CREATING ENVIRONMENTS FOR LEARNING

MPA designed two outdoor classrooms for New York City parks, one located at the threshold between land and water, and one on the edge of an oak wood.

The classroom at Eib’s Pond in Staten Island bridges across the fragile area of wetland vegetation while engaging flora, fauna, and hydrological change. A destination and an entry point towards new experiences, the classroom is used by children from the nearby public school as an educational facility, and by people of all ages as a place for relaxation and fishing.

The classroom at Roy Wilkins Park in southern Queens provides its underserved community with space in a wooded natural preserve. The porosity of its “walls” and roof recall the space made by a filigree of leaves and branches overhead; the ground is designed topographically, as part of, but also distinct from, the surrounding forest floor. The path of approach becomes a ramp which leads the visitor through the pavilion, past the two level multi-functional meeting and work area, onto an overlook into the woods beyond.

MPA directed AmeriCorps members in the construction of the two classrooms, using a combination of sustainably forested redwood and recycled plastic lumber. The Parks Council funded the materials for the classroom and coordinated the AmeriCorps program.

RECOGNITION

The Power of Pro Bono, 2010
Places Award, Environmental Design Research Association, 2003
Merit Award, Wood Design Awards, 2003