated. Nevertheless, we spent a delightful time talking about our mutual friends and Gas Works Park. Perhaps it was our common small town southern roots, our ties to Laurie and Bob, or our shared interest in the role of construction in design, but Rich stayed in touch and has supported, as well as challenged, my work since. Consequently, I now have my own collection of “Rich” stories. The first occurred a few months after our introduction when he wrote a short note to LAM’s Cut & Fill section complementing portions of my construction column on concrete pavers but also challenging my assessment of the energy used to produce them. Although initially devastated by the critique, I quickly recognized that Rich was right. I had failed to look at the paver’s complete life cycle when assessing its energy consumption. Like his ecological design thinking at Gas Works, Rich’s approach to the “cradle- to cradle’ assessment of construction materials was decades ahead of others in the forefront of ecological design thinking.

But my favorite stories are from Rich’s phone messages. The first occurred after I contacted his office to locate a dimensioned plan of the “Garden of Planes” for a student. Rich left a message on my answering machine informing me that, because he had worked out the design on site, no

such drawing existed, but he told me how to create one. He then dictated a step-by-step process instructing me to begin by drawing a rectangle of the dimensions of the original swimming pool followed by instructions for a series of graphic moves that broke down the proportions of this rectangle. He instructed how to locate specific points, connect them with diagonals and raise or lower the planes they defined, concluding with "*There you have it, The Garden of Planes.*" Since that delightful message, there have been more "Rich Messages," often to hassle me about finishing my book on outdoor theaters. Reverting to his deepest Kentucky accent he always begins, "*Lin...der, Lin...der, Rich here, Rich Haag. Just checking to see how the book is going. That's Rich, Rich Haag.*"

Since moving to the west coast, I have enjoyed many pleasant meals discussing our discipline with Rich when he was in Berkeley or I in Seattle. The most memorable was after his 1999 Berkeley lecture when Lawrence Halprin and Garrett Eckbo joined us (see photo.) The three spent the evening reminiscing on their relationship to one another and to Tommy Church, reminding me that Rich had worked for Larry who had worked for Church. These accomplished men had transferred their design wisdom, a decade at a time, to the next generation. Rich provided me a tie to this distinguished design heritage as well and I thank him for his role in connecting these points of professional heritage to my own education and career. I would be a very different landscape architect otherwise.

## Reflections on Richard Haag by Grant Jones

May 2014



I discovered landscape architecture through the good fortune of meeting Richard Haag, a lecturer and visiting design critic in my architectural studio at the UW in 1959. His stagecraft captured our hearts during those last two years of architecture and after graduation. Growing up as a child and student of the tide flats, I brought my passion for nature to his office on Fuhrman Avenue, experiencing first hand Richard's dedicated advocacy for the landscape as well as his guerilla tactics out in the community. Technically I was a rebel of the Beat Generation, but I had come through a liberal education at the Lakeside School one of the best prep schools in the country. I had learned to write and think as a natural act of free thought and to challenge what my generation referred as "The Establishment."

But Haag's blend of Kentucky farmer cunning and Japanese folkways-Zen lifted me to another level. He also opened the doors to Harvard where his close friend Hideo Sasaki was Chair. The GSD was an emporium of creative action where landscape architecture was the father of planning and was equal to architecture. No designer had won the Sheldon Fellowship since Thomas Church. Professor Hornbeck encouraged me to apply for the Sheldon and to our great surprise; I won it and began preparations for a year and a half of research in South America and Western Europe.

But before Haag, architects told us that the only thing landscape architects did was plant shrubs around buildings. Haag corrected that narrow outlook by showing us that landscape architects designed with all of nature in mind. The whole landscape was their medium because they had to lay out parks and to design the roads within them, lay out new communities and school

campuses, botanical gardens, even zoos. Richard's office library was brimming with interesting books. After hours I taught myself plants, memorizing thousands of Latin scientific names. I stayed late and read stories about the great plant hunters of the Nineteenth century like Wilson and I read Loren Eiseley's magnificent essays on nature and evolution, as well as Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac*. I designed a few residential gardens and small parks for the city. Eventually I helped manage a huge job that Richard brought into the office in 1962, to convert the Seattle World's Fairgrounds into a downtown park and civic center.

By now my tide flats had become for me an even more powerful symbol, my own version of Northwest mysticism; a term used locally by regional artists such as Mark Tobey, Morris Graves and Richard Gilkey. My sources would include the whole landscape: clouds, misty river mouths, salt flats and driftwood marshes beneath glacial-till sea bluffs and swirling kelp beds ringing windswept rocky islands with stunted fir trees shaped like gusts of wind.

