TEARDROP PARK

ADDITIONAL LINKS
Battery Park City: http://www.batteryparkcity.org
Project for Public Spaces: http://www.pps.org/great_public_spaces/one?public_place_id=869
ASLA Professional Award: http://www.asla.org/2009awards/001.html
LAF Case Study: http://www.lafoundation.org/research/landscape-performance-series/case-studies/case-study/391/
“Experiencing **natural environments** is widely recognized as an important part of early childhood development, and yet most urban playgrounds have banished plants in favor of equipment. Teardrop Park is designed to address this gap, offering **adventure and sanctuary to urban children** while engaging their minds and bodies. Site topography, interactive water fountains, natural stone, and intimately-scaled plantings contribute to **an exciting inner world** of intricate textures, intense scale differences, and precisely choreographed views, all nestled in Battery Park City.”

–**Landscape Architecture Foundation**
Located in the planned community of **Battery Park City** on the southern tip of lower west side of Manhattan alongside the Hudson River, Teardrop Park is a public park situated between four residential buildings. Designed by landscape architect group **Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc.**, Teardrop Park, which stretches across a tiny 1.8 acres, was completed 2006 at a 17 million dollar budget.

Battery Park City is a planned neighborhood that began as a land reclamation project along the Hudson River using excavated materials from the construction of the World Trade Center, New York City Water Tunnel, and other projects. According to the city’s webpage, with more than five million square feet of environmentally sustainable construction on its 92-acre site, Battery Park City is the largest "green" neighborhood in the world.
**CONTEXT:**

1. The gap between the residential buildings is very narrow. There are many site constraints, such as a high water table, poor soil quality, and strong winds. Wind studies indicated that the east/west corridors through the park would experience strong and cold winds off the Hudson River while the areas between the buildings would be more protected.

2. Solar analysis indicated that the residential towers that were to define the corners of the park, each ranging from 210 feet to 235 feet in height, would create tremendous shade.

**SOLUTIONS:**

The designers located major green space a.k.a. the Lawn Bowl in unshaded area (which was tilted southward to better absorb the available light). Play areas for small children, like the sand box, slide hill, and water-play rocks, were placed in the shaded and wind-protected areas.
The ICE WALL

Teardrop features a magnificent “Ice Wall,” artwork by Ann Hamilton and Michael Mercil, a children’s slide, sand boxes, water play, a reading area with rock seats, places to “rock hop,” naturalistic plantings, and much, much more for park lovers to discover. The Ice Wall was built in between Warren and Murray streets, in the middle of Teardrop Park. The Wall simultaneously suggests and reinterprets the geology of New York state. The individual pieces of Alcove bluestone (technically a thick veneer), retain their natural shape, color, and surface irregularity. Recessed black mortar helps establish solidity.
Teardrop Park employed artist Ann Hamilton to design a public work for the park. Her project employs the use of natural materials embedded into the park’s landscape.

“The art at Teardrop Park (1999-2004) lies imbedded within the physical and visual structure of rock, water, earth and plant. Three bluestone sections evoke a sense of geologic flux and transition between present time (now) and past time (then). While recalling a natural history of the Hudson River Valley, these sections might also recall the processes of quarrying, or of masonry. But this stonework neither comes from nor quite belongs to any of those things. And because it was never any other built thing, the stonework is not a ruin.

Lift, thrust, fold, fault, drop, scrape, erode—our rendering of geologic incident at Teardrop Park is not anti-form, but is also not yet, or not quite form. It is a becoming of, or coming to, form that makes real our relation to landscape as well as our relation to art.”

–Ann Hamilton
SUSTAINABILITY
Teardrop Park is a prime example of sustainable urban design. All stormwater is captured on site for use in the planted areas assisted by drip irrigation while the adjacent Solaire building captures its greywater for re-use in the lawn areas of the park. During construction, recycled materials were used; the rubberized play surface was made from recycled tires. Additionally, all stone in the park was imported from less than 160 miles away.

PERFORMANCE
Teardrop Park is used by an estimated 200,000 children annually. Designed to mimic the landscape of the Hudson River Valley, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates principal Matthew Ubanski stated, “We needed a strategy that allowed for some sense of exploration or unfolding in this very small space. Otherwise people would just come in, see everything, and leave.” However, Project for Public Spaces criticized the project with regards to access, performance potential, and usage by a minimal local populace.