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Places become
ours when we
understand them.

Places become
understandable
when they are
invested with
knowledge and care.

For many years the Environmental Design Research Association has been dedicated to helping us to know more. EDRA has championed the conduct of disciplined research, convened the leading figures in the field and generally fostered the development of new programs and initiatives having to do with the accumulation of knowledge which can guide environmental change.

In this issue we report the outcome of the first EDRA/*Places* Awards for Place Design and Place Research. We jointly conducted this program to give greater visibility to the many people who build our understanding of what makes good places and to the intersections between research — conducted to build greater certainty in the formation of places and predictions of their consequences — and design — the exercise of bringing many factors together into places that enter into people's lives and provide continuing benefits and inspiration. The wonderfully well conceived projects and places that were permeated are presented in the following pages, along with comments from the jury and from authors we have invited to study the projects and offer additional observations. It's a fine group of presentations and we have supplemented it with a portfolio of provocative and instructive places that bear special examination.

We are pleased to have been able to work with the EDRA board to create this program, and are especially grateful to the Graham Foundation for Advanced Study in the Arts for financial assistance.

This summer we had the additional pleasure of presenting to Lawrence Halprin the first PlaceMark award. This award is to be given to someone who has demonstrated extraordinary leadership in the creation of places. The recipient is asked to set the PlaceMark, a circular bronze plaque, into a place that he or she has helped to create and which they would like us to consider as a benchmark for subsequent achievements.

The presentation of the award took place in Halprin's loft office space in San Francisco, surrounded by drawings, photographs and engaging objects, as well as study sketches and sample letter carvings from the FDR Memorial.

Lawrence Halprin was chosen for the award because his vision has become so much a part of the American landscape of places; there is hardly a major city that doesn't



PlaceMark Award presented to Lawrence Halprin, May 17, 1998. Left to right: Donlyn Lyndon, Lawrence Halprin, Frances Halsband.

Photo: Heather Hood

have, or wish to have, some version of the cascading waterfalls that he pioneered in Portland; there is hardly a section of the country where his talents have not been used to bring life and vitality to the experience of public spaces. His current projects alone include continuing work on the FDR Memorial in Washington, and at the Sea Ranch in California, a revised trail system in Yosemite and, farther afield, a magnificent walk and outlook in Jerusalem.

The certainty of his vision has enabled him to be uncommonly open to innovation and change. Indeed Halprin has led the way in reaching out to larger constituencies, encouraging others to bring ideas and convictions to the table at an early point in the process. His RSVP Cycle lays out a cyclic sequence of events that can productively inform the design process at an early stage, then serve as the basis for subsequent modifications and invention.

Throughout his career Halprin has stretched our collective conceptions of process and form, bringing fresh insight — splashing life, you might say — into the ways we make and perceive the public realm. For his PlaceMark he has chosen a location in Levi Plaza, a space that connects its surrounding new office structures to the grid of a former manufacturing/warehouse area of the city and infuses a natural order into the open space system of the adjoining Embarcadero. It has become a much admired location in the structure of the city, as well as a fine place of respite for the people who work in adjoining buildings.

We salute Lawrence Halprin and his various associates for the creation not just of good places, but of a way of working and dreaming that embeds the force of imagination in the fabrics that structure our lives.

—Donlyn Lyndon