Project Description

Project Identity and Location:
Pomona College Millikan Laboratory and Andrew Science Hall, Claremont, California

Purpose of Project:
Replacing an outdated Math and Sciences building that was located on a portion of the site, the new building transformed the old building and asphalt parking lot into a thriving academic center which also serves as a gateway at the north end of the Pomona College campus. A central courtyard provides a multi-use space with moveable furniture and flexible softscape for students and staff to study and gather outdoors. In addition, the new design better integrates pedestrian connectivity to surrounding buildings and improves site lines to the nearby James Turrell Skyspace. Stone and concrete paving combined with boulder seating and concrete seat walls with wool slat surfaces provide a natural and inviting courtyard that accentuates the architecture by EHDD.

Role of Landscape Architect:
The project was designed to educate. And with a high level sustainability goal we minimized water use, maintenance, and green waste while supporting habitat and offering seasonal sensory interest. The plant palette includes native trees and shrubs and a rain garden that cleans storm water run-off and removes sediments. The storm water management system is designed to raise community awareness about natural systems and provide students the means to measure water quality and volumes. Surface movement and changes in material reveal the flow of storm water as it travels from building roofs, is cleaned, and detained onsite.

Significance:
The revelatory design approach was sparked during workshops with the math and science faculty who expressed the desire for a highly functional, sustainable, and educational landscape. We worked with the architects to reveal the flow of rainwater from the roof all the way into the detention basin. The design also provides opportunities for outdoor learning for a variety of subjects. Native plants allow the biology department close access to that community. An outdoor classroom provides space for lectures and study groups of physics experiments. We blended the physics faculty’s desire to host interactive equipment to let students become and study physical forces with the math and other sciences departments; desire for a flexible and garden-like space. The result is a courtyard with a small event lawn, patio spaces, deciduous Sycamore trees for shade and light, and beautiful stainless steel sculptures that double as interactives. A human sundial, a bench that becomes a lever, and a steel arch that can hold swings or be used as a projection screen allowing for interactive learning for students of all ages. The project received a LEED Platinum commission.

Special Factors:
The Millikan Laboratory continues to teach as it reveals the value of learning from and in nature.