

FROM: **NATIONAL AIDS MEMORIAL GROVE** March 21, 2005

CONTACT: Ken Ruebush Thom Weyand
415-621-4143 510-528-3950
415-609-9999 510-599-6782

www.aidsmemorial.org

National AIDS Memorial Design Competition Winners Announced

SAN FRANCISCO, CA -- A stark landscape evocative of devastation and the promise of renewal has been selected from over 200 entries in an international design competition for the National AIDS Memorial in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. Titled "Living Memorial," the winning design is a no-holds-barred reality check for a disease that now kills 8,000 people each day.

The winning team uses a forest fire metaphor in responding to the challenge for all competition entrants to create a design that not only memorializes those lost to AIDS, but also one that addresses the on-going devastation of humankind's worst epidemic.

New York architects Janette Kim and Chloe Town responded to the design challenge with a charred wooden boardwalk and field of blackened rods setting a colorless stage for nature's slow inevitable re-growth.

"While this design is at first frightening," said Ken Ruebush, co-chair of the competition, "it is also rich with the eventual triumph of life. In this way, it echoes the intentions of the Grove's founders who established the seven-acre living memorial 16 years ago."

The design will be highlighted with those of the other finalists, as well as seven Honorable Mentions and a sampling of other entries, at a reception at the San Francisco Modern Art Museum on Friday, April 1st, 2005 from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. AIDS activist and actor Judith Light will introduce the winning design and the team that created it.

The "Living Memorial" design was one of five finalists selected by a world-class jury that included Walter Hood, UC Berkeley professor of landscape architecture; Mary Miss, environmental artist; and Toshiko Mori, dean of the Harvard School of Design; Joseph Rosa, Design Curator of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, among others. In all, 201 entries were received from 24 countries and 21 states. Architects, landscape architects, and artists were invited to submit designs last fall.

Hood called the design a “gutsy anti-landscape element that reflects anger, death—and eventual healing and renewal.”

“Living Memorial” includes three key elements: a charred wood cantilevered section that extends out from the Grove’s northern slope; symbolic burnt trees, black carbon fiber rods with mirrored tips, which rise to street level, and a charred ground surface within the dell that allows for new vegetation to heal the area over time.

“Foremost in our minds throughout the process,” stated Thom Weyand, competition co-chair, “was to find a design element so strong that upon viewing it, one cannot escape feeling the total horror of AIDS. In the “Living Memorial” we have found that design.”

“It gets across the message of the enormity of this pandemic without relying on names and statistics; it is a truly visceral experience,” added Weyand. “And, at the same time, it is hopeful.”

While its impact is hard-hitting, the winning design treads lightly on the award-winning National AIDS Memorial Grove. “This design respects the organization’s wish to be able to use the Grove’s major gathering spaces unimpeded,” Ruebush said.

The four other finalists are: Raveevarn Choksombatchai of VEEV Design, Jacob Atherton, Michael Eggers and Andrew Shanken, San Francisco, CA; Melissa Cate Christ, Toronto, Ontario; Andrew Thurlow and Maia Small, TSA, Pawtucket, RI; Shinya Uehara and Chantelle Brewer, UB Team, Chicago, IL

The National AIDS Memorial is a seven-acre dell in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park - a living tribute to all whose lives have been touched by AIDS where people gather to heal, hope, and remember. Passage of the National AIDS Memorial Grove Act in 1996 bestowed national significance upon the award-winning Memorial that began as a grassroots effort by local residents searching for a positive way to express grief in a community devastated by AIDS. The Grove is the only federally designated National AIDS Memorial in the United States. In 1999 the National AIDS Memorial was awarded the Silver Medal in the national Rudy Bruner Urban Excellence competition.

#####



Photography by Simon Evans

<http://www.simonevans.co.uk/>

Statements of winning design team

Personal Reaction to Competition

As designers, we are honored and thrilled to participate in the making of this national memorial. We have enormous respect for the founding mandate of the AIDS Memorial Grove and look forward to the opportunity to contribute to the meaning of this important and necessary place.

Just as fire can be both ruinous and rejuvenating, we hope our project's reference to the effects of burning elicits a range of emotions but is, ultimately, uplifting. From grief to solace, uncertainty to empowerment, we hope to stir the public's imagination and, in turn, generate a greater awareness of both the Memorial Grove and the AIDS pandemic.

Project Description: Living Memorial

Degeneration and loss. Regeneration and life. Our design for the National AIDS Memorial expresses both extremes by introducing **a stark landscape into the verdant setting of the existing Grove. The memorial offers both an honest acknowledgement of the devastation of AIDS and a testimony to the uplifting power of renewal.**

The project is inspired by the landscape of forest fires common throughout Northern California. Though destructive, these fires are a natural and necessary part of the forest ecosystem—they are essentially life affirming. The pinecones of the giant sequoia, for example, must be exposed to extreme heat in order to germinate. In the memorial, the theme of burning is re-interpreted as a concurrence of the natural and artificial. The effects of burning are expressed in a number of ways: experiential, material, and symbolic.

