



Landscape Architects Network, April 1, 2014 "Receptor by Cliff Garten Studio," by Marta Ratajszczak
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Receptor by Cliff Garten Studio

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Modern cities are in grave need of great public spaces – plazas and squares, meeting places for communities, green areas inspiring people to spending time outdoors. The trick is to make the area interesting while keeping it human friendly and practical. Cliff Garten, internationally recognized sculptor, founder of the [Cliff Garten Studio](#) and the designer of the Receptor project, seems to have nailed it; his constant search for a public space which can become more than just a sum of its functions resulted in several extraordinary projects, the Receptor at Patriot Ridge in Springfield, Virginia being one of the most recent.

The designer

Cliff Garten is a recipient of several rewards and fellowships, including being cited for design excellence by the [American Society of Landscape Architects](#). His designs are defined by the fusion of sculpture and landscape architecture, integration of private and public function, personal and social experiences. The spaces designed in his studio are always site –



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Lit up at night the Receptor project is certainly eye catching; credit: Cliff Garten Studio

The design

The sculpture in Garten’s eyes is not just the usual separate object that we are all used too; it encompasses its surroundings, joining together the traditional monument with the elements of landscape and architecture. In the case of the Receptor it consists of the central bronze and stainless steel sculpture, surrounded by four organically – shaped mounds of earth covered by grass and ornamental planting. Each mound’s perimeter consists of concrete seating, lit up at night with LED lights.

The central sculpture, also brightly lit at night, symbolizes a platform for communication through its three elliptical and circular dishes. The linear seating bands create a linear landscape which references the reception of satellite communication from space to the earth. The whole plaza is quite spacious, but not gigantic, covering the area of 250×400 feet (about 76×122m).



Sculpture for the Receptor project; credit: Cliff Garten Studio

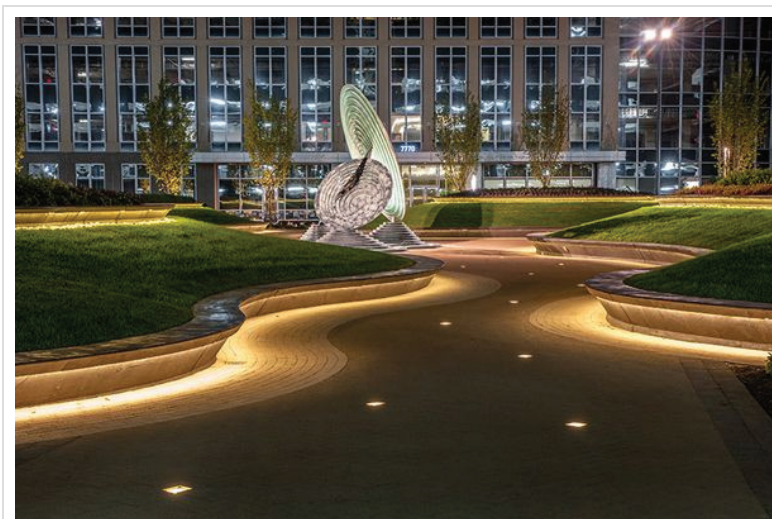


A close up of the sculpture; credit: Cliff Garten Studio

The whole area is well visible from the surrounding tall office buildings, including the adjacent National Geospatial Intelligence Agency. The employees and visitors use the space extensively – to rest, meet, and socialise. The central sculpture provides a great



meeting place, whereas the long benches, integrated into the mounds allow for the more private gatherings, providing plenty of space to sit down and socialise. The soft, organic shapes of the earth mounds together with the accompanying greenery create a relaxing, soothing atmosphere. Thanks to the bright, but soft LED lights the plaza is user - friendly also during the hours after dark, which enhances its usability immensely.



A well thought out and beautiful spacial experience; credit: Cliff Garten Studio

It is evident that the design of this plaza was thoroughly researched and thought through. The central sculpture and the surrounding mounds work together, creating a great public space. I can only wish that more modern cities get that kind of area designed and executed for them - we certainly need it!

Project title: Receptor

Project Location: Patriot Ridge, Springfield, Virginia

Client: Dean Lopez, VP, Development and Construction, Corporate Real Estate Properties Trust

Landscape Architects: [Cliff Garten Studio](#)

Completion date: 2013



Marta Ratajszczak, Writer

Marta is an ambitious garden designer based in Poland, always trying to think outside of the box and express new ideas to encourage people to open their mind to the beautiful world of design and imagination.