Ted Roethke was an equally powerful shaman. After graduating in Architecture, confidence to write and think led me to get into Ted Roethke's exclusive Verse Writing class for two more years. Roethke had a passion for giving a voice to the landscape with craftsmanship and to be revelatory with physicality and excitement for life's forces. Roethke also demanded our deep study of the Old Masters along with contemporary revolutionaries from Britain and the Americas, while at the same time requiring two poems a week written in our own voice, something that Ted hammered into each of us relentlessly, like a blacksmith shoeing wild horses with iron from their own wild hills.

From now on when I moved through an old or new landscape, I would become connected to it. I would approach its unfolding rooms like a polite visitor, eventually wooing it, engaged to it, learning to become a dutiful husband. My time writing with Ted Roethke also integrated me as an artist, because Ted's support and his recognition of me as a poet caused another kind of adaptation inside me. It felt like I had entered or inherited a kind of wholeness of landscape consciousness that allowed me to experience every landscape as the structure of a poem in the making; and, of course, this changed my life forever.

But it was Richard who shipped all of us young architects who worked for him back to Harvard to become landscape architects. We were the "northwest mystics" and a phenomenon around the GSD. Year after year, five years in a row Jerry Diethelm, Frank James, Grant Jones, Robert Hanna and Gary Okerlund were accepted. Jerry became the Landscape Architecture Chair at the University of Oregon; Frank became a famous and stalwart designer at Sasaki's office; I, well you know what I did; Bob led urban design at the Boston Redevelopment Authority and then became professor of design for Ian McHarg at Penn and formed the office of Hanna Olin with Laurie; Gary became the most creative community planner in Charlottesville, Virginia. Before departing Richard Haag Associates, we had all come under the spell of Don Sakuma, one of Sasaki's first designers in Watertown. He'd suggested that Don would be perfect to help Richard start the department of landscape architecture at the UW and he did.

## Reflections on Richard Haag, unstoppable force of nature by Doug Kelbaugh

May, 2014

Why is Rich Haag the most incorrigibly positive person I know?

Why is he also one of the most respected?

There are at least seven good reasons:

His energy, his happy vibe, his upbeat demeanor, his witty humor, his mischievous smile and delightful mischief-making, first surmising the situation, then surprising people, charming them in a wink,

with a wink,

His gently subversive attitude and his clever strategizing and unexpected comments that are one step ahead of everyone in the room,

His Kentucky roots, with disarming farmers quotes from his childhood, like "There ain't nothin' wrong with progress, it's just gone on too long."

His healing time as a boy in the limbs of his favorite climbing tree,

(Inspired by his love for climbing trees, we gave one as a wedding gift to our daughter for grandkids.)

His sense of Japanese Zen design, both haiku and koan,

His mix of on-the-ground savvy and academic intelligence, from dirty fingernails and wheelbarrows to stunning concepts to compelling lectures,

His founding of the Landscape Architecture program at the University of Washington, and his highly decorated professional practice.

His Olympian design talent – from the Katsura Cathedral at his extensive nursery to the iconic Gas Works Park to his famous Pacific Northwest gardens to the creative

proposals he did in the South Lake Union, Sand Point and other UW charrettes,

All those magical motifs - muscular/masculine and feminine/fine,

All those ASLA awards, including an unequalled twofer on the President's Award

All those design competitions, which continue into his 90s.

500 projects and counting!

He just keeps on keeping on...Rich Haag is an unstoppable force of nature.

We all love ya,



Doug Kelbaugh, Professor of Architecture + Urban Planning, and former Dean  
University of Michigan

P.s. Let's not forget Cheryl, his loyal, smart, behind-the-scenes partner in these successes.

