Immediate Release

LMN-designed Vashon Center for the Arts opens to the community

Culture and the environment share center stage

SEATTLE, June 9, 2016—LMN Architects, a design practice known for creating impactful community-focused projects of all scales, announces the opening of the new Vashon Center for the Arts. The $20.2 million Center is a multi-purpose performance venue that establishes a vibrant, inviting center for arts events on Vashon Island. The project celebrates the distinct character of a rural, yet sophisticated island community, and supports a rich arts culture for all ages. "Now we have a home that is worthy of the incredible Arts community that we have on Vashon Island, to honor the work in an environment that is so beautiful and so well crafted. We have reached a pinnacle on this island that will serve generations to come. When people walk into the auditorium, their jaws drop. This is the exact reaction we wanted, and we got it," notes Molly Reed, Executive Director, Vashon Center for the Arts.

The new 19,000 square-foot facility expands the arts campus of Vashon Allied Arts, headquartered at the historic Blue Heron Arts Center, and progresses its mission to serve the visual and performing artists on the Island. As part of the expansion, two acres of adjacent wetlands were restored to serve as an interpretive center and sculpture garden resulting in a five-acre campus.

"The client group and the community of Vashon Island pulled together to bring an incredible community asset to the island. The design team was dedicated to creating a building that reflects the rural spirit and unique character of Vashon, while providing a state-of-the-art facility celebrating the talent of its vibrant arts community. The mission of Vashon Center for the Arts, and the respect they have for what we brought to the project, allowed me to maintain a strong emotional connection to the building and the community throughout the design process and construction. I will be returning often for performances in the building," notes Jennifer Hing, Principal, LMN.

The program for the facility includes a 300-seat performance hall, an art gallery, a large lobby that can accommodate special gatherings, and support spaces such as dressing rooms, a green room/multipurpose classroom, a wardrobe room, and a loading area. The performance hall includes a full stage, orchestra pit, a catwalk system, and a tension grid above the stage. Designed for natural acoustics, the building serves the Island's music companies such as symphony, chorale, and opera, while an adaptable configuration system can adjust the hall to support drama, musical theater, dance, lectures, and amplified music.

The exterior character of the building draws on the unique community traditions of Vashon Island, emphasizing natural materials and Pacific Northwest craftsmanship blended with modern detailing. A long, gabled roof—a form used for many of the island's vernacular buildings—shelters the majority of the structure, while modestly-scaled support spaces step the building down to the surrounding neighborhood. The north-facing elevation is infilled with large windows to brighten the lobby pre-function spaces facing the street. Natural light floods these spaces by day, while at night the interior lighting glows as a community lantern.

Located at the intersection of two streets, the building embraces the corner to conceal parking behind. The courtyard at the northwest corner provides a welcoming and visible pedestrian entry. The natural slope of the site, and the strategic placement of the smaller volumes at either end of the gabled form, nest the building into the site while minimizing the building volume necessary for the natural acoustics of the auditorium. The art gallery, clad in weathered steel panels and capped by a ribbon of clerestory windows, shares the entry courtyard. Inside, doors, connecting the gallery to the lobby, enable the two spaces to function as one on special occasions. A set of outdoor spaces along the west side of the building modu-

lates the long elevation of the building. In addition to artwork inside, art is also integrated into the building court-yards and gardens, including pieces by Mark Bennion and Julie Speidel.

The performance hall, essentially a cast-in-place concrete box, is a merger of acoustic performance, structure, and materiality. Acoustically, the high ceiling, shape, construction assembly of the roof, texture of the structural elements and the suspended acoustical reflectors work together to achieve the desired naturally acoustic performance. The structural walls which hold up the roof, provide mass for sound isolation from exterior noise, mass for proper acoustical reflection, and texture for dispersal of sound throughout the room. The walls feature narrow, vertical channels which are cast into the concrete and are inset with varying dimensions of wood strips adding depth to the surface of the wall to provide greater texture for acoustical reflections and sound modulation. Walls are angled to ensure that sound is not bouncing back and forth between two parallel walls, and the rear wall of the auditorium is shaped with a series of shallow curves to disperse the sound back into the auditorium.

While the building has public access on only one level, the eave space at the shoulders of the roof was used to create a mezzanine level for mechanical rooms, resulting in an extremely efficient use of the building footprint which was necessary due to the tight site boundaries. Where possible, structural elements serve as the finish surface of the building—plywood decking, exposed structural ceilings, and polished and stained concrete floors and walls—resulting in a celebration of functional elegance.

The site is designed with the flow and collection of water in mind. The combination of rain gardens and landscaped swales on the west and south side of the building facilitate biofiltration to support adjacent wetlands, and the building's large roof area is designed for rainwater collection to feed the rain garden and a cistern used for toilets within the building. LEED Silver Certification is anticipated.

Project Team
LMN Architects (architect)
Lund Opsahl, LLC (structural)
CDi+Mazzetti (mechanical)
Stantec (acoustical, electrical, lighting)
AHBL (civil)
C&N Consultants, Inc. (cost estimating)
Murase Associates (landscape architect)
The Shalleck Collaborative, Inc. (theater)
Sellen (general contractor)

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About LMN
Seattle-based LMN Architects specializes in the planning and design of significant public and private projects, including convention centers, cultural arts venues, education facilities, office buildings, multifamily housing, hotels, transit stations, mixed-use developments and other urban environments that celebrate and enrich communities. The firm is the recipient of the 2016 American Institute of Architects Architecture Firm Award. www.LMNArchitects.com

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