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When it comes to thinking on a big scale, urban advocate Andrea Woodner is the brain trust

Speaking a mile a minute,

Andrea Woodner jabs the table with her index finger and states her ambition for "Reinventing Grand Army Plaza," the latest project of the Design Trust for Public Space, her nonprofit organization that seeks to enhance New York's beauty, sustainability, and accessibility. "This is to be the greatest landscape architecture design the city has seen in years!" she exclaims. "We want the people to enjoy it and the departments that have jurisdiction over it to really feel they can be its caretakers."

Designed in 1867 by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux as a threshold to Brooklyn's Prospect Park, Grand Army Plaza has become a maddening traffic circle: An estimated 4,000 cars pass through its converging interchanges daily, while its dignified core—a majestic arch and fountain—is isolated by the hazardous crossings required to reach it. Clearly, Grand Army Plaza doesn't work, and the Design Trust wants that to change. It's a tall order, but Woodner is confident. "I'm looking forward to the controversy," she says of the inevitable objections that attend a project like this.

A sculptor and an architect from a ➤



From top: The founder and board chair of the Design Trust for Public Space at home with her dog, Lucinda. The entry to the Pentagram-designed outdoor exhibition of the 30 competing plans to reimagine Brooklyn's Grand Army Plaza.

mover shaker



mover shaker



structure, and now we're doing the parks," says Woodner. The GAP project, the first phase of which was an ideas competition, was originally suggested by an alliance of community and cultural organizations called the Grand Army Plaza Coalition. "You can't have this building boom without a public-space boom to accommodate human need," says Woodner, referring to Brooklyn's breathless recent development. (Even a new Richard Meier & Partners Architects condominium has just gone up near the plaza.)



family of real estate developers, Woodner blended her areas of expertise when she founded the Design Trust in 1995. Since then, the organization has completed more than 25 projects in New York, influencing design practice and public policy. Approached in 2001 by a community group called Friends of the High Line, the Trust extensively studied development possibilities for the derelict elevated railway on Manhattan's West Side. This led the city to rescind its demolition order for the structure, laying the groundwork for New York's most anticipated neighborhood transformation.

While the private sector began embracing green-building practices in the 1990's, the Trust led New York's public-sector environmental movement. "We started with buildings, moved to infra-

The enthusiasm of elected officials when the Plaza ideas were presented in September was a sign that it's already a compelling project. Indeed, the Trust's systematic inclusion of public agencies, neighborhoods associations, and design professionals at every programming stage is a guarantee of its efficacy. "It's always a dialogue—that's sacrosanct to the Design Trust," Woodner notes. After accepting

Clockwise from top left: The scheme for Canopy, one of the two winning preliminary Grand Army Plaza designs. Competition entries individually displayed in 8-foot cubic kiosks. The cross section of Please Wake Me Up, the other winning design. Sketch Model, seen in the trust's "Taxi 02" organized for the 2007 New York International Auto Show. A rendering of the pedestrian esplanade envisioned in Please Wake Me Up.



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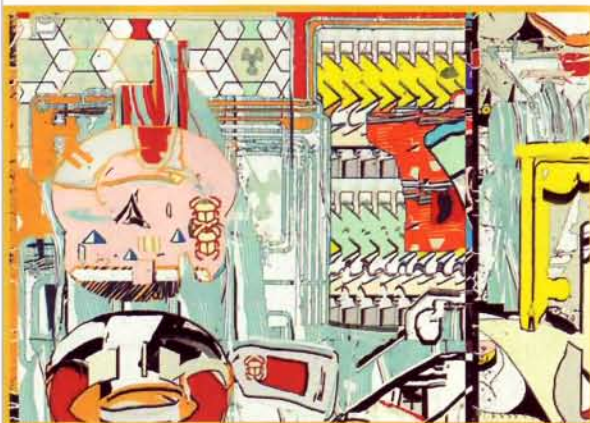
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applications from individuals, city agencies, and community groups, a jury will convene to select a single project to support. The Trust will then identify fellows to recommend design practice or public policy, which, as a result of the very democratic nature of this process, will likely be endorsed by all concerned. "We encourage and, to a certain extent, enforce the dialogue between these disparate parties," says Woodner. "We're interested in a facilitating, midwifery role." Sounds like a recipe for the Design Trust's success and for a better New York all around.

—Christine Schwartz Hartley

The Design Trust for Public Space hosts its Seventh Annual Benefit Art and Design Auction on November 19 at Milk Gallery in New York. To view artworks go to designtrust.org



From top: Rosaire Appel's mixed-media *Factory Song*, a piece for sale in the Design Trust's Seventh Annual Benefit Art and Design Auction. *Isabel*, a silver print by Keith Carter. Tj Best's *Elytra* table in holly wood and painted steel. Pauline Wertz's porcelain gun.