



The Architecture of Remembrance (10/13/16)

- 00:00:26 Alice M. Greenwald: Good evening. My name is Alice Greenwald, and I'm the director of the 9/11 Memorial Museum. I am delighted to welcome all of you to this very special program tonight, which is being presented as part of Archtober, the architecture and design month in New York City. I particularly want to recognize our museum members who have joined us this evening and to say once again how much we value your support.
- 00:00:53 I also would like to extend a special welcome to those who are tuning in to our live web broadcast. 9/11 memorials around the world have become touchstones, both for those most affected by the attacks and those who have no recollection of the attacks at all.
- 00:01:12 They are potent reminders of the obligation to acknowledge the worst terrorist attack on American soil and to remember the nearly 3000 innocent men, women and children who were killed as a result of them.
- Because each of our memorials is located at one of the three sites where the attacks occurred the 9/11 Memorial here in New York City, the Flight 93 National Memorial near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, and the Pentagon Memorial in Arlington, Virginia we all share a special relationship.
- 00:01:48 Tonight, just one month after commemorating the 15th anniversary of the attacks, we have the opportunity to gain deeper insight into the creation and the design intentions of these three magnificent memorials, from the principal architects themselves.

Michael Arad worked as a New York City Housing Authority architect before winning the international competition, for which there were over 5200 submissions from 63 countries, to design the National September 11 Memorial.

00:02:21 Michael also spent three years with Kohn Pedersen Fox, where he worked on several major projects, including Union Station Tower, a mixed-use, 180-story skyscraper in Hong Kong, and Espirito Santo Plaza, a 37 story tower in Miami that won the New York chapter of the AIA's Design Award citation in 2001. He is now a partner at Handel Architects.

00:02:47 Paul Murdoch is president of Paul Murdoch Architects, the award-winning firm he founded in 1991. The firm is located in Los Angeles, where Paul has also worked with the AIA Gold Medalists Arthur Erickson and Charles Moore. He has over 30 years of experience in the design and management of a wide variety of civic, government, and higher education institutions building projects, including the Flight 93 National Memorial. Paul has also taught architectural design and theory at UCLA and USC.

00:03:21 Julie Beckman launched KBAS Studio with partner Keith Kaseman, and together, they designed the Pentagon Memorial in Arlington. Concurrently, she is also the director of student services and an adjunct assistant professor at the College of Architecture and Design at the University of Tennessee Knoxville. Previously, Julie served as a full-time lecturer, graduate studio critic, and coordinator of undergraduate design studies, as well as director of student services for the architecture department at the University of Pennsylvania School of Design.

00:03:56 Joining our distinguished guests this evening to reflect on the relationship between architecture and remembrance and the significance of place in public memory is our own moderator, Clifford Chanin, senior vice president of education and public programs. Please join me in welcoming them.

00:04:20 Clifford Chanin: Thank you very much, Alice. Let me also offer my welcome to each of the three of you. There is a lot that we will talk about, and we'll have access to some slides if we need them, but let me ask you each went through a competition to emerge as the designer of the various memorials we're talking about. I want to ask how aware you were of this idea that, in each of the three places where the 9/11 attacks occurred, that you were somehow responsible for codifying a national memory.

00:04:56 Obviously, you knew this, because you were designing to the place and to the thing, but did you step back, and in what ways, think about that this is really part of a national narrative that what you're doing is really sharing something about the history that is rooted in the place, but extends both in time and space far beyond that place?

00:05:17 How did you think about that, as you each got the assignment that you did? Let me start closest to me with Paul.

Paul Murdoch: Yes.

Clifford Chanin: Good.

(laughter)

Paul Murdoch: We did. I would say one of the key things that we were conscious of was trying to suspend what was a very emotional time.

00:05:44 We got involved in 2005, only four years after, so there were still a lot of very raw emotions and very deep-felt feelings about what happened and what was ongoing at the time. I think part of what we were very much trying to do was take a longer view and not get entirely absorbed by that time, but be able to create something that would endure, because it's

there as a memorial to be remembered and experienced for generations. So it was very much in our minds.

Clifford Chanin: Julie?

Julie Beckman: Well, there's a part A and a part B. Part A is before we knew we were selected, and part B is after, of course. We chose to enter the competition as a means to kind of deal with our own grief.

00:06:49 We were living in New York at the time, and so we experienced the city in its crisis. I think both Keith and I were recent graduates from graduate school just several months before 9/11 happened, and so we were looking for a way to give back in some small way. We knew that there would be a conversation about how to remember, and so we felt this is how we can contribute, whether they look at our submission for 10 seconds or two minutes.

00:07:24 That was it. We didn't participate to win. We participated to get these emotions and ideas out of us. But once we learned that we won, that was another wave of emotion.

00:07:43 For us, we did feel an enormous responsibility and a tremendous honor to be given this opportunity to participate in something. I think it was all about very much suspending the emotion as much as possible, but getting to work immediately and kind of diving into the details and assembling the team and getting to work, really. But every time we would step back, we would realize the role that we were playing in this history.

00:08:23 Clifford Chanin: Michael?

Michael Arad: I agree a lot with what you just said. Those feelings of wanting to relate the only way that you know, as an architect, through

design to a very difficult and emotional experience that you yourself experienced here in New York.

00:08:43

By the time I proposed my suggestion for the memorial here, it came after a process which selected a master plan, and that master plan defined quite rigidly what a memorial could be. It wasn't what I thought it should be, on some level. It suggested that the entire site should be some 60 feet below street level, and there were buildings kind of jutting over the footprints or bridging over them.

I think, because of my experiences here in New York in the days and weeks that followed the attack, I realized how important public space was to our response as New Yorkers.

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If we didn't have places like Union Square and Washington Square to gather in, we wouldn't have been able to respond the way that we did. I think New York responded with a lot of stoicism and compassion. Those places afforded us that opportunity to do that. I remember going to Washington Square Park a few nights after the attack.

