

Water-carved architecture in Florida

Carlo Ratti Associati pioneers use of submarine technologies to design floating plaza as part of West Palm Beach' new Currie Park waterfront

Images and press materials are available upon request – please write to pr@carloratti.com

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International design and innovation office Carlo Ratti Associati has unveiled the design of a **master plan for the Currie Park waterfront of West Palm Beach, Florida, featuring a one-of-a-kind floating plaza that utilizes some of the same technologies employed in the construction of underwater vessels.** The project will transform a 19-hectare vacant area on the coast of Lake Worth Lagoon, the narrow sea channel that separates the two cities of West Palm Beach and Palm Beach, creating **a major new complex that includes housing, retail, and leisure facilities.**

A pair of leafy ramblas will allow people to stroll from the city center of West Palm Beach directly into the middle of the lagoon. Here, **Carlo Ratti Associati will build a floating plaza that sits on the water, partly under the sea level, thanks to a system of responsive air chambers similar to the ones used by submarines.** The floating peninsula will incorporate a series of public facilities, including **an organic restaurant with its own hydroponic cultivations, a circular pool, an auditorium, and a water plaza.**

“With this project, we aim to reclaim West Palm Beach’s connection to the natural elements that surround it, and give shape to a vibrant new district that will serve as a creative catalyst for the entire city”, said **Carlo Ratti, director of the Senseable City Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and founding partner of Carlo Ratti Associati.** *“The project also showcases how a new technology allows us to radically redefine the relationship between architecture and water.”*

The floating plaza, sitting on the safe waters of Lake Worth lagoon, will be built upon **a series of air chambers that automatically open and close, releasing or taking in water according to the number of people that are walking on the surface.** *“Architecture usually conceives of buildings as separate, autonomous entities, but in this case, the plaza inhabits the water as if it was carved right into it”,* adds Ratti: *“The water becomes a moving element that harmoniously accommodates the new public space”.*

Back on the mainland, the master plan will coalesce around **a newly expanded Currie park, which will extend out across the city from its current waterfront location via a pair of leafy ramblas. The project will anchor a new, lively part of the city,** featuring residential towers, a pool terrace overlooking the sea, and a retail area that will include a food hall dedicated to organic products. **The master plan will also reshape the waterfront’s overall terrain.** On the north side of Currie park, where a parking lot stands now, a gently sloping hill will be created, **allowing pedestrians to access the area and opening up the view towards Palm Beach’s narrow stretch of land and the ocean just beyond it.**

“The Currie park master plan will bring new life to West Palm Beach and serve as a world-class attraction that draws tourists to our city”, **says project investor Jeff Greene.** *“This also builds on the success of our collaboration with Carlo Ratti Associati on West Palm Beach’s new Greene School.”*

“For too long, this part of West Palm Beach had its back to the water. Finally our city is about to enjoy a fantastic new public space for all of our citizens – one that will reconnect West Palm Beach with Palm Beach and open up the city to its surrounding natural elements”, says **Jon Ward, Executive Director of the City of West Palm Beach’s Community Redevelopment Agency.**

The project of the Currie Park master plan draws on **Carlo Ratti Associati’s long-time research on innovative uses of water in architecture.** In 2008, the office designed the Digital Water Pavilion at the Expo Zaragoza, a building with retractable walls made of water that gained international recognition and was **named by TIME magazine as one of its “Best Inventions of the year”.** The master plan for West Palm Beach was unveiled on October 31st, 2016. Construction will break ground next month and will be completed by 2018, allowing people to seamlessly live in their city - on the ground and over the water.

CREDITS

Currie Park

A project by Carlo Ratti Associati

Team: Carlo Ratti, Andrea Galanti, Emma Greer, Chiara Borghi, Valentina Grasso, Oliver Kazimir, Alessandro Tassinari

Client: Jeff Greene

In collaboration with the City of West Palm Beach’s Community Redevelopment Agency

Advisors on landscape design: Stoss

ABOUT CARLO RATTI ASSOCIATI

Carlo Ratti Associati is a design and innovation office based in Turin, Italy, with branches in Boston and London. Drawing on Carlo Ratti’s research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the office is currently involved in many projects across the globe. Embracing every scale of intervention - from city master plans to furniture design - the work of the practice focuses on innovation in our built environment and daily lives. Noteworthy achievements at the urban and architectural scale include the masterplan for a creative-hub in the City of Guadalajara, the Future Food District at Expo Milano 2015, and the Digital Water Pavilion at Expo Zaragoza - named among the “Best Inventions of the Year” by Time Magazine. Product design projects range from experimental furniture for Cassina, to light installations for Artemide, to responsive seating systems with Vitra. Since 2014, Carlo Ratti Associati has been involved in the launch of two startups: Superpedestrian, producer of the Copenhagen Wheel, and Makr Shkr, developer of the world's first robotic bar system.

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