2011 ASLA Design Awards

Hillside Garden
Honor Award
Design Workshop, Aspen

Residential Design Over $100,000 Construction Budget
Project Summary | Hillside Garden successfully blends the values of a traditional and formal lifestyle with an irregular and challenging hillside site. Parallel walls and elevated terraces edit views and establish use areas and rooms, creating a seamless transition between garden and architecture. Water is an ever-present element, facilitating a visual and audible intimacy that reverberates throughout the home.

Purpose | The purpose of the design was to create an intimate garden, given the limited space constraints, by exploiting the verticality of the site and the borrowed views of the valley. Located on the outskirts of Aspen, the home is carved out of a 2-acre property consisting of native Gambel oak, aspen, and spruce on a steep, north-facing slope adjacent to the Aspen Highlands Ski Area. Long views from the home are stunning, opening up to Woody Creek and Basalt Mountain to the north and west. Closer in, the gridded street pattern of downtown Aspen forms an urban backdrop. Managing the foreground views, including the rooftops of the school district buildings, recreation center, and the hospital, created a distinct challenge for the landscape architect.

Role of Landscape Architect | In creating the Hillside Garden, the Landscape Architect sought to strike a balance between the client's desire for formalized entertaining spaces, with the reality of a casual atmosphere that could be enjoyed by the homeowner's on a daily basis. The east terrace captures and frames dramatic views of the city of Aspen and the adjacent mountain valleys, and is designed for formal entertaining and dining. A water feature and large rectangular lawn area serve as the central organizing themes for this multi-leveled space. On the upper level, walls enclose the entertainment space while efficiently separating the garage and parking areas. On the lower level, tucked under a series of walls that help to extend the garden away from the house, is a grotto-like spa. Flanked by formal plantings, an outdoor fireplace and garden pergola, the central grass area is designed to accommodate a covering for large gatherings and other activities.

In contrast to the east terrace, the west terrace is an intimate space outside the library. It is anchored by a water fountain containing a series of directed spouts that emit water from a narrow channel just below the top of the wall into a deep lower pool. The white noise created by the water cascading off the wall is further accentuated by the depth of the pool, creating a visual and aural activity that echoes into the master bedroom above. A loggia faces north and west, literally extending the room to the out-of-doors. A high wall frames the distant views to the open valley to the west, editing the foreground.

From the roadway above, a stone-cobbled entrance drive slopes downward, bordered by a series of walls and plantings that are punctuated by crisp edges, columnar aspen trees and colorful
perennials. The drive enters the compound through a passage that connects the drop-off and arrival area. Opposite the front door are a series of terraced walls which define the outer limits of the property and accommodate the steep grade. The terraces are planted with soft groundcovers, shrubs, and aspen trees. A basin of water, meant for viewing upon departure from the house, is set within a wall opposite the front door.

**Special Factors & Significance** The garden is a series of small outdoor rooms which flow into one another, each associated with the events that take place in the space. The spaces are rectilinear in design, connected by visual and physical axis points. Lines and angles create vistas and visual interest, literally connecting the house and garden spaces by plan relationship. Door, window, and visual connections from inside the various rooms engage and support the purposeful formality and tradition in the architecture and landscape architecture. Fountains and water features, views, and intimate gathering spaces are laid out in almost perfect proportion to one another.

Special opportunities abound within the garden and terrace system to capture distant views, creatively manage the topographic changes, capture small micro-climates of sun and shade, and emphasize connections within the individual spaces. The surrounding terraces push the garden to the edge, creating a condition of unlimited freedom in which an entire natural landscape unfolds in the distance.