

Gerdo Aquino

INTERVIEWS: Alexander Russ

Gerdo Aquino is CEO of SWA, a company that evolved from the landscape architecture firm Sasaki. His work focuses on underutilised or abandoned urban and suburban infill sites that nonetheless have the potential to enhance their existing surroundings through creative programming and natural systems integration.



1 CAREER STARTING POINT?

Watching the natural sand dunes of coastal Florida beaches transformed into condo developments.

2 INFLUENCED BY?

People willing to take risks; artists whose creativity has no boundaries; responsible politicians who embrace the importance of open space.

3 INSPIRED BY?

The complex, multi-cultural, creative city that is Los Angeles.

4 WHY LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE?

The profession allows me to implement big ideas at a multitude of scales that benefit the environment and quality of life.

5 DESIGN PRINCIPLES?

Consider the extremes: feasible vs. irrational, predictable vs. unexpected.

6 WHAT'S YOUR SPECIAL FOCUS?

Improving the quality of life in our cities and towns through the integration of robust ecological systems and great design.

7 FORMULA FOR SUCCESS?

Understanding your client's vision.

8 WHERE WILL YOU BE IN 15 YEARS?

I'll be continuing my rewarding journey as a landscape architect, urban designer and planner.

9 OBSTACLES FOR THE PROFESSION?

None.

Mark Dawson



Mark Dawson is a member of the Executive Committee of the landscape architecture firm Sasaki, which was founded by Hideo Sasaki in 1953. He helps drive the strategic direction of the urban public market practice within Sasaki's Urban Studio. His specialty is planning and designing urban landscapes.

1 CAREER STARTING POINT?

There wasn't one moment when I found the profession. As a child I loved working with my hands, canoeing, building things, which first revealed my interest in nature and making.

2 INFLUENCED BY?

Stanley White, Hideo Sasaki, Carlisle Becker, Vern Budge, and Stuart Dawson.

3 INSPIRED BY?

The sheer scale, beauty, and magnificent form of nature.

4 WHY LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE?

It allows us as designers to make a difference that spans generations.

5 DESIGN PRINCIPLES?

Research the history of the location, be an active listener, and translate that input into beauty and an aesthetic that is rooted in its location.

6 WHAT'S YOUR SPECIAL FOCUS?

I love working in challenging urban frontiers where the outcome is less certain.

7 FORMULA FOR SUCCESS?

Collaboration, learning, and listening.

8 WHERE WILL YOU BE IN 15 YEARS?

I will still be designing and building, but at a scale that I have more control of – my year awaits.

9 OBSTACLES FOR THE PROFESSION?

I don't see the obstacles as obstacles.