

experiencing memory

Designers speak about the 9/11 Memorial Museum at the World Trade Center

“The pavilion takes a bold stance in order to reframe adjacent spaces, highlighting diverse conditions and complex emotions. It’s intended to provide equal parts insight, comfort, and hope.”

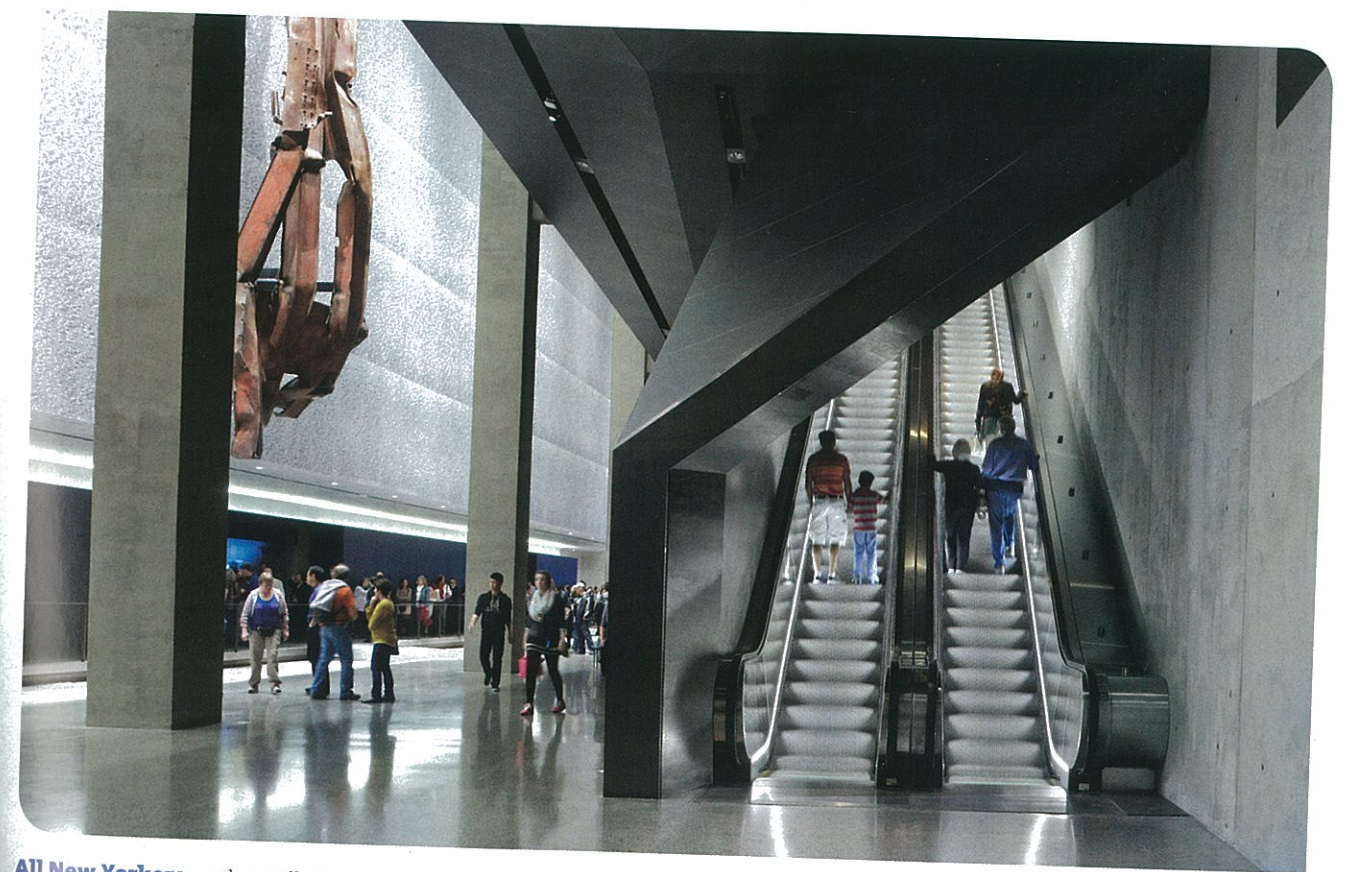
—Aaron Dorf of Snøhetta

“Our tools as architects are typically space-planning, form-making, and material specification. The museum reminded me that, when we see our palette as including light, sound, and ephemera, we have the ability to create even more powerful, evocative, and transcendent experiences.”

—Margaret Sullivan of Margaret Sullivan Studio

“Procession is an integral part of memorials, and here the whole story is told on the ramp going down, through still images, narratives, and objects, contrasting the many with the one.” —Tom Hennes of Thinc

“Descending into the foundations of the old towers is unforgettable. It seems to capture all the sadness and pain of being a New Yorker that day. Yet the hope and optimism return when you rise back to the plaza’s daylight.” —Shawn Sullivan of the Rockwell Group



All New Yorkers, perhaps all Americans, already walk around with a personal museum of September 11, 2001, in their heads. So how do you design a physical space that can embody, for everyone who visits, the emotional, political, and factual aspects of the terrorist attacks that killed 2,753 people at ground zero, in the destruction of the original World Trade Center, as well as 224 in Washington and in Shanksville, Pennsylvania? Four firms’ answers to that question have taken shape as the 9/11 Memorial Museum. To serve as its aboveground entry, Snøhetta founding partner Craig Dykers built an angular glass pavilion between the two voids of the memorial—the footprints of the twin towers. The subterranean portion of the museum, 121,000 square feet descending all the way to the bedrock, is the work of Davis Brody Bond’s Steven M. Davis. Thinc principal Tom Hennes and Local Projects principal Jake Barton collaborated on the exhibition design. Together, the space, the artifacts, and the digital interpretations tell the story. ➤

Previous spread: Trident columns recovered from the World Trade Center stand in Snøhetta’s entry for the 9/11 Memorial Museum, otherwise designed by Davis Brody Bond. The pavilion is flanked by the twin pools of the memorial, completed by Michael Arad with the firm now known as PWP Landscape Architecture, and surrounded by the towers of the financial district. Photography: Jin Lee.