## Reflections on Richard Haag by Reuben Rainey

May 2014



In the summer of 1987 I found myself sitting across the table from Rich Haag in a seafood restaurant in Seattle's Pike Street Market. While fish market vendors below our balcony played catch with large fish to amuse tourists and seagulls glided above the scene, I nervously began a conversation with Rich, knowing I was in the presence of one of the great masters of American landscape architecture. Recently I had served on an awards jury of the Architectural League of New York, and we had chosen the Bloedel Reserve for its traveling exhibition, "The

Inhabited Landscape." I had written a short piece on the Bloedel Reserve for the exhibition catalog, a rather pretentious attempt to interpret this masterpiece of four linked gardens from a Buddhist perspective. It was doubly pretentious since I only knew the design from photographs. I had been bold enough to attempt this since I had a background in comparative religion and philosophy. I had not met Rich before. I hoped he would not dismiss me as some kind of presumptuous academic blow hard imposing a mannered interpretive straightjacket on his great canonical work. To my great relief he regarded my interpretation with respect, for he had spent time in Japan on a Fulbright Scholarship and studied Buddhism in great depth. However, he explained the Bloedel Reserve was intended to evoke any number of deep visceral responses and had no one message—it was not an encounter to be simply rationalized or decoded. His comment reminded me of a story about T.S. Eliot, who, when asked what one of his poems meant, replied that it means what you think it means. Thus my interpretation, while a bit cerebral, was one of many possibilities. I made my first visit to the Bloedel the day after our meeting and experienced its transformative power, a power not lending itself to be corralled within a fence of verbiage—much less by my initial attempts to interpret it from photographs. Rich had once explained in an interview I had read that his intention at Bloedel was to evoke the "raptures of the deep." During that first visit I began to feel what he meant.

Our conversation on that clear summer day lasted for over three hours, punctuated with some excellent local beer and delicious seafood. It moved from a discussion of Jungian archetypes to Zen Buddhism, to the challenges of 20<sup>th</sup> century landscape architecture, to minute details of his work, especially Gas Works Park and his other great civic space designs. Anyone who has had the privilege of spending time with Rich knows he often will, in the course of a conversation, stare intently at you and engage in long Zen-master-like silent pauses before resuming dialogue, a kind of creative waiting until the next level of discourse can germinate. That day I received enough ideas and agendas to catalyze much of the career in landscape architecture that lay before me. It was the single most productive and meaningful conversation I have ever experienced about the profession and the values that sustain it.

**Memories and Reflections on Richard Haag by Nancy D. Rottle**  
Associate Professor, UW Department of Landscape Architecture  
May 2014



*Rich and student image credit: Copeland UW Visual Resources Collection. Date unknown.*

I worked for Richard Haag in 1989-90, early in my landscape architecture career. His work at the time was primarily residential, and my projects included conceptual design, planting design, and installation refinements. My most vivid memories of Rich at that time revolve around his passion and expertise for using plants to their best effect, combined with a genius for conceptualizing and manipulating landforms. Rich maintained an active nursery where he cultivated the Giant Katsura, *Cercidiphyllum magnificum* (which he called the "Tree of the Future" in an article in *Pacific Horticulture*). Rich and Cheryl would take the staff

out to lunch each month – our "office meeting" – and as we drove around Seattle neighborhoods, Rich would point out tree and plant specimens, commenting on their uses and misuses.

One day friends who were plant-expert gardeners stopped by the office with the news that the garden of Leo Hitchcock – UW botany professor and co-author of the extensive regional native plant taxonomy *Flora of the Pacific Northwest* – had been purchased by a developer who was planning to bulldoze the garden and replace it with several houses. Our friends noted that there were many special plants the botanist had amassed that could potentially be saved, including seven lovely, large *Stewartia japonica* trees, a rarity in the Pacific Northwest. Rich knew exactly who to call -- Darwin Bean, an experienced tree mover he had worked with in the past. Bean brought his crew to carefully dig, wrap, tie in burlap, load onto an extended truck trailer and transport the precious large *Stewartias* via ferry to our client on San Juan Island, where Rich directed their location and planting at the entryway to the new waterfront residence. I've never learned if they survived – I'll need to ask Rich one of these days.

Founder of the UW's Department of Landscape Architecture, where I've taught since 2001, Rich not only still maintains his Seattle practice but also generously accepts invitations to give lectures and tours of his masterpieces at Bloedel Reserve and Gas Works Park for our students. At Bloedel, they learn lessons of interpreting the Pacific Northwest landscape and the possibilities for designing magical, choreographed visitor experiences. At Gas Works, Rich's stories of creating the park and retaining the industrial relics against many odds, the applied theory of prospect-refuge, his Giant Katsura trees, and his strong admonitions to work for the benefit of Nature are memories that students retain through the duration of their academic tenure. This past winter, Rich and Cheryl donated 40 tickets to enable our students and faculty to experience a Soundscapes concert of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony No. 6, played by the Northwest Sinfonietta and paired with a show of Rich's slides of Northwest nature landscapes.

