

PENTAGON MEMORIAL

DESIGNERS' STATEMENT, BACKGROUND INFORMATION, PROJECT DESCRIPTION & BIOS

Designers: Keith Kaseman & Julie Beckman
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KBAS Statement:

"Like many people, from the moment we witnessed and learned of the horrific loss of life on the morning of September 11, 2001, we simply wished to extend our hearts to those whose lives had changed forever. Words will never describe how honored we feel to have played such a significant role in the Pentagon Memorial. It has been a true privilege to be part of a stellar team, and to have worked so closely with so many people who gave the project their absolute best. Further, we will forever be inspired by the strength and determination that carries all of the family members we have come to know so well over the past 6 years. Thousands of people contributed to this place so that its contemplative integrity will persist into the distant future and with its dedication, the Pentagon Memorial will take on its own life, attracting meaning and contemplative interpretation from all of those who visit this special place."

Keith Kaseman
Julie Beckman

Keith and Julie's Journey...

Upon receiving their Master of Architecture degrees from Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation in 2001, Julie Beckman and Keith Kaseman worked in separate architectural firms in New York City. Living in Manhattan, Keith and Julie experienced September 11, 2001 as most people in New York did, by learning about the horrific attacks amidst the chaotic shock and confusion on the sidewalks of the city with their own eyes. Along with hundreds of millions of people around the planet, their hearts cried in a way never felt before. Given the persistence and weight of the grief, sorrow, confusion and fear that permeated daily life, particularly in New York City, Julie and Keith wished they could somehow inject something positive – some form of respect – into the heavily negative atmosphere of that time. In June 2002 they learned about the design competition for the Pentagon Memorial.

Upon digesting the message put forth by the Family Steering Committee on the official competition website, and recognizing the integrity with which the competition had been organized, it was clear to Julie and Keith that this was the opportunity they had been looking for. As it was an open, international design competition with a top-notch jury, it became immediately apparent that the call for ideas was truly sincere. With the original due date set for September 11, 2002, Keith and Julie made the decision to view the first anniversary by quietly developing an idea for the Pentagon Memorial and submitting the proposal on time. Working between their 280 square-foot studio apartment and a restaurant / bar downstairs, Julie and Keith cultivated their proposal over the course of two months, into the late night and on weekends. Simply content that they had possibly contributed to the conversation at hand, even if for only 30 seconds, they would have never expected to hear anything further regarding their entry.

Much to their surprise, Keith and Julie learned that they, along with five other teams had been selected as finalists from more than 1,100 competition entries in October 2002. All six teams were then given a stipend and approximately two months to elevate their schemes to a higher level of refinement and resolution. On March 3, 2003, it was announced that their design for the Pentagon Memorial had been unanimously selected by the competition jury as the proposal that was to be built. Shortly thereafter, Keith and Julie relocated KBAS (Kaseman Beckman Advanced Strategies) from New York to Alexandria, VA to dedicate themselves to the immense task at hand.

Fully integrated into the Balfour Beatty / Lee + Papa and Associates design-build team, KBAS has had the privilege of working with a truly amazing project team made up of hundreds of people and dozens of companies from around the US. Academic and industry advisors, material scientists, fabrication specialists, testing facilities, construction experts and design professionals have all played critical roles in developing the techniques required to realize the Memorial and elevating the quality of the Pentagon Memorial to the worthy and exacting standards by which it is built.

After three and a half years of working through research and development, strategic fabrication refinement and final construction documentation, Keith and Julie moved KBAS to Philadelphia, PA in 2006. For the duration of on-site construction, Keith and Julie commuted to the Pentagon weekly and frequently visited the host of key foundry, fabrication and finishing shops around the country through all key phases and facets of production.

