

## BOUNDARY WORK

Landscape architects have always had an ambivalent relationship to research. The earliest volumes of *LAM* testify to this, recording zero-sum debates over whether landscape architecture was an art or a science. Research, originally seen as the domain of the sciences, has been claimed in the past several decades by landscape architects in the humanistic tradition.

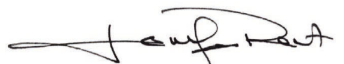
While many landscape architects now see the profession situated at a happy confluence of art and science, Joan Nassauer, FASLA, does not. Speaking at the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA) conference in March, Nassauer challenged the notion that landscape architects could continue to rest on their generalist laurels. Nassauer is a bit of a legend in the field, having developed the idea of “cues to care”—ways of signaling to the public that ecologically focused landscapes are designed spaces—based on years of research into public awareness and understanding of residential and urban landscapes. With her long teaching career, multiple National Science Foundation grants, and decades of collaborations with social and natural scientists, Nassauer is exceptionally qualified to campaign for an increase in science literacy among landscape architects.

If designers want to be seen as leaders in climate work, Nassauer argued, they must lean harder into the work of academics. Those in the academy will need to teach art-focused design students how to look for and interpret scientific research, and there must be avenues around the institutional firewalls that safeguard scholarly publications; otherwise, practitioners will continue to be

blocked from access to academic research. And without evidence-based practice, landscape architects will diminish in importance and credibility.

On the other side of the scholar-practitioner divide, Anya Domlesky, ASLA, has been thinking about other ways of transiting boundaries between research and practice. Domlesky is an associate principal and director of research at SWA Group, where she runs XL Lab, SWA's innovation platform. In another panel at CELA on this subject, Domlesky talked about the Consortium of Practice-based Researchers in the Built Environment (CPRBE), which she is launching with Rebecca Popowsky, a research associate at OLIN. The idea, she told me in an email, is for the organization's website ([CPRBE.org](http://CPRBE.org)) to serve as a matchmaker between researchers in academia and practice and/or researchers in different fields. Members thus far include staff from SWA, OLIN, Sasaki, Design Workshop, Reed Hilderbrand, Studio Ludo, and OJB.

These are larger firms with the resources and bandwidth to spin off grant- or project-funded research labs, or, in the case of Studio Ludo, were founded as nonprofit research and design firms. But this is not to say that there is no play for smaller firms, which might be feeling strapped for time and staff already. “Your builders and maintainers are your peers in research,” observed one panelist. Engaging them is a place to start.



JENNIFER REUT  
EDITOR

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