

## OLIN

My name is Laurie Olin. I am a landscape architect. I knew Rich Haag for decades, first as a student from his first week as a teacher in my design studio in the fall of 1958 at the University of Washington, then as an employee in his first small office, later as a colleague when he hired me to teach in the new Department of Landscape Architecture at UW, and then for decades as a professional peer and personal friend until his death.

Rich Haag's Gasworks Park is an international landmark in landscape design solely because of the powerful presence of the remaining towers of the vanished gasworks. It predates by more than a decade any other such repurposed industrial works in Europe, America, or elsewhere in a public park. Haag's vision to retain the towers as sculptural, historic, cultural icons was original and a master stroke of artistic genius. Haag's fascination with them as a 'memento mori' of earlier advanced technology and Seattle's history was shared by many students and faculty in the School of Architecture and Planning (its name at the time) through the 1950s and 60s as witnessed by the many drawings and paintings of the Gasworks that appeared in the school's annual spring exhibition.

In 1967, I participated in the production of Action: Better Cities (ABC), a collection of proposals from the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) led by its then president Fred Bassetti. Among the proposals for parks, civic spaces, and other urban improvements, most now accomplished, was one to transform the long-abandoned Gasworks into a public park on Lake Union. Not long after that, the omnibus Forward Thrust Bond initiative was successful, and it included funding for the park, which was to be named for Myrtle Edwards, a former City Council Member who was a parks advocate. Eventually Haag was selected to design it.

It was a contentious time for urban historic preservation. I was Vice President of Friends of the Market in the difficult struggle to save it from demolition. Along with Vic Steinbreuck, Fred Bassetti, Ibsen Nelson and many, many, many others, Haag was also on our Board and involved. Ibsen Nelson and I had fought a losing battle to save a historic armory north of the Market which was demolished and replaced with a parking garage (the park came later). Then Rich and I decided to try to save the Grandma's Cookie sign in Wallingford above the gasworks and several gasometer tank frames across the street from the Gasworks. At Rich's suggestion I made a ten foot long scroll of sketches with ideas for their adaptive reuse as active recreational facilities, truly urban park activities. These were exhibited together with a wall full of Haag's stunning black and white photographs of the gasworks towers at the Henry Gallery in one of the first Art in Public Places events in America.

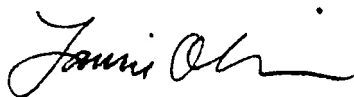
Once Haag began working on the design for the park, I also made numerous drawings for him of the park which included the children's play shed. Everyone who was involved believed deeply in saving the towers. Haag proposed cleaning them up, stripping them of some of apparatus (pipes, ladders, platforms, etc.) that confused their form and might entice people to attempt to climb them, thereby securing them to prevent anyone from attempting to do so, for obvious safety reasons. Enough of the clutter that confused the form or might entice people to climb was removed, and what remains Haag intended to remain as it is. For all his

radical ideas, Haag was deeply realistic, practical, and humane. There never, ever, however, were any ideas on his part that they should or would be removed. They were the reason for his design. Rich loved their tough muscular form, their raw expression of American energy and work. He referred to them as “our ancient ruins, like Roman aqueducts on the Appian Way,” which stand in mute expression of former ambition and achievement, of heroic engineering of a bygone era.

It is completely untrue as some have mistakenly suggested Haag thought that what we see today would at some point disappear. The whole idea was that of the Machine in the Garden, the end of the classical pastorate. It was a modern design for a modern society. Rich believed in ecology and pioneered phytoremediation on the site, demonstrating that plants could take up toxic elements from the soil. He also loved history. The towers in Gasworks Park are real history, not some prettied up romanticized fable.

Yes, of course, people should be kept from injuring themselves, but in a skillful manner that doesn't maul the towers and Haag's vision. What we see today is what Rich wanted and for which he went to a lot of trouble to keep for posterity.

With great respect and best regards to Seattle and its citizens,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laurie Olin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small dot above the "i" in "Olin".

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