Opposite: A gallery’s interactive tables allow visitors to pull up additional information about the victims pictured on the screens. Photography: Jin Lee.

Above: Suspended over the museum’s lowest level, a piece of structural steel bears witness to the plane’s impact between the 93rd and 99th stories of the north tower. Photography: James Ewing/Otto.



“A museum doesn’t need to be finished. It can be a platform for a changing set of experiences.”

—Jake Barton of Local Projects



“The plaza has become the life thing, the museum the death thing. The balance is what makes it successful.”

—Peter Walker of PWP Landscape Architecture

“The museum does what architecture and design should do—make something real, palpable, and visceral.”

—Andre Kikoski of Andre Kikoski Architect

Opposite: The “last column” remained in place until May 30, 2002, when its removal marked the official end of the recovery effort. Photography: Eric Laignel.

Top: A 60-foot-wide segment of the original slurry wall, holding back water from the Hudson River, has been stabilized with tiebacks anchored to bedrock. Photography: Eric Laignel. **Bottom:** Facing the slurry wall, panels of foamed aluminum wrap the exterior of the enclosure for the pool in the footprint of the north tower. Photography: James Ewing/Otto. ➤

“Our four big concerns were authenticity, memory, emotion, and scale.”

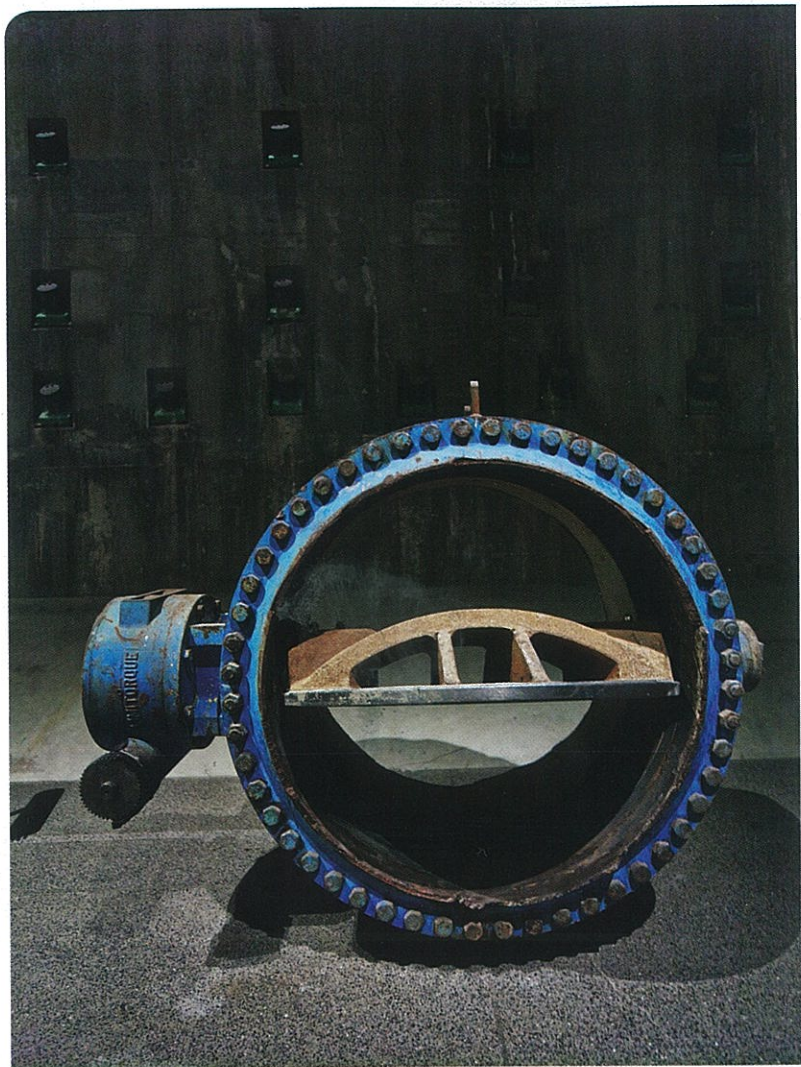
—Steven M. Davis of Davis Brody Bond

“The integration of architecture, exhibits, and immersive experiences clearly sets a new bar.”

—Todd DeGarmo of Studios Architecture



Ladder Company 3's truck, which helped people escape from the north tower, was then crushed in its collapse. Photography: Eric Laignel. ➤



Above: A river water valve, its diameter considerably smaller than today's standard, is displayed on the polished concrete floor. Photography: Eric Laignel.

Opposite top: A 20-foot section of the radio antenna that once topped the north tower now lies near the hand-painted squares of a mural commissioned from Spencer Finch. **Opposite bottom:** Allowing the outlines of box columns to remain untouched, per the wishes of victims' families, bridges give access to two galleries. Photography: Eric Laignel.

"The memorial is more abstract, the museum more didactic. But I've always seen them as one entity, conceived together. One can't exist without the other."

—Michael Arad of Handel Architects

"As a member of the jury for the memorial, I also followed the museum closely from the beginning, with visits to the construction site. But it's different when you see the space with the lighting and the collection, creating a relationship between the artifacts and the volumes. It's thoughtful and strong."

—Enrique Norten of TEN Arquitectos