00:09:46

I lived in the East Village. That whole area was sort of cordoned off for a few days, and I was kind of south of that cordon line. I ended up at that fountain around 2, 3 in the morning. There were no more than a dozen people there standing around the fountain.

When I walked up to that fountain, I felt connected to all of them. There was no ceremony. There was no speech, but there was a sense of togetherness, which was really important. When I sent in my proposal, I suggested a plaza at grade. I thought the site should really be knit back into the urban fabric, that it had to be part of New York City again.

00:10:22

If you were to keep it 60 feet below street level, it would never be part of the city again. I think, because I was here in New York, I could feel sort of that emotional connection. There was a cerebral understanding of how

important public space is, like that it promotes democracy and civic virtues. But it was seeing how a place like Washington Square could change in the wake of the attack to support people that gave me that emotional belief that it could also be the appropriate response for this site.

00:10:52

It was almost like this polemical sort of letter to the editor, like "The foreign policy is wrong. You should do this," and you don't think that, at the most, it will be published as a letter to the editor, not that you would be entrusted with a foreign policy on that, but in effect, that's what happened.

(laughter)

Michael Arad: The jury selected that design, and it was then a tremendous responsibility, sort of phase A, phase B. How do you take that responsibility and bring it to realization?

00:11:21

Clifford Chanin: I wanted to pick up on this notion of public space, because, I mean, here we are, and it's obvious that that ambition of yours has been realized, but the two sites that you worked with are very, very different than something in the heart of Manhattan. The Pentagon is not on the main tourist track. In any case, it's not easy to get into the Pentagon, much less be there for the memorial.

00:11:47

Shanksville itself and I've been there twice, actually you've got to really make an effort to go there. You are hours outside of Pittsburgh. You're not going to go there by chance. In those two very different circumstances, how did you think, if you did, about the role of public space in what you were designing? Let me start first with who should I start with? Just go ahead, Julie.

00:12:14

Julie Beckman: Well, you're right. The Pentagon is not easily accessible, and it's the home of our defense, and so it was not meant to be a tourist

attraction in any way. So what we fought very hard for was to ensure that the memorial was accessible to the public 24 hours a day, despite the rollercoaster of red, yellow, and orange alerts that we went through during the time that we were working on it.

00:12:53 When the level would go up, they would say, "We're putting a fence around it" and "We're putting a gate, and it's going to close at 8:00." We said, "No, it can't. Put the fence on the outside of the memorial, so that, if you're trying to protect the building, we'll take our chances on the memorial. It's more important that the memorial be accessible to other people."

00:13:16 That's due to where it is and the fact that it is directly in front of the impact zone. That's kind of part and parcel of what happened that day. It's part of the story. It's not on the well-traveled path that many people visiting Washington get to experience, but that side of the Potomac is becoming a little bit more kind of cohesive, with Arlington Cemetery and the Air Force Memorial.

00:13:50 So there are more reasons to go on that side, but it does take effort to get there.

Clifford Chanin: Paul?

Paul Murdoch: Well, clearly, it's such a different problem that I'm trying to create an urban memorial. What we tried to do was take advantage of its remoteness, in a way, as a part of the American landscape and use the qualities of the landscape, which are quite beautiful there in Pennsylvania, to really derive the memorial expression.

00:14:29 You can see in the image we're sort of formalizing some of the space, because this is so open and in many ways scarred landscape.

00:14:44 We need to sort of create some more poignant, intensified moments in it to create the memorial, so in some ways, we're urbanizing some moments in this big landscape, but we had to really calibrate the fact that we were going to design a memorial landscape, rather than some sort of monument out there.

00:15:11 By virtue of it being remote, we had the space to do that and really to be able to create a type of memorial that people can engage in and walk through and be able to use this as a place of contemplation and reflection, which is really challenging in an urban environment. Hoping that all of those things then are worth the making a destination of it, because you have to visit there by intent.

00:15:48 Clifford Chanin: You had 2200 acres. Michael, you had just about 8 acres. And Julie just under 2 acres.

Julie Beckman: Mm-hmm.

Clifford Chanin: So the intent is very, very different, but I'm going to ask, since Paul opened this question of landscape in relation to the environment that you're in, I'd like you each to talk about that. Michael, you wanted to come in on this anyway.

Michael Arad: Yeah. I wanted to comment on something that Julie said, which had to do with the fences and this notion that, somehow, if we can fence ourselves off or wall ourselves off, we'll somehow be safe.

00:16:18 I think it's a diminution of our freedom and a diminution of our life, especially in an urban context. When the memorial first opened in 2011, it was still in the midst of a construction zone, and it opened with construction fences all around it, so for all practical purposes, it was as if you were in a building, because you were enclosed on all sides.

00:16:45 So the FDNY felt very apprehensive about how many people we could have on the plaza at any time. There was this regimen of time tickets and airport-style security screening. At the time, I kept saying, "These fences will come down. You just have to wait for the construction all around us to proceed a little bit further, for the streets and sidewalks to be completed," because they weren't in place yet. And I encountered a lot of cynicism, a lot of sort of "Oh, I'm sure."

00:17:15 There was almost this sort of acceptance that forever we will have security screening. A couple of years ago, sort of without any announcement, the fence went down, starting at the corner of Liberty Street in Greenwich, and then slowly, over time, more and more portions of the perimeter of this 8 acre plaza have opened up. I now work two blocks away from here. I rushed downstairs and I just saw people walking onto the Memorial Plaza without having to make any previous arrangement.

00:17:47 It was, for me, a really magical moment. I think it's really important that we hold onto this notion of what makes us as a society special, and that the ability to freely congregate, to gather, to have an urban city life is so important. That was one of the things that was under attack that day.

