Experiential Design – Rethinking relations between people, objects and environments

• Paper / Proposal Title:
The Power Of Place Is A Design Tool

• Author(s) Name:
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• University or Company Affiliation:
Signal Architecture + Research

• Abstract (300 words):
The power of place is a design tool.

There are many right answers to a design prompt; aligning the response with the people and the place create a timeless solution. The intrinsic character of a place –region, nature, character, and its people– influences where design inspiration begins. Understanding site forces through research reveals the technical and ephemeral components of a site as the first step in the design process, influencing form, material, location, and engagement. Through four projects of varying scales and locations, we will explore how the voice of the place influenced the design of these public projects.

Icicle Creek Music Center, Leavenworth, WA: Inspired by agrarian forms of the Cascade foothills and Pythagoras’ Music of the Spheres, the forms echo the weathered mountains, while the mountains echo the music created here.

Power of Consequence, Seattle, WA: Art gallery-for-one that sparks a community-wide conversation about the powerful influence of design–and the responsibility designers have to do the right thing.
Georgetown Wet Weather Station, Seattle, WA: Inspired by theater and hands-on learning, the facility is a machine built for the weather that makes the invisible action of cleaning stormwater both visible and tactile, engaging and becoming part of the community.

Cottonwood Canyon Experience Center, Wasco, OR: Through a slight twist, this facility inspired by barns of the region bridges urban and rural communities through a place that is equally enclosed and open, indoors and out, and standing firmly in history and the future—creating place out of 8,000 acres of space.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Mark Johnson uses a place-based, community oriented approach to his work. He is a design collaborator, drawing the best from clients, teammates, public artists, and community members alike. His work with cultural institutions, municipalities, and communities has allowed him to develop a keen eye toward deep green infrastructure and true sustainability of place – one that is rooted in site specific characteristics merged with the opportunity to demonstrate sustainability in a visual, elegant way. He has spent the last decade refining an approach to scale based regenerative design – matching occupant, program, and climate to place in projects, ranging from interpretive focused nature centers to public parks, municipal infrastructure and museums.

Utilizing his backgrounds in music and sculpture, combined with an ecological design sense, he works across disciplines to create dynamic shared visions — where buildings, landscapes, and people are interconnected, reflective of their context, history, and goals. Layering conceptual design upon natural processes, Mark’s work celebrates the human activities of a place through the capture of rainwater, the movement of the sun, and the passage of time. At once of the place and for its people, Mark creates places to live, celebrate, reflect, and learn.