



Prof. Martha Schwartz

Senior Partner, Martha Schwartz Partners

The United States of America

Profile

Martha Schwartz is a landscape architect, urbanist, and climate activist. Her work and teaching focuses on the urban public realm landscape and its importance in making cities “climate ready”. For more than 40 years, she and the firm have completed projects around the globe, from site-specific art installations to public spaces, parks, master-planning and reclamation. Schwartz is now engaged in strategic land-use and landscape planning in assisting leadership in their preparation for effects of climate change that their city will face in the near future.

Ms. Schwartz is a tenured Professor in Practice at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and is a participant of the GSD Climate Change Working Group. Schwartz foresees landscape architecture as the leading profession to face the challenge of Climate Change. At the Landscape Architecture Foundation’s 2016 “New Landscape Declaration” summit on Landscape Architecture and the Future, Martha’s “Declaration” on climate change became the key proponent of the industry’s current position that Climate Change is a central issue to the practice.

She is a founding member of the Working Group of Sustainable Cities at the Harvard University Center for the Environment, a founding member of the Landscape Architecture Foundation’s “Working Group on Climate Change”, and has recently founded MAYDAY.Earth, a non-profit organization focused on educating non-scientists and generalists about geoengineering and global-scale solutions which can be integrated into practice, thus expanding the role of landscape architecture.

Awarded the 2020 ASLA Design Medal, Ms. Schwartz is the recipient of numerous international recognitions, including the Honorary Royal Designer for Industry Award from the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce for her outstanding contribution to UK design; the Cooper Hewitt National Design Award; the Women in Design Award for Excellence from the Boston Society of Architects; an Honorary Doctor of Science from the University of Ulster in Belfast, Ireland; a fellowship from the Urban Design Institute; visiting residencies at Radcliffe College and the American Academy in Rome; an Honorary Fellowship from the Royal Institute of British Architects; the Council of Fellows Award by the American Society of Landscape Architects and most recently a Doctor Honoris Causa from the Boston Architectural College.

Copyright © The Greater Bay Area Urban Designer Alliance

The contents available on this document, including but not limited to all text, graphics, drawings, diagrams, photographs and compilation of data or other materials are protected by copyright. Any reproduction, adaptation, distribution, dissemination or making available of such copyright works to the public on a commercial scale is strictly prohibited unless prior written authorisation is obtained.

Disclaimer: Create Hong Kong of The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region provides funding support to the project only, and does not otherwise take part in the project. Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in these materials/events (or by members of the project team) are those of the project organisers only and do not reflect the views of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Communications and Creative Industries Branch of the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, Create Hong Kong, the CreateSmart Initiative Secretariat or the CreateSmart Initiative Vetting Committee.

Topic Title

Regenerating Ecological Services Using the Public Realm Landscape:

A city's largest asset to address climate change is their public realm landscapes (including streets!).

Topic Abstract

Today, the Greater Bay Area (GBA) is China's behemoth of industry with a population exceeding 42 million. However, the rapidity of growth of these cities comes at a steep price, given the scale of the consequences of climate change poses in the form of sea-level rise.

To address climate change so humankind can survive, will demand human intervention. Neither the US nor China is working fast enough to avert Climate Catastrophe. Both produce a combined 53% of the world's CO₂ emissions, and China is the largest emitter (28%) in the world, with no policies to stop mining coal.

At some point soon, China will have a reckoning between the benefits of China's expansion of wealth, and the costs of losing its coastal cities which generates 35% of the national GDP. Economically, Guangzhou now has more to lose from climate change than any other city on the planet, according to a World Bank Report.¹ "The challenge facing government officials today is investing in protection before the damage occurs." ¹ The clash between the effects of a warming climate, and the human desire for more wealth, will have to be reckoned with.

All coastal cities will experience somewhat the same impacts: submergence and flooding of coastal land, saltwater intrusion into surface waters, destabilization and disruption of infra-structure and groundwater, increased erosion, and overwhelmingly negative social and economic repercussions. These effects will be widespread and will accelerate with time.

Designers of the built environment have an extremely important and large role to play in reshaping coastal cities so they can adapt, build new cities, and importantly, mitigate the causes of climate change. Landscape architects are more and more involved in large-scale, nature-based solutions, some of which reach into agricultural and indigenous people's practices, or may even combine bioengineering and new technologies. There is even one idea being researched from the field of solar geoengineering that proposes to cool the Earth, thereby slowing or stopping sea level rise. We will take a look at case studies and different strategies that may be pertinent to China's important coastal cities. Our remit is not only to stop climate change, but to learn how to live in balance with nature if we are to survive.

1. Which Coast Cities are at Higher Risks of Damaging Floods? New Study Crunches the Numbers, August 2013

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/08/19/coastal-cities-at-highest-risk-floods>

Copyright © The Greater Bay Area Urban Designer Alliance

The contents available on this document, including but not limited to all text, graphics, drawings, diagrams, photographs and compilation of data or other materials are protected by copyright. Any reproduction, adaptation, distribution, dissemination or making available of such copyright works to the public on a commercial scale is strictly prohibited unless prior written authorisation is obtained.

Disclaimer: Create Hong Kong of The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region provides funding support to the project only, and does not otherwise take part in the project. Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in these materials/events (or by members of the project team) are those of the project organisers only and do not reflect the views of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Communications and Creative Industries Branch of the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, Create Hong Kong, the CreateSmart Initiative Secretariat or the CreateSmart Initiative Vetting Committee.