

# TOSHI KATAYAMA

Beach 116<sup>th</sup> Street draws residents and visitors alike towards the sea. Whether driving, walking, or emerging from the subway station, the smell of the sea is strong. Eyes are immediately drawn to a beacon of white marble that rises above the rooflines and tree canopies – focusing thoughts on an inimitable place of remembrance – the Flight 587 Memorial.

The beacon, a bell tower, is the focal point of this memorial space, watching over the beach and the surrounding neighborhood. The form of the bell tower is an equilateral triangle, each side having a dimension of 10' in length and rising 100' into the sky. Clad in white marble, the bell tower stands as a visual marker to the tragedy. The bell, fabricated by Dominican craftsmen, will ring once a day at 9:16 am. The bell will toll two times and pause, six times with another pause, then toll a final five times as an audible reminder of the people who lost their lives in the Flight 587 tragedy.

Embracing the base of the bell tower will be an arcing wall composed of Portoro Leonardo marble – a marble native to the Dominican Republic. This marble wall will reach 7' in height and 75' in length. Etched into the face of the wall will be the names of the victims. The black marble is sprinkled with gold veining and will act as a counterpoint to the white granite of the bell tower and plaza space.

The main memorial plaza space is paved in white granite. The place is intended to be a gift of memories for all the victims, their families, and all those who come to visit the serene enclosure. This granite paving has been extended to cover the existing fire lane, giving more continuity and creating a stronger geometric space for congregation. White granite was chosen as the central material for the memorial site due to its lightness and feeling of hope and purity. Offset within the main memorial space, in an equilaterally triangular space, is an ascending pyramid of memorial "luminarias". The size of the triangular space is the mathematical solution derived from the space required for 265 individual luminarias. Each luminaria is a representation of an individual victim and will be continually lighted from within. The luminarias are triangular in nature and composed of Corteen steel, measuring 6" on each side and spaced 2' apart, allowing visitors to move in and amongst the field of light. The luminarias range in height from 36" to 30" and at night this mass will appear as a pyramid of light. Smaller scaled individual luminarias – 3" equilateral triangles 18" in height – will be given to the families of the victims, creating a powerful link to the memorial site across time and distance.

To the left of the luminarias is placed a singular Pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*), chosen for its extreme adaptability to seaside locations and conditions. By re-planting a Pitch pine from the existing site, the design hopes to reinforce the symbolism of hope and life continuing to thrive throughout all seasons and despite adversity.

Creating a backdrop for the foreground memorial space is a 30' high wall that stretched across the breadth of the site. Like the rest of the plaza, this wall is clad in white granite. A 40' wide X 10' high window has been cut into this wall, allowing visitors a clear line of site from Rockaway, through the memorial plaza, and out to the coast and beyond – permitting the powerful effect of the borrowed landscape to permeate into the city grid. This wall helps define movement patterns within the memorial space, as well as acting as a foil to direct attention away from the less contemplative aspects associated with the beach front.

On the beach side of the proposed window wall, the proposed bathrooms will be clad in the white granite to bring continuity to the space. Raised 5' above the beach, a new stainless steel walkway, semi-circular stage and railing will complete the beachfront façade of the memorial space. Surrounding the base of the beachfront façade will be a foundation of stacked boulders, emphasizing the transition from the more natural forms of the beach and sea to the more strongly honed forms of the memorial space. Visitor will be able to see the window wall and the shoreline. The second will be placed on the same axis at the water's edge. These boulders will help to identify the memorial space from the ocean side and draw people towards the space.

This memorial offers a contemplative space for reflection, while providing the necessary gathering space for visiting families and residents to assemble during the annual memorial event held on November 12. The Flight 587 Memorial will be a simple, elegant space of purity enlivened by the ephemeral elements of sun, shadow, wind, and sea.