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KATE D. LEVIN
Commissioner

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Department of Cultural Affairs Projects Recognized at the 27th Annual Awards for Excellence in Design

Three Percent for Art Commissions and Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Visitor Center Receive Awards from the Public Design Commission

New York, NY, July 2, 2009 – The Public Design Commission of the City of New York recognized the Department of Cultural Affairs for four projects at last night's 2009 Awards for Excellence in Design ceremony at the New Museum. The awards, presented by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Public Design Commission President James P. Stuckey, recognize outstanding public projects that exemplify high-quality design.

Commissioner Kate D. Levin accepted on behalf of the agency. She was joined by Susan Chin, Assistant Commissioner for Capital Projects, and Sara Reisman, Director of Percent for Art.

The four projects were:

- *Inside Out*, an artwork by Richard Artschwager
Riverside Health Center, 160 West 100th Street, Manhattan
- *The Shapes Project*, an artwork by Allan McCollum in collaboration with Marpillero Pollak Architects
Elmhurst Library, Queens
- *The Opposite of a Duck*, an artwork by Janet Zweig
Children's Reading Room, Glen Oaks Community Library, Queens
- *Visitor Center*, designed by Weiss/Manfredi
Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Brooklyn

“The cultural sector has long been at the forefront of design innovation,” said Commissioner Levin. “My agency is privileged to work with incredible artists, architects and colleagues in City government whose creativity and ingenuity continually transform the ordinary into the extraordinary. Congratulations to all of tonight's honorees for your winning projects, and many thanks for your outstanding contributions to our urban landscape.”

“The public projects developed by the Department of Cultural Affairs, whether through its Percent for Art program or in conjunction with the City’s cultural institutions through its capital division, are regularly commended by the members of the Design Commission for their high standards of design,” said Jackie Snyder, Executive Director of the Design Commission. “This year, we are thrilled to recognize four exceptional projects that will enhance and enliven the experience of visitors to these public spaces.”

“Our Design and Construction Excellence program has allowed us to work with world-renowned design professionals and artists who have incorporated remarkable artwork into our public works. Receiving these awards emphasizes our commitment to building exceptional projects throughout the five boroughs and our support of the Percent for Art program,” said David Burney, Commissioner, Department of Design and Construction.

Three of the four winning projects were commissioned through the City’s Percent for Art program. This program, administered by the Department of Cultural Affairs, applies one percent of eligible City-funded construction budgets to commission permanent, site-specific artwork. Today, more than 225 projects have been completed, with 70 works underway, by a wide range of artists working in diverse media. Percent for Art aims to bring artists into the design process, enhancing the City’s civic architecture and providing venues for all New Yorkers and visitors to experience visual art outside traditional museum and gallery settings.

“This year’s Design Excellence awards honoring Richard Artschwager, Allan McCollum, and Janet Zweig touch on the wide range of artistic practices supported by Percent for Art and the Design Commission,” said Director Reisman. “Each artist takes a unique, site-specific approach to engaging occupants and visitors, helping people to experience public architecture in new ways.”

Inside Out is artist Richard Artschwager’s bold response to the existing architectural and site conditions of Riverside Health Center. “The application of color and value will play into the changing natural light of day,” said Mr. Artschwager. The artist will place bright orange terra cotta tiles on the exterior and interior stairwell of the Center, enlivening the building, and inspiring patients to use the stairs.

The Opposite of a Duck is Janet Zweig's investigation of ambiguity and paradox through the eyes of a child. Ms. Zweig’s two-sided LED sculpture will hang from the ceiling of the children's reading room in the Glen Oaks Community Library. Commissioned by the Queens Public Library, the work is based on hundreds of unanswerable questions collected by the artist from philosophers around the world, through an on-line query. Using a technology developed by Todd Polenber, the piece consists of LEDs attached to circuit boards that hang vertically parallel on an undulating aluminum frame, making the display transparent and readable from both sides. Moving lines of light scroll around the sculpture, engaging children as they look up in wonder.

"Not every question has an answer - that's what I wanted to convey in the piece for the Children's Reading Room at the Glen Oaks Library. I hope that children will be provoked, puzzled, and amused by the unanswerable questions displayed on the sculpture," said Ms. Zweig.

Installed from the floor to the ceiling of the Elmhurst Library adult reading room, Allan McCollum’s *Shapes* incorporates more than 1000 *Shapes* based on 300 “parts” that can be combined and re-combined in billions of ways. The *Shapes* will be cut from hardwood plywood, with a veneer of natural elm, inspired

by Elmhurst’s historic trees. The installation will be mounted on the reading room wall, which will be faced in semi-opaque white glass, an idea developed in collaboration with Elmhurst Library architects, Marpillero Pollack Architects.

“The Elmhurst Library serves the borough of Queens, one of the most culturally diverse communities in the world,” said Mr. McCollum. “It is my hope that this collection of unique *Shapes* can come to represent both the commonality and the diversity of the Elmhurst community, at the same time.”

Designed by Weiss/Manfredi, Brooklyn Botanic Garden’s Visitor Center is conceived as a seamless extension of the Garden’s landscape. The sinuous 22,000-square-foot glass building, nestled into an existing berm at the Garden’s northeast corner, will serve as a three-dimensional continuation of the garden path system, framing a series of views into and through the landscape. As the first new structure built in the Garden in twenty years, the Visitor Center will unify past and future: its form and materials echo historic structures on the site, while its design and function anchor it firmly in the 21st century. The design aims for LEED Gold certification, and includes a living roof, recycled building materials, passive solar components, geothermal heating, and bioswales (recessed catchment zones filled with water-loving plants) that will improve storm-water management and relieve the burden on the municipal sewer system.

Construction of the Visitor Center is being funded in part through the Department of Cultural Affairs.

“Congratulations to Brooklyn Botanic Garden and Weiss/Manfredi on your extraordinary design, which beautifully integrates form, function and sustainability,” said Assistant Commissioner Chin. “We look forward to breaking ground this year.”

Brooklyn Botanic Garden Board Chairman Frederick Bland said, “We believe our architects have created a building ideally suited to its site and the BBG mission, combining exceptional beauty with a level of environmentally sustainable measures that assure this is a model of how to build in the 21st century.”

Public Design Commission of the City of New York

Established in 1898 as the Art Commission, New York City’s design review agency was renamed the Design Commission in July 2008 to better reflect its mission. The Design Commission reviews permanent works of art, architecture and landscape architecture proposed on or over City-owned property. Since 1982, the Design Commission has recognized outstanding public projects with its Annual Awards for Excellence in Design. Winning projects are selected by the Commission from the hundreds of submissions reviewed each year and exemplify the highest design standards.

New York City Department of Cultural Affairs

The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs supports and sustains New York City's cultural life through public funding for programs, operations and capital improvements at more than 1,100 nonprofit cultural organizations throughout the five boroughs.

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