PENTAGON MEMORIAL: Project Description

Adjacent to the point of impact of American Airlines Flight 77, the Pentagon Memorial is a place like no other. Inviting personal interpretation on the part of the visitor, the Memorial provokes thought yet does not prescribe what to think or how to feel. Both individual and collective in nature, the Memorial intends to record the sheer magnitude of that tragic day by embedding layers of specificity that begin to tell the story of those whose lives were taken.

Organized by a timeline based on the ages of these individuals, 184 Memorial Units are uniquely placed along Age Lines parallel with the trajectory of Flight 77— each marking a birth-year, ranging from 1998 to 1930. Highly articulate in its form and placement, the Memorial Unit is the heart of the project, as each Unit demarcates a special place dedicated to each individual. As such, directional orientation inherent to the cantilevered Unit provides specificity to whether an individual was aboard Flight 77 or in the Pentagon at the time of impact. Each individual's name is engraved at the end of the cantilever, hovering above a pool of water that glows with light at night. Fully designed in a 3-dimensional computer modeling environment, the Memorial Unit will be produced through Computer Numerically Controlled (CNC) technologies and cast in a highly specialized Stainless Steel.

These Memorial Units are dispersed throughout a tactile, sensory driven environment with all materials contributing to an emphasis on life. A porous stabilized gravel system will not only allow visitors to hear their own footsteps and those of others, but also allows the grove of trees to thrive and grow directly through the gravel without protective grates. Consistently shading the Memorial Units, brilliant Paperbark Maples will create a dynamic canopy of light and color throughout the day and seasons. Planted as healthy saplings, elegantly exfoliating bark will register their growth into the future. Finally, the Memorial Park is surrounded by a continuous perimeter bench which is backed by a soft border of ornamental grasses. When combined with the Memorial Units, there is over 2,100 linear feet of seating throughout the Memorial.

Keith, Julie and KBAS – Bios:

Keith Kaseman received a BSD in Architecture from Arizona State University in 1995 and a Master of Architecture from Columbia University's GSAPP in 2001. A Leopold Schepp Scholar, he graduated from Columbia with Honors for Excellence in Design, and was a recipient of the Lucille Smyser Lowenfish Memorial Prize. Prior to his graduate studies, Keith worked as an assistant to Michael Zakian, Architect (Los Angeles) and as a designer / project-manager for AA Praha (Prague, Czech Republic). Prior to launching KBAS, Keith was a designer / project manager at SHoP Architects (New York), heavily involved with several of groundbreaking projects in the office at that time. Keith is currently a visiting lecturer in the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Landscape Architecture, and an Adjunct Associate Professor of Architecture at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (GSAPP).

Julie Beckman earned a Bachelor of Arts in The Growth and Structure of Cities from Bryn Mawr College in 1995 followed by a Master of Architecture from Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation in 2001. Prior to the founding of KBAS, she worked as a project manager/architectural designer with several design firms in and around NYC including Eric Baker Architecture (NJ), Delecour & Ferrara Architects (Brooklyn, NY) and Stephen Tilly, Architect (Dobbs Ferry, NY). Julie is currently a visiting lecturer in the Department of Landscape Architecture and a studio critic in the Department of Architecture at University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Design.

KBAS was launched in 2002 by Keith Kaseman and Julie Beckman in New York City. Upon having their entry selected as the winning scheme in the Pentagon Memorial Design Competition in 2003, KBAS relocated operations to Alexandria, VA for over three years to focus efforts on the Memorial's design development and construction documents. With construction underway on the Pentagon Memorial, KBAS relocated its headquarters to Philadelphia, PA in 2006. Our operational neighborhood spans from New York City to Washington, DC on a weekly basis.

KBAS believes that at its best, Architecture stands as a declaration of collaborative intelligence and exerts a positive force in the world. In this light, KBAS develops advanced strategies to further contribute to the design of our cultural fabric and beyond. A recipients of the Young Architects Award from the Architecture League of New York in 2006, KBAS has built up a unique body of work through diverse competitions and commissions since its initial launch.

KBAS

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