A field of black poles and an earthwork of charred wood and foliage create an open terrain for public engagement. Visitors make their way through the lush vegetation at the main entrance and catch a glimpse of tall black poles in the distance. The poles repeat the pattern and vertical extension of the adjacent tree trunks and expand the edge of the woods into the meadow beyond. The poles reach from the floor of the Grove to the height of the sidewalk 24 feet above, filling the volume of the dell. From above, visitors can see that the poles are tipped with mirrors to catch the sunlight.

Further into the Grove, visitors come across a blackened earthwork of charred wood that frames the meadow beyond. Just as a blanket of snow or a rolling fog transforms our sense of space, this landscape invites a new awareness of one's perceptions and emotions. The residual effect of a colorless landscape provides a space for contemplation. Visitors can walk through the poles, onto the wood itself, and spend time on benches of charred timbers reclaimed from actual forest fire sites.

Saplings and seedlings are grown in planters among the wood planks. The public can watch the plants transform over time and participate in their cultivation. In this way the project seeks to build upon the idea—already vibrant and powerful within the Grove—of a living memorial as a reminder of the enduring power of nature to renew and affirm life.

Just as fire can be both ruinous and rejuvenating, we hope the project's reference to the effects of burning elicits a range of emotions and reactions. From grief to solace, uncertainty to empowerment, we hope that the project will resonate with the public imagination and generate a greater awareness of the Memorial Grove and, in turn, the AIDS pandemic.

Janette Kim / Chloe Town

Biographies

Janette Kim

Janette Kim recently founded *All of the Above*, an architectural research & design practice based in New York City. She currently teaches design at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY, and previously held the Howard LeFevre Fellowship at the Ohio State University. She has worked for architects and artists Laura Kurgan, Diller + Scofidio, Michael Rotondi, and Maya Lin. She is originally from Los Angeles, and holds degrees in architecture from Columbia and Princeton Universities.

Chloe Town

Chloe Town is from Toronto, Ontario and practices architecture in New York City. She has previously taught in the graduate program of The University of Pennsylvania and has been a guest critic at Princeton, Columbia, The Cooper Union and The University of Toronto. She is currently a project architect at Platt Dana Architects in Manhattan and is a founding partner of Parallel City based in Brooklyn.

NAMG – Design Competition Juror Biographies

Sunil Gupta

Is an Indian born Canadian citizen who has lived and worked in London as an artist and curator of contemporary art since graduating from the Royal College of Art. Most recently his work has been seen at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, the California Museum of Photography and the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi. A book of his work, "Pictures From Here" was published in 2003 by Autograph/Chris Boot. His work is represented by Zelda Cheattle (London), Stephen Bulger (Toronto), Radhika Singh (New Delhi) and Sepia International (New York). Lately he has become increasingly involved with cultural activism and HIV/AIDS in India. He was diagnosed HIV+ in 1995.

Walter Hood

Is a professor of landscape architecture at the College of Environmental Design, UC Berkeley. His research interests include the critical examination and development of specific urban landscape typologies for the American city. Hood advocates the art of improvisation as a design process for making urban landscapes and architecture. His work incorporates a flexibility and adaptability that reflect minority cultural experiences. He is the author of *Everyday Urbanism, Urban Diaries: Improvisation in West Oakland, CA*.

Mary Miss

Is an environmental artist whose work draws on architecture, landscape design, gardens, and a history of worldwide culture. She is also a sculptor and filmmaker. Her films include *Cut-off*, focusing on the interaction of landscape, viewer, and set. She is currently creating a *Wreath for Ground Zero*, a project that transforms the perimeter of Ground Zero with a continuous band of sky-blue fencing, seating, trees, and flowers; moving through the paths formed by these layers, people create a living wreath around the site until reconstruction.

Toshiko Mori

Is a professor in practice and chair of the Department of Architecture, Harvard Design School. She is also the principal of Toshiko Mori Architect, established in 1981 in New York. Current works include residences in Florida, Maine, and New York, as well as the Farnsworth Art Museum in Rockland, Maine. She is an active participant in and organizer of symposia and competition programs.

Joseph Rosa

Is the Helen Hilton Raiser Curator of Architecture and Design at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA). He is the author of *Next Generation Architecture: Folds, Blobs, and Boxes* (2003), *Yves Behar/design series 2* (SFMOMA, 2004), *ROY/design series 1* (SFMOMA 2003), *Albert Frey, Architect* (1990-1999), *A Constructed View: The architectural Photography of Julius Shulman* (1994), and *Adolf Loos: Architecture 1903 – 1932* (1996). He is also an adjunct professor at the California College of the Arts.