

GENERAL FUSION NEWSLETTER

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March 2018

Christofer Mowry and I first met in Kuala Lumpur at a forum in October 2017 organised by Khazanah. It was an extraordinary event with experts and visionaries from around the world and from every discipline – all brought together to tackle some of the big questions facing us today. To give you a sense of the diversity of speakers and subjects, I gave a talk about the importance of intuition, imagination and soul in architecture alongside an astrophysicist who is sending rockets to the moon.

Michel Laberge gave such an inspiring talk about General Fusion that I left the conference believing all our energy problems will be sorted in ten years' time. As soon as I got back to London, I asked Christofer if he would give a talk to my office, AL_A – I promised him a very technically literate audience with a passion to save the world.

It was a rousing talk. There was only one slide that felt out of place – a visualisation of a potential prototype facility. It did not in any way capture the sense of optimism and innovation of General Fusion. In fact, it did the reverse and projected an image of defensiveness and being closed off from the community.

By way of thanks for the talk, I offered to look at an alternative architectural vision.

As architects, we want to create something that is not only highly efficient but also beautiful and that projects a confident message to the public about the extraordinary potential of fusion technology.

Our concept is in its very infancy but it is underpinned by key ideas: how to convey the wonder of fusion and the importance of collaboration, and how to transform a traditionally closed world into one that welcomes the public.

We asked ourselves how the fusion reactor at the heart of the process could take on a more symbolic form and how the facility could showcase the interrelations of every aspect of General Fusion's work.

We separated the volume of the reactor as the most significant part of the facility and, as it is vital that everyone has a clear view of the goal of General Fusion, the reactor became the central focus of a circle.

The form of the circle sends a powerful message as well as being an efficient arrangement for the facility. It shows that everything is connected and everyone is working together. It helps to foster a collaborative approach and starts to erode hierarchies.

What was missing from this circle was the element of outreach and expression of General Fusion's quest for innovation. As both education and the messaging of the facility are critical, we introduced these into the halo that surrounds the reactor.

The genesis of General Fusion's work began with the torus and so we were drawn by the iconography of this form, one which is intuitively understood by everyone. In our design we have harnessed the form of the torus and the magnetic fields within it to communicate the energy of the work within the prototype facility.

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On approaching the facility, people will perceive a halo hovering above the landscape and encircling the reactor. As they walk around the public spaces of this halo, they will start to understand the different elements of the facility, which seem to have been physically separated but remain a part of the common endeavour. The facility nestles into the landscape with a central garden between the halo of offices and the reactor – this porous relationship between inside and out helps to remind people of its inherent sustainability.

This is only the start of the conversation. The next steps are to work closely with Christofer, Michel and everyone at General Fusion to make it reality.



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