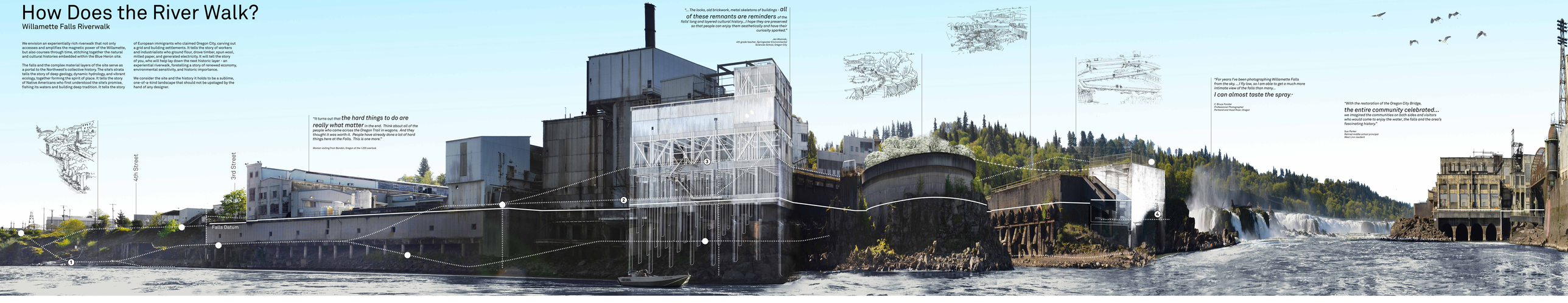
How Does the River Walk?

Willamette Falls Riverwalk

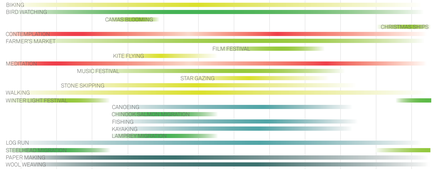
We envision an experientially rich riverwalk that not only accesses and amplifies the magnetic power of the Willamette, but also courses through time, stitching together the natural and cultural histories embedded within the Blue Heron site.

The falls and the complex material layers of the site serve as a portal to the Northwest's collective history. The site's strata tells the story of deep geology, dynamic hydrology, and vibrant ecology, together forming the spirit of place. It tells the story of Native Americans who first understood the site's promise, fishing its waters and building deep tradition. It tells the story of European immigrants who claimed Oregon City, carving out a grid and building settlements. It tells the story of workers and industrialists who ground flour, drove timber, spun wool, milled paper, and generated electricity. It will tell the story of you, who will help lay down the next historic layer - an experiential riverwalk, foretelling a story of renewed economy, environmental sensitivity, and historic importance.

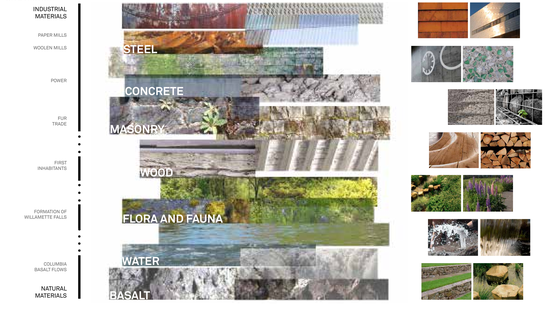
We consider the site and the history it holds to be a sublime, one-of-a-kind landscape that should not be upstaged by the hand of any designer.



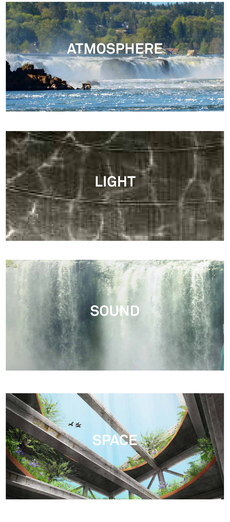
RITUALS



SITE HISTORY



EPHEMERAL QUALITIES

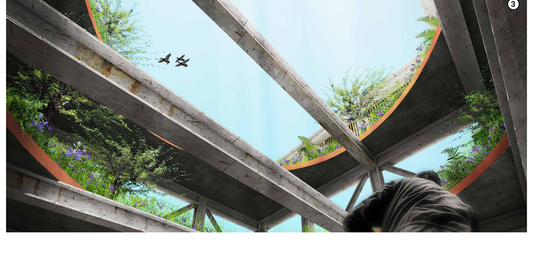


Material Palette

From the yearly lamprey run to the daily hum of paper making, the site's historic and contemporary rituals have left their own material traces upon the basalt bedrock. We see these traces as opportunities, enhancing them with atmosphere, light, sound, and space, to create the experience of the riverwalk.

MAYER/REED
SNØHETTA
DIALOG

PROTECT



REUSE

REDUCE

ADD

Inspiration and Integration

We are inspired by the complex strata of the site. From ancient basalt to contemporary steel, the site's layered materials tell the tale of the region's natural and cultural history. By protecting, reusing, reducing, and adding, we will integrate and amplify the site's strata into the riverwalk.

MAYER/REED
SNØHETTA
DIALOG

Spirit of Place

The magnetism of Willamette Falls' precipitous cataracts and plunging waters has marked its shores with inhabitation. It is the genesis and spirit of place. We will provide an experiential glimpse of the fall's power, one that transports visitors deep into history and highlights its elemental qualities.

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