



Oodena Celebration Circle

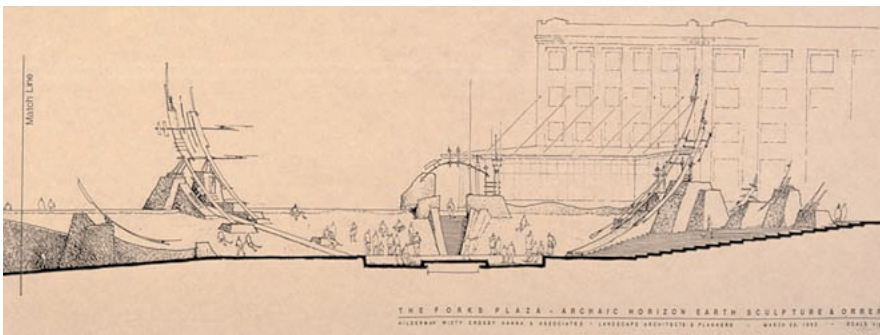
The Forks, Winnipeg, Manitoba 1993 - Present



Once in his life a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth, I believe. He ought to give himself up to a particular landscape in his experience, to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder about it, to dwell upon it. He ought to imagine that he touches it with his hands at every season and listens to the sounds that are made upon it. He ought to imagine the creatures there and all the faintest motions of the wind. He ought to recollect the glare of noon and all the colours of the dawn and dusk.

N. Scott Momaday,
The Way to Rainy Mountain (1969)
Published in "Crossings"

The Forks, situated at the junction of water-based travel routes that bisect the continent in all compass directions, has been a gathering place for thousands of years. It is perhaps the most important historic site in Western Canada. In late 1992, The Forks Renewal Corporation called for proposals to design a 'spiritual heart' among the commercial and recreational developments proliferating there. Now called Oodena Celebration Circle, after the Ojibwa word meaning "heart of the city", this new site was to be a rallying place, identifiable as the centre of The Forks development, and invoking the spirit that has drawn people here for the past eight millennia.



Oodena
CELEBRATION CIRCLE



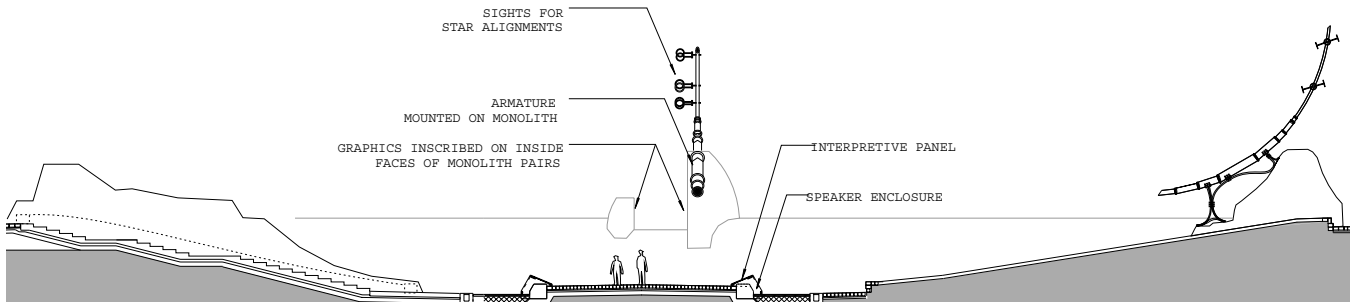
Located on a windswept wedge of land between the newly renovated Manitoba Children’s Museum and the Johnston Terminal retail and office complex, the site is a hub connecting several existing and proposed destinations. The technical requirements for the project included flood protection measures, provision for loading access to the historic buildings, short term parking, a school bus lay-by and a transit loop. The program also required a gathering space for ceremonies and presentations to be located near the riverbank at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers.

The design challenge was to identify appropriate uses for the site and imbue a sense of spirituality within the burgeoning

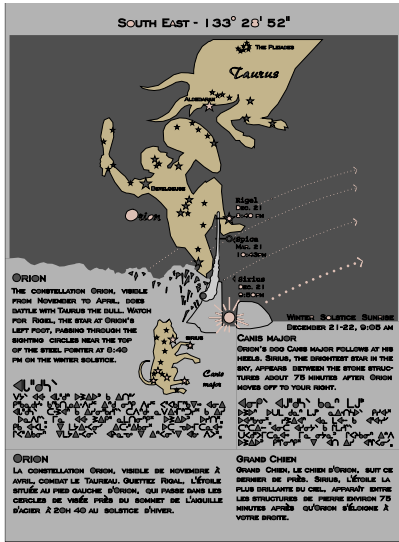
commercial and recreational activity. One aspect of the challenge was the diversity of cultural groups that had a stake in the heritage of The Forks. Early in the design process, Hilderman Thomas Frank Cram gathered archaeologists, historians, aboriginal representatives, designers and administrators in a workshop to discuss the source of spirituality in the landscape. The forces of nature, celestial patterns and mythologies were common themes running through the discussion.

Oodena Celebration Circle was, therefore, conceived as an opportunity to demonstrate our reverence for the long cultural history of the site, and to put us back in touch with the natural elements of earth, fire, water and sky. The 3 metre deep excavation unearthed what archaeologists call “the archaic horizon” – a 3,000 year old layer of soil rich in artefacts. The resulting “bowl” became a gathering place that evokes spirituality without reference to culture-specific symbols, by directing our attention to the beauty of the sun on the horizon, the wonder of starry nights, the serenity of winter bonfires and the drama of spring flooding – experiences, and presumably responses, which we share and thus, experiences which unite us as human beings.

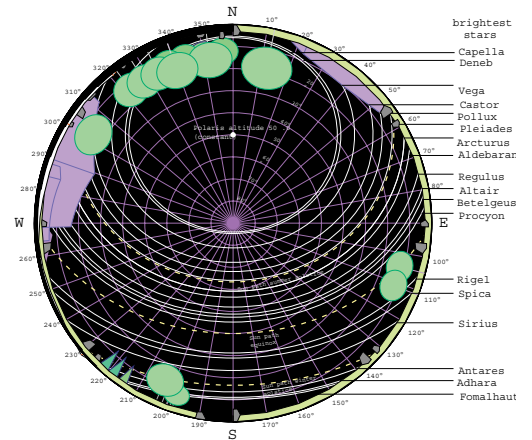
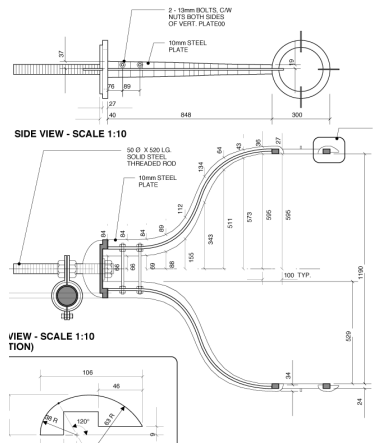




The gaps between the monoliths align with solstice and equinox sunrises and sunsets. Steel armatures mounted on the monoliths define precise sightlines for visitors to view specific stars. Stories and images from various cultures are presented on interpretive panels and sandblasted into the monoliths.



Typical interpretive panel, layered stainless steel, bronze and copper.



Site Plan of Oodena Celebration Circle

