

# 2009/10 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships

## Denver Urban Forest Project Award

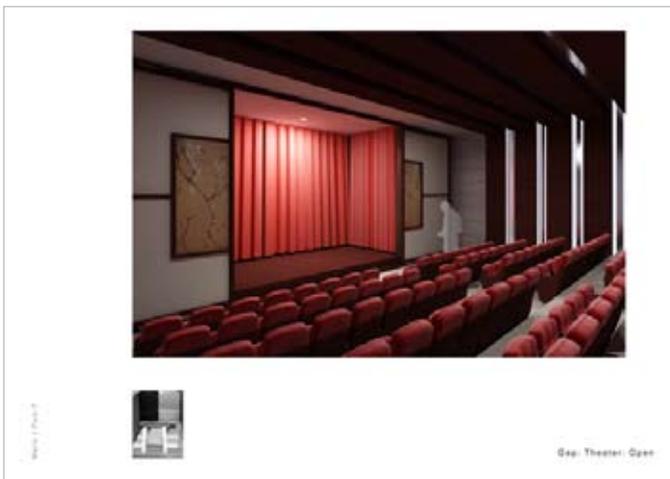


**MARIE PARK**  
Industrial Design  
Graduate Student  
TBD



My first sense of a community was in a predominantly Korean-American area of Plano, Texas. I was surrounded by the secure atmosphere of belonging to a community of local shop owners, entrepreneurs and professionals. In the 1990s, many of the former cultural establishments, local Korean-grocery stores, restaurants and community centers were uprooted. Populations shifted accordingly. Entire communities were transplanted, diminished, revived and hybridized. There was an economic disparity between Korean-American business-owners resistant to the change of "character" of their neighborhoods and those more willing to join newly-gentrifying business networks. What were the roots of this community's evolution?

As a student at Pratt Institute, I have observed more deeply the urban forces that led to one Korean-American group fighting to preserve their grassroots businesses and another desiring the economic benefits that would come with "urban renewal." These problems were by no means specific to Plano. I became intrigued with tracing the impact of urban forces, immigration and gentrification in particular, on



**Worldstudio**  
FOUNDATION



the professional association for design

## MARIE PARK

Industrial Design



ethnic communities in New York, San Francisco and London. I extended my design considerations to fit a broader interest in the evolution of communities through time, population shifts, and the use of more efficient and sustainable materials and technologies.

Yet, I knew that these theoretical interests called for practical application.

Fortunately, my professional architectural experience has only continued to fuel my interests in shaping the character of environments on an urban scale. In Brooklyn, at NICHE Design Group, I worked on large and small-scale designs ranging from furniture to yoga centers. While interning at Ballinger in Philadelphia, I assisted the design team in creating the Johns Hopkins Simulation Center, an environment where professionals would be trained by new technology methods. Working at HLW International in New York City as a member of the design team for Google's offices at the Chelsea Market, I gained nuanced insight into the benefits of sustainable design practice.



Though my academic experiences centered on the cultural evolution of communities, I sought out exposure to the fundamental dimensions of urban planning. This desire led me to a government project with the New York City Police Department. I studied the movement of foot traffic inside the NYPD's building as part of an interior space-planning project. The flow of policemen and detectives into and out of the building made me realize that work spaces were not confined to the building interiors. Design needed to take into account the continuous movement of workers and their community. I consequently envisioned their workspace as encompassing the entire city.



My project at the NYPD revealed to me that society's workplace—from policemen in Lower Manhattan to Internet executives in Chelsea and indeed, to Korean business-owners in Plano—has become increasingly interconnected through local urban and global interaction. How do we preserve the character and culture of communities within networked cities? How do we cease to ignore the needs of disadvantaged groups, while still supporting urban operations?

Though my interests may appear varied, I do understand that all large-scale questions need small-scale actions. One of my steps was to become LEED-certified. Also my studies at Pratt Institute immersed me in an interdisciplinary community that has enhanced my ability to collaborate effectively. My childhood in Plano and my professional experience in Philadelphia and New York has shown me that, at its heart, design is about a human element, best integrating populations into their communities.