00:18:12 The response, to me, has to be to preserve that, and not sort of willfully, without any care about the possibility of danger and we've witnessed that in attacks in Paris and in Brussels and in Orlando just recently but with a sense that we should be able to gather in public, that that's our right as citizens of a great city. The right response for a memorial is to allow that to happen, to create those streets, to create that plaza at grade.

00:18:46 Maybe there are days where it's closed off, because it has to be closed off, but you don't design for it to always be closed off.

Clifford Chanin: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yeah. This is really the return of normalcy, in some sense. If you were designing a space, even in difficult times, that is to be open, that is to be accessible. It's a different kind of

assertion than building a fortress of some kind to contain this memory. Certainly, the Pentagon would be a place that would have all kinds of requirements.

00:19:19 But when you're making the argument that Michael just made and I imagine each of you made in one way or another was this an argument that resonated with the people who were on the other side of that argument, if that's a fair way to characterize it? Not that we would be cavalier with questions of security, but that the idea that this needs to be an open space to be experienced as a social collective was that understandable even in the face of the security concerns? Let me come to Julie first.

00:19:50 Julie Beckman: It was, actually. Even when there were times when they would discuss about we called it zipping it up. "Zip up the memorial." I think they had a hard time feeling like they had to make that suggestion.

00:20:08 I think the people that we were working with, namely the Department of Defense, people working on the Pentagon renovation program, I mean, they had an entire population inside that building that they would want to have access to that park at any time, not just during working hours. While they tried during times of zipping it up, they would try to be as generous as possible. "We'll close it at 11." Because we would argue that it has a presence at nighttime, that night versus day is very, very different, and we want people to be there.

00:20:49 But in the end, I think they realized that it's the building that they were really protecting, and there are means to keep vehicles away and whatnot, and I think they realized that it was more important to have the public be able to come and go as they pleased 24 hours a day.

Clifford Chanin: Oh. The access, again, is a very deliberate trajectory that you would make as a visitor.

00:21:17 But was this a concern, in one way or another, in terms of making it accessible to people?

Paul Murdoch: I wouldn't say it was a driving concern. I think our ultimate client is the National Park Service. It's a national park as well as memorial, so their mission is to make these places available. However, the type of memorial it is is very much about engagement and participation.

00:21:48 God forbid people would go to a park and walk, that they would actually go through this on their own two feet and come out of it with some sort of personal experience. It's very much meant for people to engage with it that way and not hold people off and look at it or snap a shot of it.

00:22:13 While it's not an urban place, it's a place in the American landscape, but it's a place for Americans and others to engage with very directly.

Clifford Chanin: Michael, did you want to come in on this issue? The pushback on the...

Michael Arad: Yeah.

Clifford Chanin: ...openness versus

Michael Arad: There was a lot of pushback. There were people that disagreed completely, who had some of the points that I was trying to make. That was part of this process here in New York. The base of Tower One changed because of security concerns. The design of the memorial changed because of security concerns.

00:22:50 There were memorial galleries which had been open, and there was concern that an event could occur within those galleries, and that was one of the myriad of reasons, not the sole reason, that led to some of the

design changes which occurred in the design of the memorial over an eight-year design and construction process. There was certainly a lot of advocating throughout that process, but you had wins and losses as a designer through that.

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I think that, at the end of the day, that, for me, there were two very fundamental ideas behind the design of the memorial, one of them this notion of a public plaza at grade. To be able to do that, to hold onto that idea, was critical to the success of the design of the memorial. The other idea was not so much due to security was this notion of trying to make absence physical, present, and tangible. I think the two voids capture that.

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When you begin a process like this, for me, I began with a very specific design. I knew down to where every joint line would be, practically. You have to kind of let go of some of that specificity, but understand sort of what are sort of the broader, important narrative points that you're trying to convey, and how to hold onto them, how to reinterpret them, through changes like the security changes, like budgetary changes, like constructability issues which come along.

Clifford Chanin: Yeah. Please, Julie, yes.

00:24:17

Julie Beckman: We called that the design intent. If we had to make adjustments, was it compromising the design intent? If it wasn't, then we can swallow a little easier and kind of negotiate on changes, but that was always paramount. It actually was the families that locked, in our case, the design intent.

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So you can take as many comments as you want, but if the design intent is changed in any way, then we're not going to listen to those comments.

Clifford Chanin: You mentioned a point that I think is worth discussing in relation to all of these sites, is the role of the families here, the largest

group, obviously, and the national memorial in the sense of the most encompassing, the most accessible but obviously the families, in the case of the Pentagon or Flight 93, were the most immediately concerned and were the most deeply engaged from that beginning point.

00:25:21 So let me ask: What was the evolution of that process and the impact that the families and we really can't speak, as you all know, in the singular, about this as a single group many different views, but ultimately, I think, in all three cases, the families did crystallize around the vision that is reflected in what was the outcome of these three processes. Yes. First, Paul.

00:25:48 Paul Murdoch: Well, the families were very much involved in the competition process. There were two stages, and each jury was well represented by family members. In fact, I think the second phase had a majority of family members, so their say was there in the formation of the mission of the memorial. The vision that they had for it was very much coordinated with the park services and some of the other constituent agencies.

00:26:22 In being selected through that process, there was an alignment with the families because of their participation in that process. Part of that was the ability to see beyond their own losses and see the significance of what their loved ones had done and the importance of making that available to the wider public and future generations.

00:26:57 It was very much part of why we, in our evaluation of whether to enter to this was the vision of the family members from the beginning, the way it was stated in the competition brief, and they have been our solid all the way through. They have been a great help to us through a very difficult process. They're key.

Clifford Chanin: Michael?

Michael Arad: It's hard for me to generalize on this one, because there were just so many different people who I've met through this process who lost loved ones and a complete range of reactions.

