

SCCASLA 2016 QUALITY OF LIFE DESIGN AWARDS SUBMISSION: *Ruth Shellhorn*
Communication Category: Publications on landscape architectural history

PROJECT IDENTITY The Project is a book about the midcentury landscape architect Ruth Patricia Shellhorn, FASLA (1909-2006), co-published by the University of Georgia Press and the Library of American Landscape History in April 2016. *Ruth Shellhorn* is a generously illustrated, European-quality paperback, 230 pages in length, with full-color and black and white photographs, drawings, and plans.

PURPOSE OF PROJECT *Ruth Shellhorn* is the first in a planned series of books, “Masters of Modern Landscape Architecture.” The beginning third of *Ruth Shellhorn* presents an intensive biographical Overview of Shellhorn’s early life in Pasadena, her six years of professional training at Oregon State University and Cornell University (1927-1933), her transformative post-college travel experiences in South America, and her mentors, Florence Yoch and Ralph D. Cornell. The Overview also explores how Shellhorn overcame gender issues and the effects of the Depression-era economy when she first began working in 1933, and it considers her “manifesto,” which reveals the details and process of her design philosophy. The Overview is followed by an in-depth analysis of a dozen projects by Shellhorn. Collectively, these projects offer a representative glimpse of some of the Southland’s most iconic postwar landscape designs, including Disneyland and the Bullock’s stores. *Ruth Shellhorn* is written in a clear, jargon-free style and is intended to appeal to professional and student readers, as well as the interested layperson; it also is meant to activate appreciation for the unique and previously unpublished oeuvre and design philosophy of a landscape architect who had a major impact on the development of the midcentury Southern California landscape.

ROLE OF THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT *Ruth Shellhorn* is the result of the landscape architect’s hundreds of hours of original research of primary sources, including interviews with Ruth Shellhorn and her colleagues, clients, and many others. The landscape architect spent ten years collecting photographs of Shellhorn’s plans and landscape designs, and brought to bear great foresight and persistence in orchestrating the preservation of Shellhorn’s professional papers (over 400 boxes of materials) at UCLA Library Special Collections. The landscape architect has enhanced our quality of life by painstakingly preserving and resurrecting the record of Shellhorn’s remarkable life and career, and by providing a historically rich point of inquiry and understanding into a distinctive field of cultural landscape architecture in Southern California.

SIGNIFICANCE Positive public response to *Ruth Shellhorn* has been substantial. Published only a few months ago, the book has become an instant resource for landscape architects who study midcentury cultural landscape design. The landscape architect has heightened the educational value of the book by giving lectures for the Harvard Graduate School of Design, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, the Society of Architectural Historians, and many others. Landscape history professors and their students view the research as an essential element in understanding the planning and development of postwar Southern California. Professionals and laypersons alike appreciate that understanding the application of Shellhorn’s design philosophy within a regional context enhances our quality of life.

SPECIAL FACTORS The landscape architect also played an instrumental role in the making of a documentary entitled *Ruth Shellhorn: Midcentury Design in Southern California*, which was produced by the Library of American Landscape History and released in April 2016. Co-funded by SCCASLA, the film adds an enriching amount of visual detail that furthers our understanding of Shellhorn’s professional contribution.