

News

Flight 93 remembered by UW architect

ALEX DOUKAS - SPECIAL TO IMPRINT

"Some lay wreaths, some gather to say prayers for the lost. I express this loss through design," reflects Ken Lum, a masters student in architecture at the University of Waterloo. Lum is one of five finalists in a competition to design the national memorial honouring the passengers of Flight 93.

Some of the most horrific images ever to be televised are those of the World Trade Center towers collapsing, the south tower at 10:05 a.m. and the north at 10:29 a.m., September 11, 2001. As this sequence was repeated on television for weeks, many North Americans have the events etched in their minds.

For Lum, the fate of the passengers of Flight 93 is as important to commemorate as that of the victims of the World Trade Center. The plane crashed over a Pennsylvania field after the passengers struggled with hijackers, killing all including 33 passengers, 7 crew members and the 4 hijackers. According to evidence from the 9/11 Commission, hijacker Ziad Jarrah deliberately crashed the plane as passengers attempted to overpower their captors.



KEN LUM

The luminous roofscape dissects the dim landscape with light.



KEN LUM

Memorial Sanctuary overlooks Sacred Courtyard in remembrance of Flight 93.

The memorial site spans the field where the plane crashed and totals 880 hectares. "The memorial intends to capture the courage and sacrifice of the passengers and crew of Flight 93 as the tragedy unfolded, with one bold gesture," Lum said. "This experience is translated and expressed through a luminous roofscape that mirrors the flight path of Flight 93 — from Newark to San Francisco and then to Washington."

In his design submission, Lum emphasizes the sanctity of the "sacred ground" — a term that refers to crash site itself. The proposal, "aims to transform a common field into a sanctuary that resonates a sense of individual and collective memory, sacrifice and loss."

Lum's design, entitled, "(F)LIGHT: The Luminous Roofscape," was selected from among more than 1,000 entries. Candidates included professional landscape designers and architecture firms. "It is a humbling experience, not just to be amongst great architects, but also to be honoured with the opportunity to develop a memorial for the passengers and crew of Flight 93 who sacrificed themselves to save those that they don't even know," Lum said. "This sacrificial gesture is for me the most humbling moment."

To Lum, the submission is more than a mere project. "I feel that all of us have a small role to play on this earth before we are consumed by eternal darkness," Lum said. "Many would think that this role lies in the individual but I feel that the individual is only the first step. What happened on Flight 93 is proof of ... a sacrificial act not meant to protect the individual, but strangers they had never met."

Director of the UW School of Architecture in Cambridge Rick Haldenby, extended congratulations to Lum and pledged support for his project: "[Lum] is in a tough spot since all the other finalists have substantial support in their firms or as dean of a professional school. The community of the School of Architecture will support him." He also said that Lum's selection did not surprise him, as many prestigious awards have gone to UW architecture students in the past decade, most recently the Canada Council Prix de Rome for Emerging Practitioners, awarded to Taymoore Balbaa, a graduate of the program.

Finalists receive \$25,000 US to develop their projects for appraisal by a jury in June. The winning design will be announced in August. Proposals can be viewed at the memorial website: flight93memorialproject.org.

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