00:27:47 There are people who, I think, appreciate what we built greatly, and there are others which don't, but for me, throughout this process, it was always important to try to engage and make the case, knowing that I won't always succeed in making the case, but to be as open as possible about what my design intent was, but also knowing that I was going to hear a hundred different suggestions, and I couldn't be true to a hundred different suggestions.

00:28:26 I think the part for me that was most difficult the engagement with family members had to do with an arrangement of the names. Early on, there was a widow of a retired firefighter, and there was a discussion whether or not her husband's name should have been listed as a firefighter or not, because he was not an active member of the fire department at the time of his death.

00:28:56 He was working for Silverstein Properties. It was moments like that that, just kind of out of nowhere, just really grabbed you, and you could not have anticipated how difficult, emotionally, that it would be to try and make what's the right answer?

00:29:18 I mean, in that particular one, I knew what I thought was the right answer, but it was not what other people might have thought was the right answer. We were able to reach out to all the family members and engage them in a process that I called meaningful adjacency when it came to the arrangement of the names. When I first proposed this in 2004, when the memorial was selected, it was deemed as too complex a project.

00:29:51 The LMDC was in charge of the design process at the time. It had not yet transitioned to the Memorial Foundation. So that idea of reaching out to family members, asking them "Are there names of other people who perished that day that you would like to see next to the family member

that you lost?" was shelved. I was asked to come up with another way of arranging the names, and I couldn't think of any other way for arranging the names that would be fair and equitable, that wouldn't unintentionally privilege and I use the word privilege in parentheses there some relationships over others.

00:30:25 Even something as simple as an alphabetical listing would put some family members together and drive other family members apart, if they didn't share the same last name, or if somebody else shared the same name as them. There were many instances of that. We have three Michael Lynches. Two of them are Michael Francis Lynches listed on the memorial.

00:30:47 So just an alphabetical listing alone would have been a disservice to everyone. I suggested what I called a haphazard listing. It was with a really heavy heart that I made that suggestion, because I knew that it would separate people that should be listed side by side on the memorial families that flew together on the plane, siblings or parents and their children, who worked together in the towers.

00:31:14 For two years, that was the operating assumption for how the names would be arranged, and it aroused the ire of so many family members, and many different groups which represented different family members came together and came up with a counterproposal for how the names should be arranged. They had five principal points that they wanted to see listed on the memorial. On the names arrangement, they wanted the floor on which people worked, the rank that somebody might have attained, their age, the company that their worked for.

00:31:43 It kind of balkanized the names arrangement in a way that I had thought was counter to this notion of emphasizing both the individual loss and this collective loss. Instead of this collective loss that we all suffered and the individual losses of all these lives, it started to group people by this company, by that floor.

It was through a long process of negotiation and talking and then under the leadership of Michael Bloomberg, with the assistance of Patti Harris, we were able to come back to them and say, "Can we revisit this notion of meaningful adjacency in a different rubric?"

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By arranging the names into nine broad categories which reflected where people were that day the four flights, the two towers, and the Pentagon, the 93 bombing victims who perished here near the North Tower footprint, and the first responders, and they in turn are grouped by where they came from, from the same firehouse, from the same precinct house.

Almost as an afterthought, sort of, the mayor agreed. I don't know if it's an afterthought, but I remember we came to this idea of the geographical driver for the names arrangement.

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I said, "But could we bring back the meaningful adjacency?" And I was surprised we were given the opportunity to do this. I think most people who are elected to political office would have said no, because there was no certainty how successful it would be. Let's say that we were able to meet half of the requests. Now you have a group of people that feel that they didn't get something that somebody else did. At the end of the day and I'm not a religious person, but it felt providential. We were able to meet 100 percent of the requests that we got.

00:33:20

Clifford Chanin: More than a thousand requests.

Michael Arad: More than a thousand, but 100 percent of them.

Clifford Chanin: Yeah.

Michael Arad: 1200 requests. To me, it's very important, not just for the family members who come and look at a specific panel and see two

names side by side that reflect a deep meaning that it has for them. One of the panels at the North Pool, a young woman lost her father and lost her best friend from college. Her friend was working for Aon. Her father was on Flight 11. And her father's name is one of the last ones under Flight 11. Her friend's name is one of the first ones under World Trade Center.

00:33:53 But when people hear that story, it's no longer an abstraction of close to 3000 names. It's a very specific story and it's an opportunity to relate on a very personal and emotional level to a very specific instant of tragedy, of grief for one person. I think that's important to bring in here. It wouldn't have been able to do that if we didn't have that participation of the families in this process, but it's not an easy road.

00:34:19 Clifford Chanin: Can you each talk a little bit about the names' arrangements as you've had them at your memorials? Let me start with Julie.

Julie Beckman: Yeah. I'm going to bring up the plan, guys. The only one. Ours are arranged by their date of birth, and so we were looking for a way to enable a timeless nature of this place and something that would withstand generations coming and understanding the story of what happened there that day.

00:34:56 For us, understanding that there were five young children that perished there that day all the way up to a 71 year old gentleman and in between, and the impact of those five children I think it's best seen in the plan. I don't know if you guys want to put the plan up. It's number 1 of the Pentagon. Yeah.

00:35:24 Upon entering, you're faced with those five children, and the very first one was the youngest child, who is Dana Falkenberg. She was 3. The next one is her sister, Zoe. Her mom and dad are amongst the large array in the middle.

00:35:44 We faced that deeply, deeply, deeply knowing that we were going to separate family members. The way that we dealt with that is there's a plate over which the water runs and a plate of steel in the water, and on that plate, we list the other family members that were lost at the Pentagon that day and their birth year. So on Dana's bench on the plate in the water, it says Zoe Falkenberg, 1992, I think.

00:36:21 Then Charles Falkenberg and his year and Leslie Whittingham [sic], and that's another she wasn't a Falkenberg, and so

Clifford Chanin: Yeah.

