



Laurie Olin

Rome Prize in Landscape Architecture

Award in Architecture from the American Academy of Arts and Letters

Inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters

Thomas Jefferson Medal in Architecture

2011 ASLA Medal

2012 National Medal of Arts, Presented by President Obama

A John Simon Guggenheim Fellow

An honorary member of the American Institute of Architects

An American Academy of Rome Fellow

A Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

A Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects

2015 Winner of Benjamin Franklin Founders Award

2017 Vincent Scully Prize

2017 Frederic Church Award

Recipient of over 18 International Design Awards

And going. Still...

SYNOPSIS

Artist, scholar, architect, landscape architect, professor, author, urban visionary, and unparalleled designer of cities, Laurie Olin is a true Renaissance man and a great American master.

SITTING STILL is a documentary film that portrays this generous and irreverent urban warrior as he gives voice to his profoundly social concerns.

Robert F. Wagner, Jr. Park, NYC



While you may not know his name, chances are you know his work. Laurie Olin is responsible for many of the most iconic and beloved parks, gardens and public spaces in the country, including the Getty Center gardens, Battery Park City, Columbus Circle, the National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden, the Washington Monument grounds, Bryant Park, Mission Bay and Independence Mall, to name only a few. His imprint on cityscapes extends to many more public spaces he's created all over the world, most notably Canary Wharf and Bishop's Gate in London, Villa Olimpica in Barcelona, and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin.



Washington Monument Grounds

And though envisioning these landscapes may seem immense, they all began in the same unobtrusive way: sitting still and drawing.



Columbus Circle, NYC

Drawing for Laurie has been an education, permitting him to be more intensely present and aware of his surroundings while looking very carefully at them. Whether encountering something original or prosaic, sitting still with sketchbook in hand has been Laurie's mode of exploration.

A child of the wilderness, Olin came from Alaska to mainland US feeling a visceral, cultural richness in the big American cities. He found these urban settings filled with drama, energy and diversity. He saw realities that others didn't seem to acknowledge or appreciate. From there, he began a fifty-year journey to preserve, restore, radicalize and transform them...to make them livable.



Naknek Village, Alaska 1958

Given the disproportionate growth of the world's largest metropolises with more people than ever before being born, living and dying in cities, Laurie Olin urges us to take a closer look at the health and survival of our cities—how our sense of place is either diminished through overbuilding and neglect, or enhanced through purposeful design and social encounter. In his own words, he is constantly *"attempting to accommodate the changing scale of urbanism while dealing with traditional human desires, memory and culture."*

In a time when global values increasingly reflect "profit over people," a capital-driven exportation of monoculture in architecture, and the white-washing effects of globalization—Laurie Olin is fighting to bring authenticity to civic spaces and vast ecological systems. His motivation has always been the social aspects of urban design, working passionately to keep cities viable for all citizens with a special focus on the economically marginalized. He aspires to create a level playing field—a more democratic and egalitarian society through shared public space.

This passion started in the 1970s when Olin spent months on Seattle's Skid Road living among the homeless community, creating a book of writings and drawings entitled "Breath on the Mirror" and calling attention to a very underserved community. During this time, Olin also led the coalition to save Pike Place Market for the people of Seattle.

His objective has always been to find the connective tissue between man and nature—the stuff that brings the elements together in an elevated sense of place, creating a sustainable forum for art and interaction.

Why is it of interest to talk about the creation of our most cherished public realms, places that most people either see as voids or take for granted? Because the connection to these places roots and anchors us to a shared community and a common history.

A toddler takes a first step, a skateboarder lands a death-defying flip, a passerby shares

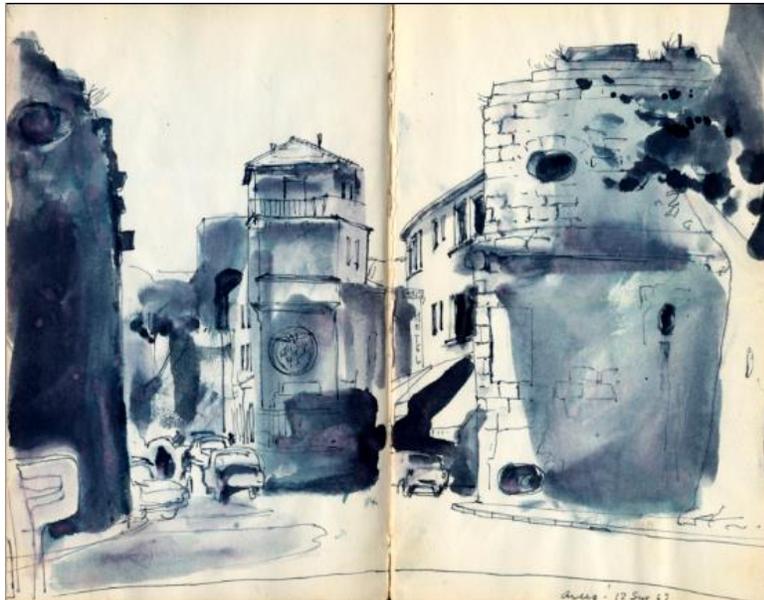


lunch with a homeless person, lovers meet, friends exchange confidences, endless encounters, deep breaths and fleeting glances. And of course, just sitting still. As people come together in these beautifully and dutifully designed public spaces, they add to the creation of memory and meaning over the decades which is just what Laurie Olin intended.

Battery Park, NYC

ARTISTIC APPROACH

Illustrated with seventy years of Olin's personal paintings and drawings, this film is also a visual tour-de-force. Thousands of pages of drawings, paintings, sketches, and studies will animate and fill the screen. Imagery, not talking heads, will illuminate our story. It will explode with ink and watercolor. Renderings, plans, and photos will create a tableau for a dynamic and richly textural film. Images such as these offer immediate and unpredictable visual artillery, drawing from a one-of-a-kind archive: Laurie Olin's collected works.



Ink drawing of Arles (1967)



Heraklion (1980) by Laurie Olin

Principle photography for the main interview is an elegant, stylized approach created in a studio environment and shot with two high definition cameras. A designed backdrop with changing panels of imagery (in green-screen frames) subtly remind us that in life and in nature, nothing is static.

The film's visual elements include an interview on a soundstage, location photography, stylized studio photography, animation of Olin's drawings, drone shots for aerials, archival film and photos and time-lapse sequences. Filming has already taken place with Olin on location, at home, and in studio. Further interviews draw on Olin's long-time colleague, luminary and architect Frank Gehry.



Music also played a critical role in Laurie's childhood, defining his tastes and punctuating the cultural changes that occurred in his lifetime. There was always music in the Olin home, kindling Laurie's special love for jazz and creating the soundtrack to his life. Music will also carry that supporting role in this story.

Albert Walters in New Orleans (1968)

Given Laurie's strong presence on camera, his unique storytelling and brilliant recall of many life experiences, this documentary will make for a poignant portrait of a great American master. But more than that, it will catalyze others to understand how landscape defines and unifies us. Especially when we can sit still and take it in.

