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FORSYTHE + MACALLEN

Stephanie Forsythe (M.Arch.00) and **Todd MacAllen (M.Arch.00)** met and began working together in 1994, when they travelled with a group of architecture students and professors **Richard Kroeker** and **Essy Baniassad** to the Pacific coast of Colombia. As a group they made records of coastal communities facing relocation.

In and between their years at architecture school Stephanie and Todd designed and built 3 houses. Being involved in the construction of those houses has allowed them to develop their awareness of the symbiotic relationship between design and construction. They drew plans on the land, cut and milled lumber from trees felled on the site and made design improvisations as new information, insight and material were revealed during the construction. They experienced the slow turning of the seasons, first light and the subtleties and extremes of weather. This represents a fundamental part of their ongoing education: a need for ideas to pass from mind to hands and back again, ingraining a sense of materiality, making space and experience.

Upon completion of their Master's degrees they began searching for ways to engage in the design of urban housing and public space. Last year Forsythe + MacAllen won 1st prize in a competition to design 200 units of housing and community facilities at the centre of Aomori city, in northern Japan. The competition, judged by **Tadao Ando** and **Jean Nouvel**, attracted the attention of 4000 competitors from 86 countries. Design development on their winning project is scheduled to move forward in spring of 2004. In the design for Aomori, three luminous, glass volumes, containing 200 households, float in privacy above the active street level. The housing volumes define an outdoor room in the city. This public room is a garden composed of a hill and a pond. At street level an arcade, sheltered by the housing volumes, encircles the pond and provides access to shops, restaurants and a gallery. Set out on the water, under the grassy hill, is a large space for daily community activity and seasonal festivals. This space is set out into the pond to admit a play of light reflected off the water and viewed like a stage from

the street and plaza. In the summer the pond creates a tranquil space in the midst of the busy city. In the winter, as a thick blanket of snow mutes the city, the space transforms, with the pond becoming a frozen plaza for skating and festivals. The hill becomes a snowy place for children to play and it ramps up to the second floor, just outside the art gallery and children's day care. Deeper under the hill is a small auditorium and public bath. The housing volumes are clad in a double glass skin with balcony space between. The inner layer of transparent, sliding glass panels and the outer layer of translucent, vertical, glass louvers mediate light, shadow, view, privacy, acoustics and extremes in temperature. A fundamental idea of the Aomori houses is to give shape and identity to the public realm with the fabric of housing. At night the housing volumes become meaningful light sources, floating lanterns in the city, their softly glowing surfaces becoming rippled in random yet rhythmic patterns of colour, light, texture and motion as banks of windows are pivoted from within individual houses.

Forsythe + MacAllen were chosen to be among this year's six winners of the Architectural League of New York's Young Architects Forum. They presented an exhibition and gave lectures on their work in June at the Architectural League. Most recently, Forsythe + MacAllen were honoured by the Canada Council for the Arts with the award for Early Design Achievement.

Forsythe + MacAllen Design can be contacted via www.forsythe-macallen.com



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