Julie Beckman: the alphabetical we would have run into similar things. Probably, Keith and I are the only ones that know that we tried our best to align them perfectly across the site, so that the noses of the benches line up in a perfect line, but nobody else would really know that.

00:36:52 That was another way for us to try and bring the families back together across this field.

Clifford Chanin: Paul?

Paul Murdoch: Well, I think everybody experienced something like this. The park service really spent years trying to discuss just how the names should read, not even how they should be composed. Different family members had different ideas of what the names should be.

00:37:25 Obviously, it's an extremely sensitive part of any recognition. For us, there were 40 names. We decided, being aligned with the flight path, that we would do alphabetically arranged. We have this cantilever marble slabs that are only about 30 inches wide.

- 00:37:51 Some of the names, if they're large enough, in 1 inch letters, get to be too wide for the panel, so you have issues like that. We decided to have two lines for the names. There's nuances about the font, the size, the arrangement, the composition and whatnot.
- 00:38:18 But when it really threw us was there was a young Japanese passenger, and her mother wanted her son to be recognized in kanji as well as in the typical letters. Some of the flight attendants wanted to be recognized as flight attendants, not just passengers. We sought for another way to recognize that as a secondary information.
- 00:38:49 But then we found that one of the passengers, Lauren Grandcolas, was with unborn child. Should that have a 41st panel? Should that have the same, equal recognition as the others? In the end, we decided that it should be etched into the marble, like the kanji and like the flight attendants.
- 00:39:19 We weren't sure if that was going to be acceptable, but the family members that had a say liked the idea. I've seen many people go up to that panel and see her name and then recognize that more subtle etching and that being much more powerful than had they seen it equally with everybody else. So just very, very difficult design decisions.
- 00:39:52 Clifford Chanin: Let me ask: so much of this that you describe, the difficulty of before each of these three memorials are open now, and the role of the families recedes, to some degree. It now is a public space, and it's interacting with the broad public, but has the opening of each of these three memorials relieved or changed, in some way, the encounters you have with family members who might have had certain doubts
- 00:40:24 That the realization of something now this is the thing, in each of the three cases is now the physical, tangible remnant of their loved one, and that this is what is really the public encounter, so what they were worried about is now matched, at least in theory, against what's actually happening in each of these three memorials. Has that played out differently for them, do you think, now that there is a reality? Michael?

- 00:40:51 Michael Arad: Recently, I saw somebody. You make friends with people and then you become Facebook friends with them. Somebody I know posted pictures on their Facebook of their dear ones "They were on the memorial" and going there and just visiting and snapping a couple pictures and putting it on Facebook. There's just something so straightforward about that unassuming.
- 00:41:20 It kind of drives home this notion that "This is it. This is the memorial. It's done." It's completely out of your hands at this point. It's its own thing, and people interact with it the way that you could not have anticipated, could not have thought, and it's great.
- 00:41:41 The memorial, I think, where there's family members or other people, I think the volunteer staff at the Memorial Museum and the memorial have come up with various things for example, putting a white rose on the name of somebody whose birthday it is on that day that you couldn't have anticipated. It becomes its own thing, and that's very rewarding to sort of step back and let it be itself.
- Clifford Chanin: Julie?
- Julie Beckman: We really didn't have much pushback at all from the families.
- 00:42:14 We worked very closely with a small group of them, about nine members that had lost primarily spouses and one brother. They were incredibly supportive. I'm proud to say that we had a wonderful relationship with them. When we met other family members, they were just so thankful that a place was being made for them to use and come and reflect and pay with their respects.
- 00:42:53 I don't think there's a different experience with respect to them, except on opening day, which I do have an image of. I think it's number 6. Yeah.

This was an amazing day for us, because this was the first time we saw a lot of family members return to the side for the first time since losing their loved one.

00:43:27 There were family reunions. You can see a group of people all wearing purple shirts. They made T shirts with their loved one on it. There was laughter and memories. It was tears of joy, not tears of sadness.

00:43:47 I think, for us, we feel incredibly relieved that the place exists, not because it was a long and enduring project, but because it had to be done and ready for these people to enjoy, and not only the members of the families of the victims that were lost that day, but for everybody. We were the first memorial to open, and so it served as the nation's memorial for a couple years.

00:44:18 So I think it was important that there be a place where people could go and kind of just encounter their memories and their thoughts.

Michael Arad: Not to be a contrarian, but over spring break, I was in Colonial Williamsburg and Yorktown and Jamestown with the kids, and just being way too didactic as a parent, I'm kind of dragging them from one place to the next and talking about all the virtues and values and responsibilities of being an American.

00:44:48 Then there was an editorial in the Post by some family member that described my memorial design as unpatriotic.

(laughter)

Michael Arad: And I was like, "Here I am, basically marching them through Yorktown" and so it's nice when you can tie a bow around it and say it comes full circle and it works out, but it doesn't always, not for

everyone. I think that's just part of the messy nature of a democratic process.

00:45:20

But it also gives you the appreciation for when things work out, how remarkable it is. It really could have turned in any different direction.

Clifford Chanin: Right.

Michael Arad: It could become a very different memorial. I'm fully cognizant that we were walking on a very, very narrow path, and this memorial outside could have become very jingoistic or self-pitying or it could have become something different than what it is today, and I think that would have been a loss.

00:45:50

So I'm very happy with the way it came out. I feel relieved, but I also know that it could have turned out differently very easily.

Clifford Chanin: Paul, you also have the feeling that you had some moments in your process, which I don't know how much you want to relive here, but you had some

Paul Murdoch: I'd rather not, thanks.

Clifford Chanin: Yeah. You had some

Paul Murdoch: Well, I mean, actually, it's important to mention it, because all of these projects are very difficult in their own ways.

