

on site, but these strategies are typically gray infrastructure, a simple means to manage excess runoff. Rarely are these facilities conceived as places for people.

We contend that this growing necessity to manage stormwater on site poses an intriguing opportunity to transform stormwater management into an on-site design feature. We call this strategy “artful rainwater design”—design that combines the utility of stormwater management with the amenity of rich placemaking focused on the rainwater itself. Some creative landscape architects are seizing this opportunity to create better stormwater management systems while exploiting the placemaking potential of rainwater. To help foster this approach, we have undertaken a selective nationwide case study of 30 projects that are acclaimed for addressing rainwater in ways that are both environmentally responsible and artful. We are finding that the most inspirational designs present a thoughtful and innovative combination of utility and amenity. By “utility” we mean comprehensive and thorough management of excess runoff rate, volume, frequency, and quality. By “amenity” we mean rich placemaking that intrigues, engages, and even educates the visitor about rainwater—a landscape that encourages the visitor to explore what the water is doing, discover how it is being managed on site, and learn about its environmental importance.

Two exciting award-winning projects with entirely different strengths can inform and inspire designers in their own artful rainwater design efforts. One is 10th@Hoyt, an urban apartment courtyard in the Pearl District of Portland, Oregon, designed by landscape architect Steve Koch, ASLA. This courtyard captivates the visitor with its artful display of water conveyance in a quiet, oasislike space, but it addresses the utility of rainwater management less extensively than it could. The other is the Outwash Basin at Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s new Ray and Maria Stata Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, designed by the Olin Partnership in collaboration with Judith Nitsch Engineering. The design presents a highly innovative rainwater management

ART FOR RAIN’S SAKE

Designers make rainwater a central part of two projects.

By Stuart Echols and Eliza Pennypacker, ASLA

WHEN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS hear the term “stormwater management,” what springs to mind: A regulatory demand? A system of pipes and ponds designed to be unobtrusive? Whatever the response,

thanks to revisions to the Clean Water Act, virtually every landscape architect must address stormwater management in virtually every project. As a result, designers are developing many useful strategies for addressing stormwater quantity and quality

A central water channel on axis with the entry gate combines with bilateral symmetry at the 10th@Hoyt courtyard in Portland, Oregon.