

Daniela Bertol and David Foell: Sun Farm
Collection CAE1115

Introduction/Abstract

Sun Farm is multidisciplinary project/place and experiential garden created by architects/artists Daniela Bertol and David Foell located in Claverack, New York, about 110 miles (180 km) North of New York City. The 60-acre (240,000 m²) site includes land art constructions, geoglyphs, architectural fabrications and sculptures, while the shaping of the landscape and structures is oriented to solar and celestial alignments in a dual effort to capture the sun's energy and to celebrate the cosmos. Materials include photographs, digital design drawings and texts, writings, announcements, flyers, and press.

Biographical Note: Daniela Bertol and David Foell

Daniela Bertol is an architect, designer, and artist working at the intersection of art and science. Her projects encompass several disciplines and media including astronomy, land art, geoglyphs, architecture, design, digital models, photography and video.

Bertol was born and grew up in Rome, where she earned a Master's degree in Architecture; in 1985 she moved to the United States. Bertol's early projects explored geometric space and virtual environments using digital models, where geometric forms evolved in organic components, similar to shapes found in nature. Bertol founded *space ink* in 1989 as a multidisciplinary laboratory embracing experimentally built and published projects as well as theoretical works focusing on the transformation of architecture and its integration with digital space. Her vision is that technological advancements should establish continuity with the past—instead of creating a fracture—and has been expressed in architectural and educational projects, art installations, artwork, furniture and graphic design.

Her site-specific environment and art installations have been exhibited in the United States and Italy. She has published numerous articles in art and science journals and lectured at several congresses and symposia worldwide and is the author of two books on architecture and digital space: *Visualizing with CAD* (Springer-Verlag, 1994) *Designing Digital Space* (John Wiley & Sons, 1997). Bertol has been consulting for over fifteen years with major New York City architectural firms. She was involved in the planning and design of the American Airlines Terminal at the JFK Airport for TAMS Consultants, where she developed design studies using computer modeling and visualization to generate several alternatives for this two million square foot facility.

Bertol's most recent project—and work in progress—is *Sky Spirals*, a series of places devoted to sustainable design: the shaping of the landscape based on intersecting spirals follow solar and celestial alignments. *Sky Spirals* began as a conceptual work based on digital models, maps and aerial photos. As the work developed, the virtual model and diagrams were translated to a physical site in Claverack, New York. They became *Sun Farm*, the first site of the *Sky Spirals* concepts. The interest in sustainable architecture has inspired solar based design, such as the house at *Sun Farm*; contemporary architectural vocabulary and materials re-propose design intention from early civilizations. Bertol's design vision is noted for integrating principles of eastern philosophies and practices with contemporary architectural theories and research.

David Foell, AIA, was educated at Cornell School of Architecture. He has designed in the fields of retail and residential interiors, furniture design, and transportation infrastructure. Since 1991 has worked as Design Manager in the architecture and engineering department of NYC Transit. He has managed the design of \$10-\$100 million station rehabilitation projects including such as well-known stations as 72nd Street/ Broadway, 116th Street / Columbia University, and the Bowling Green entrance. He is coauthor of the book *Designing Digital Space* (John Wiley & Sons, 1997).

Scope and Content

The Sun's daily path—from sunrise to sunset and its disappearing at night—is represented, literally and metaphorically, by two spirals connected by a $\frac{3}{4}$ of mile long axis. *East Spiral*, located at the east end of the axis, represents the day, metaphor of the beginning of human life. *Sun Axis* stretches in the east-west direction and is defined by photovoltaic panels, linked to the energy grid; it ends in *West Spiral*, representation of the sunset and night. A naked eye observatory for night stars defines the center of the spiral. Constructions realized by late 2011 included:

- *East Spiral*, an excavated pond, shaped as a logarithmic spiral and surrounded by a mound; the center of East Spiral represents the Axis Mundi of Sun Farm;
- *East West* a geoglyph aligned to an east-west axis;
- *North Arrow*, a 24-foot (7.3 m) metal sculpture parallel to the Earth axis;
- *Meditation Path* –a north-south gravel path framed by a tree-trunk arch, with a timber sculpture Time Helix, as focal point;
- *Time Helix*, a helix sculpture based on 108 rotations of a timber module;
- *North-South, East-West, Up-down*, a tensegrity sculpture aligned to the four cardinal axes;
- a passive solar house;
- *Sunrise Trellis*, a structure framing the sunrise at the equinoxes;
- *Square Field*, a rock and gravel garden based on geometric progression;
- *Noon Columns*, a 80-foot (24 m) long sundial / sculpture;
- *Solstice Monument: the Helix*, a helix shaped arch, aligned to the sunrise at the winter solstice and the sunset at the summer solstice.

The viewing of the main artwork—the intersecting spirals path—develops at different layers of perception. Art becomes a participatory event leading to a spiritual experience, where the observer is led by views of the sky in the Sun's daily path/cycle. Walking along the path will provide a different layer of interpretation, as a walking meditation, with a direct experience of the metaphors of spirals / time / sun path / life. The site of Sun Farm is in the Hudson Valley, a geographic region celebrated in the paintings of the nineteenth century Hudson River School, for its landscapes, dramatic skies, sunrises and sunsets. The framing of the sky created by the structures in Sunset Farm echoes the intention of those paintings and brings a contemporary interpretation to the perception of the landscape. The work unveils as a built philosophical statement of awareness of being in time and part of a system.

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Dates

1997 - 2015

Quantity / Extent

.25 cubic feet

Language

English

Arrangement

The *Daniela Bertol and David Foell: Sun Farm* archive is organized into nine folders:

- Folder 1: Sun Farm Timeline, 1997 - 2011
- Folder 2: Concept Development, 1997 - 2006
- Folder 3: Surveys and Sun Farm House, 1999 - 2003
- Folder 4: Sunset Farm Design Drawings 2000 - 2003
- Folder 5: Design Drawings 2002 - 2011
- Folder 6: Business Plan, 2006
- Folder 7: Writings and Press, 1997 - 2015
- Folder 8: Events, 2005 - 2013
- Folder 9: Richard Sena Gallery Exhibition, 2006

Related Archive Collections

- CAE1042: *Lita Albuquerque: Stellar Axis, Antarctica*
- CAE1112: *Simon Balm: Stellar Axis, Antarctica*

Container Listing by Folder:

CAE1115: Folders 1-9, 1997 - 2015

CAE Box 18

- 1 Sun Farm Timeline, 1997 - 2011
- 2 Concept Development, 1997 - 2006
- 3 Surveys and Sun Farm House, 1999 - 2003
- 4 Sunset Farm Design Drawings 2000 - 2003
- 5 Design Drawings 2002 - 2011
- 6 Business Plan, 2006
- 7 Writings and Press, 1997 - 2015
- 8 Events, 2005 - 2011
- 9 Richard Sena Gallery Exhibition, 2006