00:46:18

My recollection, the first memory that came back when you asked that question was the day before the opening in 2011. I was just standing near

the wall of names as the family members came up the plaza towards it their first chance to see this.

00:46:45 One of the fathers of a passenger just came up to me, his eyes red, tears rolling down his cheeks, and just gave me this big bearhug. I mean, it's that kind of moment when all of that other stuff just dissolves. As Michael said, it could have gone all kinds of different ways, but that sort of validating moment is something that you keep forever.

00:47:19 Two other things I wanted to say about that. One, in our case, we've been doing it through phases, and we're still not finished, so after the completion of the second phase, the last year, when the visitor's center was built, and the flight path walkway was built, and I had a lot of families come up and say, "You know, you explained it, and I saw the drawings, and now I get it."

00:47:53 Michael Arad: Yeah.

Paul Murdoch: Right? They were trying hard to visualize it. They were behind us 100 percent. And they finally got it. So it was gratifying that they were there to get it, and getting it was a good thing for them. But just a month ago, being back there, I was talking to the mother of one of the passengers, who is elderly now.

00:48:22 She asked about our last main memorial feature, which is a tower of voices near the entrance. She says, "When will it be done?" I said, "Well, we're going to dedicate it September 2018." She looks at me and she says, "You know, I've had cancer, and I don't know if I can make it."

00:48:47 All I could do was promise her some recordings in our process that will simulate and send to her, but, I mean, that's also what's happening. People are moving on. So this now has this gradual transition from the family members to the public, but that transition is kind of bittersweet, but it's important.

00:49:18 Michael Arad: Yeah. This morning I was on the Memorial Plaza and I gave a tour to high school kids, and I caught myself saying, "You remember" or "You know it." And I'm like, "Oh, wait. No, they don't know. They don't remember." They were 3 years old, 2 years when this happened, so they can't remember. Yeah.

Clifford Chanin: It's a remarkable thing. We see it here all the time with the student groups that come. Within a year or two, that sense that there is no memory will extend through college years. It's already in the early years of college as well.

00:49:51 This is a sense and coming back to what I asked in the beginning, I mean, you really are building something that extends out of the memory of the moment. It's trying to capture something about the memory, but 20, 30, 40, 50 years from now, the people who will be coming are not people who, in large numbers, are going to remember. Do you feel the breath of history on the back of your neck as you're thinking about all this?

00:50:19 Paul Murdoch: John Reynolds was with the park service a long time, and he was the chair of the federal commission for Flight 93. After the announcement and the sort of unveiling of our design in Washington, he came up to me and shook my hand and he says, "How does it feel to be part of history?" I almost got knocked off my feet. I mean, it's exhilarating, but it's daunting.

00:50:50 Julie Beckman: Yeah. I mean, we asked ourselves many times, "How do you make a place timeless?" and "How do you tell a story long into the future, when those memories are going to be gone?" For us, it was about keeping the interpretation as the responsibility of the visitor.

00:51:18 They can learn what they learn about 9/11 in school and then they can come and experience a park that remembers 183 people. We intentionally don't have a lot of writing and explanations and whatnot,

because we hope that that will be what endures. I always relate it back to my experience going to the Vietnam wall.

00:51:47 I mean, I was very, very, very young when that war was ending, and I didn't come from a family that lost anyone from that war, so that war wasn't a part of me, but I cry when I go to that wall, so there's something there that touches an individual that can somehow imagine the tragedy and imagine just the grand nature of what was going on.

00:52:18 I think all of our designs have that capability of allowing a kind of infinite amount of interpretation. I think, with respect to 9/11 especially, for those of us who do remember, that day was experienced by all of us in very, very different ways.

00:52:43 I mean, Michael and I were just recounting that we were both here in the city, slightly different places in the city, but Paul was on the West Coast and learned about it several hours later, and there were people from all over the world that were just tuning in. What they feel deep down in their heart when they think about this day is infinitely different from everyone else's. I think there's no way to kind of come up with one representation of it.

00:53:17 I think it's important that it's that kind of level of interpretation that carries on, in order to keep the story of these individuals alive.

Clifford Chanin: Let me just come to this, because Julie raises the point. Michael, I'll ask you to pick it up. Here we have a museum. In Shanksville, there is this interpretive center. Yours is integral to the whole concept of it. The museum here is complementary, but not identical in terms of process.

00:53:47 Yours, there is planned to develop something, but it was not part of the opening of the memorial. I'm interested, in each of your cases, how you see the need for this aspect of interpretation, as distinct from

commemoration and remembrance. With the passage of time, does that need change in some way, in your minds? Michael?

Michael Arad: To pick up on a couple things that Julie said, there is an aspect of suppressing authorship in the design.

00:54:22 I didn't want this to sort of be embellished by my interpretation, to be interpreted by me. As much as I could, as I approached this design process, I wanted to let the history of the site come through in the most unmediated way, without trying to sort of say, "This was good about it. That was bad about it. This is how you should feel."

00:54:47 To me, the two things that just had to come through was the loss of all of these people and the destruction of this place. I think the memorial tries to do that and not more, on some level. It lists the names. It marks the footprints. And it doesn't then try to impose another layer of interpretation, embellishment, or a personal take on it.

00:55:17 Obviously, this was deeply personal on some level. As a designer, you're engaged in a myriad of decisions, everything from the smallest to the largest scale, from the city block to how you turn a font on a marker for a panel. You want it all to sort of be synthesized and cohesive and to carry the same message. But I think the museum has a very complementary role.

00:55:49 It's almost like sort of the flip side of that coin. If the memorial tries to sort of leave it to the visitor who's coming here to fill in, to respond and some might respond with relief; some might respond with anger; some might respond with sadness. I think, when you're writing the text on the wall or putting together an exhibit, there has to be a much more didactic path a narration, almost.

00:56:21 If one side is sort of a silence that you fill, the other side, I think, is more of a voice that you listen to.