Rich's enduring passion for the natural world was palpable and contagious, both in his visuals and in his answers to questions on stage at the concert's end.

Long the master and always the student, Rich is one of the most consistent attendees at our UW Landscape Architecture and College lectures. He is reliably ready to raise a challenge to the lecturer, and those who know to expect it are visibly nervous, waiting for the questions—which are always to the core of his philosophy that landscape architects are essential, that considering the common good includes all creatures, and that we should dedicate our work to protecting, enhancing, and connecting to the natural environment.

## Reflections on Richard Haag by Allan W. Shearer, ASLA

May 2014

"Who's responsible for the trees?"

That is the question Rich Haag asked throughout the Waller Creek design competition, which took place between 2011 and 2012. Waller Creek is a narrow, flood prone riparian corridor that marks the eastern edge of downtown Austin, Texas. Since the city's founding in 1839, it has been treated with what can generously be considered benign neglect. Its current condition is marked by eroded banks and invasive vegetation. The completion of a flood control tunnel in 2015 will allow for controlled flow levels and, in turn, there will be the possibility to develop over ten percent of the downtown area. Anticipating the unique opportunity to create a new way to experience nature in the city, the Waller Creek Conservancy launched the competition to attract the best design thinking from around the world. Rich was one of the five jurors who evaluated the proposals.



*Rich Haag, Courtesy of the Waller Creek Conservancy*

As I would come to appreciate, Rich asked his question and again and again for two reasons. First, no one person had a comprehensive answer. Rich wanted to know, for himself, how the city worked and if existing administrative protocols and procedures would be sufficient to ensure the long term success of any restoration effort. Second, he also wanted other members of the jury, the Conservancy Board, and the community stakeholders to take to heart that while urban trees are often valued, they are rarely championed. It is reasonable to speculate that no other element in the built environment is subject to so many different authorities. Rich used whatever answers were offered to introduce his thoughts about how a "Department of Trees" might allow better stewardship for these precious resources. He would also plant this revelatory (maybe even revolutionary?) intellectual

seed when he returned to Austin to deliver the opening address of the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture Conference for 2013.

As is well documented in morning papers, evening newscasts, and continuous internet reports, landscapes are contested spaces. Headlines call attention to differing opinions about purpose, but these cannot be separated from our social practices. While Austin still does not have a Department of Trees, many in the community think more about how to protect them.

## Reflections on Richard Haag by Peter Steinbrueck, FAIA

May 2014



*Victor Steinbrueck sketching at the gas works photo  
by Peter Steinbrueck*

Though I've known Rich Haag pretty much all my life (I'm 56) it's mostly been on a personal and social level through my father's long and close friendship with Rich. Rich says they were "joined at the hip—he was like a brother to me." I also enjoyed more than one Haag lecture—guaranteed lively, funny, witty and audacious commentary at the University of Washington, where I was a graduate student in architecture in the early 1980's. In the 1960's our two families lived in the same Seattle neighborhood of Denny Blaine/Madrona Park, where we Victor's and Rich's six boys and my father's three ran bare toed, wild and dirty together in one of the splendid neighborhood parks. I have not myself collaborated with Rich on any design projects, though we've talked many times about issues related to Seattle

parks, trees, open space preservation. I regard Rich and his wife Cheryl as the best friends our trees and parks in Seattle ever had. Cheryl, politically

spirited, worked on my successful campaign for the Seattle City in 1997, and was my office manager and legislative assistant for my first year in office at city hall.

It was in the winter of 1971 when I got a close up encounter with a decrepit 1905 Seattle Gas Light Company plant on a small peninsula at the north end of Lake Union. All I knew then was that mysterious assemblage of blackened pipes, rusted sheds, conveyors, and silo-like structures had something to do with extracting natural gas from coal in the old days before electricity. I was a camera buff and thought it would make for a fascinating subject up close. I was not disappointed. We wandered about the industrial ruins, I snapped away with my 35 mm Miranda reflex camera. Later, and as the two professors discussed what they thought should be saved or could be saved, I heard something said about the "sculptural qualities," and patterns of some of the stacks and neat rows of pipes. The series of black and white photos I printed provide some interesting documentation of the derelict condition of the old gas plant just prior to its conversion. I recall there was considerable public controversy over the retention of the dinosauric plant structures and polluted site. The mayor at the time even vowed to, after his term was over, "take a cutting torch" to the unsightly heap of metal junk. I myself couldn't quite believe it would be retained and turned into a green grassy park-- what vision and foresight Rich had!

