Deborah Berke awarded new Berkeley-Rupp Prize for the advancement of women in architecture, contributions to sustainability

By | Media Relations
kmaclay@berkeley.edu, (510) 643-5651

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Berkeley — Deborah Berke, a New York City-based architect known for her design excellence, scholarly achievement and commitment to moving the practice of architecture forward in innovative ways, was selected today (Monday, Sept. 10) as the first recipient of the University of California, Berkeley’s College of Environmental Design (CED) inaugural 2012 Berkeley-Rupp Architecture Professorship and Prize.

The Berkeley-Rupp Prize will be awarded biannually to a distinguished practitioner or academic who has made a significant contribution to promoting the advancement of women in the field of architecture, and whose work emphasizes a commitment to sustainability and the community.

The announcement was made by Jennifer Wolch, William W. Wurster Dean of the College of Environmental Design.

“Deborah Berke exemplifies everything this prize is meant to celebrate,” said Wolch. “The excellence of her craft, her creative approach to sustainability, and her willingness to mentor women in the field and share her ideas and expertise make her the perfect person to receive the Berkeley-Rupp Prize.”

The Berkeley-Rupp Prize awards $100,000, a semester-long professorship, a public lecture and a gallery exhibition at CED. Beyond sharing their knowledge and passion with students and faculty, one of the stated goals of the Berkeley-Rupp Prize is to offer recipients the time and resources to pursue thinking and interests outside of the daily practice of architecture. The Berkeley-Rupp Prize is made possible through a generous bequest to the campus by Sigrid Lorenzen Rupp.

Berke is founder of the New York City-based architecture firm Deborah Berke Partners, which has received awards for designs for the 21c Museum Hotel Louisville and the Marianne Boesky Gallery in New York, among others. She is also an adjunct professor of architectural design at Yale University.

As a recipient, Berke will deliver a public lecture the evening of Jan. 28 at Wurster Hall Gallery at the opening of an exhibit of her work.

During her professorship, she will examine the concept of ‘buildings for work’—architecture that supports the creative undertakings of others, while not compromising its own voice. With her belief
that women, as well as minorities, are underrepresented in the field, she will also study how the workplace can empower both women and men equally.

Among the notable aspects of her career that particularly impressed Berkeley-Rupp Prize nomination committee, is Berke’s commitment to public service in her contributions to the field of urban design and architecture outside of her practice and teaching, as well as her approach to sustainability. Additionally, the committee was impressed by Berke’s focus on the character of place, its members noting that she holds strongly to the belief that architecture must be of the “here and now”—grounded in its place and time, connected to its physical situation, shaped by its location.

The nominating committee for the Berkeley-Rupp Prize is comprised of Lucy Berman, Sigrid Rupp Trustee; Tom Buresh, Professor and Chair of Architecture, UC Berkeley and Principal, Guthrie + Buresh Architects; Madhavi Desai, Partner, ARCHICRAFTS Studio; Mui Ho, Principal, Mui Ho Architect; Lisa Kleissner, Sigrid Rupp Trustee; Michael Rotondi, Principal, RoTo Architects; Marilyn Jordan Taylor, Dean, School of Design, University of Pennsylvania; Susan Ubbelohde, Professor of Architecture, UC Berkeley and Principal, Loios + Ubbelohde; and Jennifer Wolch, William W. Wurster Dean of the College of Environmental Design at UC Berkeley.

“It is a genuine pleasure to welcome Deborah Berke to CED as the inaugural Berkeley-Rupp Prize recipient,” said Tom Buresh, a UC Berkeley professor and Eva Li Chair of Design Ethics. “Berke has crafted a compelling and provocative practice unlike any other. Deborah's work is restrained, thoughtful, and beautiful—the very embodiment of Sigrid Rupp's vision for architecture as a discipline and a profession.”

“Deborah Berke is an extraordinary architect, whose works are singularly evocative and successful,” said Marilyn Taylor, Dean, PennDesign. “Throughout her career she has been teacher and practitioner, using each talent to strengthen the other. CED will enjoy her remarkable presence as both role model and provocative. She’ll be great as the first architect selected in this wonderful new appointment.”

Berke obtained bachelor’s degrees in both fine arts and architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design and went on to study urban design at The City University of New York. In 2005 she was awarded an honorary doctorate of fine arts from the Rhode Island School of Design.

Established in 1982, Deborah Berke Partners strives to “create buildings and spaces that are poised between background and foreground, where the presence of the architecture is in a constant balance with the forces of life.” In addition to private homes, a large body of the firm’s work is comprised of projects of significant scale including public buildings, educational institutions, facilities for the arts and distinctive hotels.

Berke is a founding board member and vice president of desigNYC; has served on the Forum for Urban Design Board of Directors since 2008; and is a founding trustee of The Design Trust for Public Space, established in 1997.

Berke has served as chair of the advisory board for the Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture at Columbia University, a trustee of the Brearley School, vice president of the AIA New York Chapter, and a trustee of the National Building Museum.

Berke has taught at Yale since 1987. Previously, she taught at the University of Maryland, the Rhode Island School of Design, the University of Miami, and The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies.
Her current and upcoming work exemplifies Berke's broad range of building typologies, and includes two new locations for the 21c Museum Hotel, one in Cincinnati, OH and another in Bentonville, AR; a new residence hall at Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA; a community arts center in New York City; and an addition to and renovation of the I.M. Pei-designed Rockefeller Arts Center at SUNY Fredonia in Fredonia, NY.

Sigrid Rupp believed that women bring special values to the practice of architecture, including economic and social approaches to design and a commitment to sustainability and community.

Rupp studied architecture at UC Berkeley, where she was mentored by Joseph Esherick, Harold Stump, and Donald Reay. In 1976, Rupp founded her own firm, SLR Architects and served as its president until her death.

Some of her significant projects include the Press Building and Storey House at Stanford University; a testing facility for Apple Computer that won an American Institute of Architects (AIA) Honor award; and a factory retrofit and rehab for Raychem Corporation in Redwood City, CA. Her work also included retail stores, offices, private residences and remodels of older buildings. Rupp was a member of the Organization of Women Architects, the AIA, and the Union Internationale des Femmes Architectes, and her work is included in the collection of International Archive of Women in Architecture.

RELATED INFORMATION

- Berkeley-Rupp Architecture Prize and Professorship
- Deborah Berke and her work

CONTACTS

Mary Cocoma, director of external relations, mcocoma@berkeley.edu, 510-642-7722