Clifford Chanin: Julie, you have one that is in the works, apparently, but how does that figure into what you've done with the memorial?

Julie Beckman: Well, there are plans for a visitor's center.

00:56:46

It will be somewhat offsite, nearby but not right there. We're grappling with it, as being so involved in the memorial and wanting that degree of interpretation to remain open. But I think, from the families' point of view, they're worried that the truths of that day are going to become skewed over time, even just as simple as what side of the building was hit and what happened that day. I think I respect...

Michael Arad: Yeah. Here in New York, you see the conspiracy nuts

Julie Beckman: Right.

Michael Arad: ...every year standing on the perimeter

Julie Beckman: Right.

Michael Arad: Claiming it didn't happen, which is incredibly hateful and insulting to have the

Julie Beckman: Oh, yeah. I don't know how much involved we will be. I hope we are involved at least in understanding what's going to take place there. But I do respect that level of kind of just facts and information to be available, without, hopefully, spelling it all out

Clifford Chanin: Right.

Julie Beckman: for everybody.

Clifford Chanin: Yeah. Paul, you had an integrated project.

Paul Murdoch: Yeah. I mean, originally, in the competition, we were to just design the memorial, but knowing that there would be some sort of a visitor's center there.

00:58:21 So we very consciously created a memorial that didn't have a lot of narrative, but the narrative would occur in the visitor's center, very consciously, and that that was really important, that the story of Flight 93, the responsibility of that visitor's center was to tell that story and not sway from it, because of what can happen.

00:58:51 It's only a 7500 square foot building, so it can't be everything. It can't do a lot of things, but it has to tell that story. Then that lets the memorial really operate in a kind of different dimension. It doesn't have to be a narrative dimension. It can be more of the imagination, as you've said.

00:59:16 I think there's something, with the exchange of memory and the imagination which happens in a good memorial, that allows people that sort of open-ended interpretation over time. If the memorial gets burdened by the narrative, it's very difficult to maintain that dimension.

00:59:40 Call it a poetic dimension, a visionary dimension, a spiritual dimension, whatever, but it has to operate with the memory and imagination to really be enduring, I think, whereas the narrative is about facts. It's about what happened. It's about interpretation, but

Michael Arad: They both are about what happened. They're just told in different ways.

Julie Beckman: Mm-hmm.

Paul Murdoch: Yeah.

Julie Beckman: Yeah, and in our case, part of the family mission statement was they wanted a place that makes you think, but doesn't tell you what to think or how to feel when you're there.

01:00:17

Hopefully, the visitor's center will allow that to be the case as well. Yeah.

Clifford Chanin: Very comparable, I would say, in terms of what developed here as well. This notion of an encompassing narrative, rather than a single track, was something that, because of the diversity, the numbers, the incredible range of experience, it was something that drove our work, from what I've seen, certainly, in Shanksville, and I imagine in the Pentagon as well, that will be consistent. Let's see if we have a question or two from the audience. Please, if you'd stand.

Audience Member: I think I can be heard clearly enough, though. There's one man who had sole responsibility to make a lot of decisions, and that was Ken Feinberg. I'm wondering now, having been through the process of working with the families and working with so many different groups, all of whom felt a need to have a say in what you all designed, if you sometimes wish maybe you had an arbiter you can go to, and then the person could say, "That's what we're going to do, and that's how we're going to do it"?

01:01:28

Michael Arad: If I may respond first, I think, if, on day one, we would have presented plans which approximate what's outside here today, they would have been rejected. You had to go through a process, and it had to engage people. I think that there's something positive about that.

01:01:49 It was necessary. I think you couldn't short-circuit it. Maybe Ken Feinberg could, in a very narrow bandwidth, but this is operating across different territories.

Clifford Chanin: It's far too human, I think, to be cleaned up that way, but please.

Julie Beckman: Yeah.

01:02:16 We operated so under the radar, people didn't even realize that a memorial was being worked on and being built. I feel we were very lucky, because we did kind of have this veil of not intentional, but we were able to just move along very smoothly. I think part of that was because it was the Pentagon.

(laughter)

01:02:48 Julie Beckman: They probably but, I mean, in total support of what we were doing. So we didn't get pushback from them. We really didn't hear very much pushback from family members. We had a lot of support, and I think we were very fortunate that we were able to just move through it very smoothly.

Michael Arad: It's a little different in New York.

Julie Beckman: I know. I know. I was, obviously, monitoring. I would always say to Keith, I'm like, "I'm so glad we're not [unintelligible] that project."

(laughter)

01:03:26 Paul Murdoch: Well, clearly, we were off in a little corner of Pennsylvania, doing our thing very quietly, but it's a federal project. It's a long process. There are a lot of forces at work there. As I mentioned, it's a national park.

01:03:44 We won this competition. We had this vision of what we wanted to do and this standard, and then there's this system in place that is not going to be entirely accommodating of all of that. At times, did we want an arbiter that could just decide "do it our way"?

01:04:17 Yeah, sure. We fantasized about that, but as Michael said, it's a process. I mean, you understand so many more things that have to be dealt with through that process than you would have imagined from day one. So there's nobody behind the curtain. You're out there.

Michael Arad: There isn't even a curtain.

Paul Murdoch: It's a process of engagement.

Clifford Chanin: One more. More.

01:04:44 Audience Member: In thinking about the memorial and all it meant to this country and to the victims and to everybody who's going to see it, you must have reflected on other memorials and researched other memorials and thought about other memorials in this country and abroad. I wondered if you can tell us one memorial or two memorials that you thought of or know of that you aspired to find the same feeling and the same meaning.

01:05:19 Clifford Chanin: Who'd like to take that first?

Paul Murdoch: I'll take it.

Julie Beckman: Mm-hmm.

Michael Arad: Yeah, go ahead.