I know now, what Rich and my father shared in common besides a rare, enduring friendship, was their humanity. What I so admire about Rich, is his warmth, wit and his humor, his tenacity

in confronting less than satisfactory expedients negatively impacting human condition and the environment, his profound love of landscapes, his guru-like wisdom when it comes to landscapes and human interaction, his endurance, and his remarkable legacy.

**Reflections on Richard Haag by Michael Van Valkenburgh**

May 2014

During all of my life as a landscape architect, Rich Haag has been a constant inspiration. I will never forget the first time I saw Gas Works Park. Long before the present-day renewed commitment to the idea of parks, Rich took an industrial site and with a small budget made a public place for Seattle that is powerfully brooding and evocative. It's hard to imagine that the same creative genius also made the luxuriant, richly sensuous gardens at the Bloedel Reserve, which moved me with equal power. I feel blessed to have Rich as a friend and colleague.

Michael Van Valkenburgh

## Reflections on Richard Haag, Teacher and Advocate by Thaisa Way

May 2014



While many know of Richard Haag's design work, and others of his advocacy for thinking differently about landscape architecture, there is a much smaller community that has known him as a teacher. And yet if you have been a student of landscape architecture at the University of Washington at almost any time from 1958 to 2014, you have had the opportunity to engage with Rich. From 1958 to 1994, students took his theory and perception course, some inspired to pursue practice, others to pursue politics, and others to find another profession, but all educated in reading the landscapes around them. More recently, as he retired from teaching almost two decades ago, students are invited to join him in their first quarter to tour Gas Works Park and then in the spring to go with him to Bloedel Reserve; if he is not off on some project in China or Italy. As a colleague I have had the privilege of joining some of these trips as well as hearing students in the following weeks and months muse on lessons learned. As a historian I have also had the delight of reviewing almost four decades of syllabi, lecture notes, and slide shows.

Rich has a catalytic effect on students. First and foremost he inspires and delights students by his story telling. He knows design history as well as contemporary design and designers. He knows plants, often describing trees as if they were personal friends, members of his family. He is a nurseryman and an artist, a designer and a critic. His knowledge of the literature is as deep as any designer I know, and he can quote the salient points, whether it is Soetsu Yanagi or Jay Appleton or Al Gore. He shares his design philosophy, much of which was grounded in his

Japanese experiences as a Fulbright recipient from 1954-1955, with phrases such as min/ max, non-striving, and spatial sensations, one moment quoting a zen monk, the next the writing of Loren Eiseley or Kevin Lynch. This is Rich as the artist and designer.

But there is also Rich as the confident advocate and determined activist teacher. In this role he can offend and shock - whether by suggesting students copulate with the earth or by laughing about the many visual swindles he has used to push a project through to success. He regales students with stories of his political manipulations, his willingness to do whatever it took to make Gas Works Park happen. He describes the cunning of his methods in getting the public to support his designs, by drawing anything they wanted to see. It becomes clear that in fact he might be playing with you right now; there might be an agenda to what appears a light hearted remark or a funny idea. You learn to rarely take Rich lightly, as the saying goes he tolerates no fools. To my delight he remained generous as I wrote my book even though he had no veto power or even license to determine what projects or what perspective I took. I suspect this generosity of spirit came with age, but it also came from a place of deep humility.

Because yes, Rich is a confident designer, but he is also a humble designer, in a way that few designers are today. His curiosity knows no boundaries and he will as quickly become the student as he will the master. He attends more lectures in the College today than many of the design faculty and almost always engages with a challenging question for the speaker. He is willing to talk with any student with the guts to approach him. As to his willingness to let me delve into his work, I suspect he was as curious to read how I might critique his work, describe his legacy, as he was concerned that I would get it wrong. As the book is not out yet, that jury is still out.

Above all it is Rich's conviction that is most inspiring to students. They are thrilled to hear from a landscape architect who thinks he can change the world, and who is willing to break any rule to do so. Rich is the teacher that more of us need to emulate. Ok maybe I can't pull off the references to sex and drugs, but I can remember that if I don't believe in the power of landscape architecture to make a different world, to change the way we live on the earth, then what the hell am I doing as a teacher.

From Rich to all of us:

The Cosmos	is an experiment
The University	is a park
The Earth	is a pleasure ground
Nature	is the theater
The Landscape	is our stage
Let us write	the script
Direct	the play
And embrace	the audience
With compassion and joy	
For Life	