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## **AIA New York Welcomes 2026 Leadership, Introduces 2026 Presidential Theme “Repair: Democracy and Urban Space”**



*Incoming AIANY President Mark Gardner, AIA, NOMA, asks us to explore design as an act of care, restoration, and renewal, approaching the remediation of our built environment as a physical and moral project.*

**New York City, December 18, 2025** – On Wednesday, December 17, 2025, AIA New York welcomed its 2026 Board of Directors at the annual Holiday Gathering and Board Inaugural. Executive Director **Jesse Lazar, Assoc. AIA**, and 2025 President **Ben Gilmartin, AIA**, began the evening by reflecting on and celebrating this year’s achievements. Following the passing of the gavel, incoming 2026 President **Mark Gardner, AIA, NOMA**, shared thoughts on his presidential theme, Repair: Democracy and Urban Space.

Gardner’s 2026 theme is a call to action for architects and allied professionals to serve as design citizens, advocates, connectors, and environmentalists. In architecture and public space,



repair is an act of care, restoration, and renewal; it addresses social, ecological, and spatial inequities that heal communities and strengthens the civic fabric. Gardner's theme arrives at a pivotal moment—next year, the United States will celebrate its 250th anniversary as a nation, and New York City will have just commemorated its 400th anniversary. The 2026 presidential theme prompts us to reflect on this occasion, guided by the notion that our cities, particularly New York, are living examples of our civic ideals. How can we better listen, collaborate, and mend existing fractures to reconfigure a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive future?

In conjunction with this theme, Gardner's focus this year is on examining the American Experiment and elevating underrepresented voices. The topic of repair will guide the 2026 Center for Architecture Lab program, a multidisciplinary residency that empowers emerging voices in architecture and design. This spring, two Lab projects: "Energies of Repair: Visualizing Community Power in NYC" by Andrea Johnson and Ashley Dawson and "DEPAVE: An Ecological Repair of the Ground" by Friend Making Work (Christine Giorgio, Amelyn Ng, and Gabriel Vergara) will be granted creative authorship across the Center for Architecture's exhibition spaces and digital platforms. The two cohorts will address the urgent need to repair not only the physical infrastructure of our environments but also the political and social inequities embedded within them.

## **CHAPTER RECOGNITION**

The inaugural also served as an opportunity to recognize members and projects of the architecture and design community for their contributions. AIANY's Vice Presidents recognized the Chapter's program committees with Vice Presidential Citations for contributions in each of the organization's mission areas: design excellence, public outreach, and professional development.

### **AIANY Vice Presidential Citations**

AIANY Citation for Design Excellence: AIA New York recognizes *Recipe for a Room: Places of Food and Culture*, organized by the AIANY Interiors Committee.

AIANY Citation for Professional Development: AIA New York recognizes *Fallingwater Retreat: A Friends and Family Architectural Symposium*, organized by the AIANY Committee on Residential Architecture.

AIANY Citation for Public Outreach: AIA New York recognizes *Modes of Practice*, organized by the AIANY Planning and Urban Design Committee.



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*\*individuals with a new position on the Board*

*\*\*individuals joining the Board for their first term*

**About Mark Gardner, AIA, NOMA**

Mark L. Gardner, AIA, NOMA, is a principal at Jaklitsch / Gardner Architects (J/GA), an award-winning design practice and studio that works across scales from product design to interiors to buildings. His firm has won an AIA National Honor Award and numerous AIANY, NOMA and Architizer design awards. Gardner is the Assistant Professor of Architectural Practice and Society at the School of the Constructed Environments, Parsons School of Design / the New School. He is the past Director of the Graduate Program in Architecture. Mark is on the Board of Advisors for the University of Pennsylvania Weitzman School of Design, where he advocates for issues of diversity and inclusion. He also currently serves on the Board of Youth Design Center (YDC), a nonprofit on a mission to reduce the number of disconnected youth in Brownsville, Brooklyn by lowering their barriers to entry to the STEAM professions and increasing their relevant experience in the innovation economy. He is a Vanguard Member of the Van Alen Institute's Board of Trustees and a Fellow of the Urban Design Forum. Gardner is a Past Co-Chair and current member of the AIANY Diversity & Inclusion Committee, which he helped to restart with Venesa Alicea.

**About AIA New York**

Established in 1857, AIA New York is the oldest and largest chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), serving as the collective voice of nearly 5,000 licensed architects, allied professionals, students, and design enthusiasts in New York City.

Inaugurated in 2003 as one of the AIA's first cultural institutions, the Center for Architecture engages local and international audiences with the value, impact, and wonder of architecture. Together, we advance the value and practice of architecture to promote just and sustainable communities.

Both AIA New York and the Center for Architecture advocate for the importance of design in enhancing urban life, offering programming that fosters engagement among architects, professionals, and the public. We prioritize values such as civic engagement, equity, environmental sustainability, resiliency, technological innovation, and inspiring design.