Landscape Architect Kate Orff and Architect Damon Rich Awarded 2017 MacArthur "Genius" Grants

The MacArthur Foundation has announced the 24 recipients of their 2016 MacArthur "Genius" Grants. Today, the MacArthur Foundation announced the 23 recipients of their 2016 "Genius" Grants. Each fellowship comes with a stipend of $625,000 for the recipients to use for individual pursuits, paid out in equal quarterly installments over a five year period. The fellowship is designed to provide recipients with "a period of freedom to pursue an idea of lasting creative importance, whether a project of research or art, or the exploration of a new line of inquiry, or some number of such ventures."

In the architecture field, two names stand out: Kate Orff and Damon Rich. Orff was lauded by the MacArthur Foundation's press release for "her "resourceful design approach" that "calls attention to the most distinctive natural attributes of a given place, while her collaborations and community organizing a citywide coalition of neighborhood representatives. In New York City, Orff is co-founder of design studio SCAPE, and is also an Associate Professor & Director of the Urban Design Program at Columbia GSAPP. Kate Orff is also a lead exhibitor for the US Pavilion at the 2018 Venice Biennale. As Orff explains in her artist statement, "The Landscape Architecture team will explore how the principles of urban planning and landscape design converge in the creation of sustainable urban places. Through this project, we are seeking to demonstrate how urban planning processes such as affordable housing, infrastructure design and tenant's rights."

In addition to her professional work, Orff has been named to the 2017 recipient of the ULI Hines Prize for Visionaries in Urban Design, which will be presented at the 2018 Urban Land Institute Fall Meeting & Exposition. "The Hines Prize is an international award that recognizes a visionary, collaborative effort to improve the quality of urban life, based on the recognition that our cities and communities are the product of the interactions between all their inhabitants. The Hines Prize is awarded for a plan, project, or program that is not the result of dedicated, focused efforts by a single organization or individual, but rather an expression of the power and value of a collective effort."

The other MacArthur "Genius" in architecture is Damon Rich. Trained as an architect (at Columbia), Rich has used his design background to create physical representations of planning concepts, such as in his work on the Queens Museum in 2009. Recently, Rich has served as chief architect for Newark, New Jersey, where he helped to spawn new development and revitalization by redrafting outdated land-use and zoning laws by organizing a citywide coalition of neighborhood representatives. In his role as executive director of the Center of Urban Pedagogy, Rich has also brought together his talents as an architect and urban designer and director planning (2008–2015) for Newark, New

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