

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/a-place-expresses-a-vision/>

Sharon Prince, CEO and founder of Grace Farms Foundation, explains how she incorporated vision into the design process for Grace Farms. She shares examples of buildings and spaces on the farm that illustrate the foundation's values.



## Transcript

- The concepts that I want you to really think about 00:00:06,480 again, is that architecture space is a three-dimensional expression of a vision.. And even if you're unconsciously doing so, it still expresses a vision.. And we now have this opportunity to reimagine architecture as a driver of humanitarian outcomes and even to be this entrepreneurial platform.. All right, so here's the first expression of Grace Farms.. It is a really cool expression, in fact, it won an AIA New York Merit Award for Unbuilt Work.. And yet, my role as the entrepreneur is to market-to-market the vision and how it's being expressed.. So, I had a 35-page program that was highly aspirational and also utilitarian needs.. So, after two years of development, I had to abandon the project, because it did not achieve the goal.. It's very tough to do.. However, knowing that this was gonna be a long term project, went through a whole search to find the right architect now that I compared with..

This is an image of Sejima and Nishizawa of SANAA in Japan.. The reason why they were so perfect, and it was a long, it's another process just in terms of selecting them, but they were never tethered to existing models, and what we're creating is a new kind of public place.. There's not a place like this that was not only in terms of form, but in terms of concept.. And so, they could think in that abstract way.. And you can see here too, that when we were.... It was an iterative process.. So I am proposing concepts, like we wanna create an environment where you are experiencing nature, where nature's in the foreground, and the building recedes.. They took that further.. You can see here that the building becomes part of the landscape.. And also other things, like we wanted to create a place of both curiosity, new perspectives, create an individual experience and a collective experience..

And it just goes on like, okay, very peaceful respite and an active community diametrically opposed.. And there was many of those.. So now, here we are, it's a former equestrian site, and now we start to develop.. I'll show you a couple of the images that allow you to see that we retained two of the barns, so in terms of reuse and remodeling, very effective in terms of design for freedom, because you start to truncate the supply chain at the extractives, reducing the risk of exploitation.. And it ends up being the only opaque spaces that we had, which were very advantageous as well.. And then, Grace Farms is the only site in Connecticut that is both LEED certified for how we built and also how we operate.. So demonstrating what we're advocating for is always in our mind.. Okay, how do we, of course, how to decide to have gardens, so we could have the produce that we would also have on site, but also be able to donate and as a place.. So here we are, really again, immersed in

nature, the arts, all these aspects that I was describing.. One is to experience nature, to encounter the arts, and the arts meaning visual, performing, culinary, and so forth..

To pursue justice, this is Dr.. Mukwege Nobel Peace Prize winner on the right and Nicholas Christophe on the left.. And to foster community, this is actually the sanctuary at the top of the river that you can see has no stairs, because it makes it become part of the landscape, many aspects.. Each chair is individually designed.. The height of the stage is determined so that it becomes a more egalitarian space and that you yet see into the landscape.. Foster community, here is the commons, the center of the five glass-enclosed volumes that you can see, people now have to sit with each other.. There's no option.. There's a few others on the side.. And you can see these tables were made from wood that was felled on site.. That was part of the sustainable endeavor, but also, by doing so, it also reduces human exploitation..

'cause we know our supply chain and using locally fabricated materials in the United States.. And actually, if you know where they are, even wherever you are, it's advantageous.. And then in terms of being able to advance good in the world, explore faith because of your people.. All faith backgrounds, they can start to examine how can we do this together from a faith perspective.. And this image I love, because it shows you the hopeful space.. We're meant to, also in terms of the space, being able to address pressing humanitarian issues, so we wanted to create a light-filled space that had both spiritual potential and social potential.. And you can see here, there's many divine interventions that happen along the way...