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**Stoss Landscape urbanism: 2010 Topos Landscape Architecture Award**

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Topos, International Journal of Urban Design and Landscape Architecture, has awarded its 2010 prize to the American agency Stoss Landscape Urbanism located in Boston. The agency work has been published by *C3 Publishers* in Korea. The award will be presented next June 18 in Krakow, Poland.

The principal and director of the agency Chris Reed has built its reputation by winning many national and international competitions: the Erie Street Plaza in Milwaukee, the Lower Don Lands in Toronto, and the Safe Zone garden installation at Grand-Metis, Quebec, Canada, for example. More recently, Stoss LU was a finalist in the category Landscape Design for the Smithsonian / Cooper Hewitt Museum's National Design Awards. Design Critic at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and associate professor at the University of Pennsylvania School of Design, he completed his master of landscape architect in the latter university in 1995.

The work of this agency perfectly illustrates the current trends in landscape design practices in the field of Landscape Urbanism, a concept invented by the American architect Charles Waldheim in 1997. *Stoss Landscape Urbanism* focuses mainly on development of water front, the rehabilitation of brownfield sites, interim landscapes, infrastructures and open spaces at the territorial level all over the world.

The award focuses on the contribution of Chris Reed and his team: "the advancement of landscape architecture and urban landscape as a dynamic and "open-ended" system". C. Reed explains "At Stoss, we favor a performance-based approach over one that is primarily physical, spatial, or visual. We are especially interested in how landscapes work: how they function urbanistically, socially, hydrologically, environmentally; how they reinforce existing city frameworks and how they invent new ones; and how they may support a range of complementary and sometimes contradictory civic programs across a multi-faceted, layered, and thickened urban field. Such an approach yields new types of open space, landscape, infrastructure, and urbanistic strategies that are able to address multiple functional, fiscal, and social / cultural goals simultaneously. These strategies are thoroughly grounded in the particularities of local conditions, yet they are inventive and thickly layered in order to tap into broader trends and larger systems. And they privilege a regenerative approach to civic space and urban landscapes as complex, living, and evolving entities that are socially, ecologically, and fiscally sustainable through time."<sup>1</sup>

Chris Reed's activities and his agency illustrate the themes that have marked the recent practice of landscape designers. On the complexity of the urban functioning, they respond less by words than by performance: adjusting space pragmatically, by being in line materially with the local reality and the uncertainty; managing the ephemeral as the long term; producing and renewing the public space and its uses. The performance, defined as the achievement of the designer and the project's shift to the act, is contextualized by overcoming the opposition of the open and the closed. The place is physically laid open on its social and environmental neighborhood. It is open to the local responses to global environmental issues whose solutions are uncertain. But it closes on the functions and the local uses at local scales where references to values of garden and public space can be mobilized.

The manifestos of Landscape Urbanism of J. Corner and C. Waldheim contribute greatly to this inflection in practice of landscape architects. Both authors and those close to them see the development of

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<sup>1</sup> News : [http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/news/reed\\_stoss\\_topos\\_award.html](http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/news/reed_stoss_topos_award.html)

cities as a constant flow of actors and events, both open and closed, indeterminate, bottom up and top down. It is those forces that landscape urbanism professionals try to shape into fleeting and perennial forms. It is the professionalism of this young landscape architect and his staff that Topos rewarded.

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