Paul Murdoch: I mean, I think we're all familiar with other memorial designs, but we felt very locked into the mission of this particular memorial and this particular place.

01:05:44 It's really only stepping back years later and giving some presentations and whatnot that we start to find certain alignments. I think it's really important that there's that creative process that's very much focused on the task at hand.

What you see are three very different memorials that come out of that, in response to very different places and even different things that happened there.

01:06:19 In our case, sort of stepping back and presenting the project, I kind of rediscovered a whole series of Native American landscape memorials, earth mounds and monuments that were from Western Pennsylvania, all the way through the United States, into Iowa and whatnot, that the land had been calibrated with these memorials and monuments in an incredible way.

01:06:56 Approaching it from a memorial landscape point of view and a landform point of view, it was kind of discovering those and feeling a kinship with that.

Clifford Chanin: Julie?

Julie Beckman: Well, as I mentioned, I had a wonderful experience at the Vietnam Memorial.

01:07:19 We were young when we got this commission, and so everyone likened us to Maya Lin and a similar experience, but I think I feel very similarly, in the sense that this was a very pointed assignment. I know we did not do any formal research on looking at other memorials to be inspired by. We didn't need to, frankly.

01:07:49 I mean, the event itself was enough, and the lives lost were plenty of inspiration for us to dive into design options.

Michael Arad: I agree with a lot of what the two of you have said. I started to sketch ideas for a memorial, actually, a few weeks after the attack, and I couldn't imagine a memorial anything, actually being built at this site at the time. And there were already proposals circulating for what should be built there.

01:08:18 To me, it just felt too soon to even discuss it, and it's still a six-story high pile of rubble that was burning, and bodies were being pulled out of it, but that impulse to try and find a way to respond artistically as a designer was there. So I was drawing to the Hudson River, and I imagined the surface of the water sort of shorn open, forming two square voids, and the water falling into those voids and failing to fill them up sort of this passage of time not erasing that emptiness.

01:08:48 That image kind of led me down a year-long process of sketching and drawing and eventually model-building and photographing this model on the rooftop of my apartment building in the East Village, where I witnessed the second plane strike the North Tower, photographing against that empty skyline. I could see the absence of the towers in the skyline mirrored and reflected in these two voids which I had created in the water.

01:09:14

To me, that was very much sort of a cathartic, self-directed design exercise. There was no competition. There was no brief. I did it for myself. Then I kind of took this model and put it away. I came back to it a year later over the announcement of the design competition for a memorial that would be at this site. I tried to see how could I reinterpret it and change it and bring these voids from the river to the plaza?

I think, like any designer, I'm influenced by everything that I've seen in my life, whether it's examples like Maya Lin's famous Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., which is incredibly powerful, but also things like I came across this quarry in South Orange in New Jersey. There's just something beautiful about that absence made present that's scooped out, that hole in the ground, that was just kind of powerfully sculpted or whether it's the sort of ball courts in Chichen Itza, a little bit further south from what you were talking about.

01:10:16

So I think there's so many different influences. I remember people sent me images of Indian stepwells afterwards, saying they saw an affinity to that. So I think there's lots of different sources of inspiration. It's an odd, messy, and unpredictable process, and you don't know where it will come from or where that thread will lead you as you kind of keep pulling on it. But for me, it wasn't I admired these qualities about this memorial and these about that one, and can I aggregate them into something else. It doesn't work that way for me.

01:10:51

Clifford Chanin: Let me ask a final question here. Paul, this doesn't quite apply to you, because you're not quite done, but let's assume, for the sake of the question, that you are. Look back on it and just tell me what the most powerful takeaway for each of you has been. Let me start with Michael now.

Michael Arad: I'm sorry. I didn't understand the question.

Clifford Chanin: If you look back at your experience of this, the memorial is built

Michael Arad: Yeah.

Clifford Chanin: What is the most powerful takeaway that you have from that experience?

01:11:22 Michael Arad: I don't really have an answer for that. I think, until a year or two ago, I was still there, looking at a misaligned joint line here or a grate that popped the wrong way there. Then one day, especially now that two years ago we moved downtown. I was just walking across the memorial.

01:11:45 It was not the annual commemoration ceremony, which is incredibly moving. I wasn't there with somebody who lost a loved one. I was just walking through there, and for the first time, I could see it as it is, as other people are experiencing it. And there was something quite gratifying about that, to just see it in use by people that it's become New York.

01:12:17 This is really what I wanted it to be to be part of the city, and it has become New York. That's great.

Clifford Chanin: Julie?

Julie Beckman: I would say, well, first and foremost, it was an incredible experience, as a young designer. This experience of working on this project. I don't think I'll ever have one like it again.

01:12:49 It was a tremendous honor, as I said earlier, and sometimes I forget the magnitude of the role that we played. But I think really what it is is I agree that it's just in use and it's being visited. My husband took our 3 and a half year old there for the first time this summer, and he played on the benches as if it was a playground.

01:13:20

That's a beautiful thing for us, because he doesn't know what happened there, but he found a way to enjoy the place. I think that every once in a while I get an email from a stranger who was there and felt the need to send me a note and say how much they enjoyed it. I think that that goes a long way, too.

Clifford Chanin: Yeah. Paul?

01:13:49

Paul Murdoch: That's what comes to my mind. It's all the people there, the diversity of all the people there, from the 150 motorcycles that show up at a time to the 80 year old veteran trying to make his way down to the overlook. I mean, it's like all the thank-yous that really strike me, some of them stated and some of them just by virtue of them being there. So it's a form of gratitude.

Clifford Chanin: Well, I think, not only you have reflected a common look back, but for each of you, you really did capture something that was of essence to the sites themselves, and the proof of that is the way, as you say, people encounter them, use them, and they are all now engrained into our landscape. So let's thank Michael Arad, Paul Murdoch, and Julie Beckman. Thank you.

(applause)