

Water Landscapes



ARTPOWER

The Ballard Commons

Design / Swift Company LLC



The fountain in the Ballard Commons plaza in Seattle, Washington is a popular neighborhood destination for people of all ages. The form of the fountain is inspired by the local Puget Sound maritime and marine environment. Fueled by a desire to embed a culturally significant experience in the park, the design team explored the nearby marinas and beaches for inspiration. The result is an elegant composition of fountain elements and site furnishings that create the focal point of the park's plaza.

A long low stone sculpture is shaped to abstractly represent the flowing lines of a salmon's body or a boat hull. Curves in all surfaces of this arced form make complex this seemingly simple 72' long form made of cut blocks of "Butterfly Blue" granite from China. Five blocks in the form are lower, creating crevices and rills with bubbling water. The crevices are scored for slip resistance for children who play in the activated water.

Seven spray jets animate the plaza amid interactive seashell sculptures, and are illuminated to glow at night as vertical columns. A water spigot on the nearby drinking fountain provides water to pour onto the carved stone seashells, so it swirls down the outside of a moon snail shell and shoots out of the holes in the sea urchin. The water from the spray jets pools in the arc of the stone fountain, until it reaches the level of the curved trench drain, which mirrors the form of the fountain. This shallow pool of water reflects the silhouette of the fountain when still, but it is usually alive with children splashing. Fountain water is recirculated via a storage tank below the plaza, and a pump house with water purification set amid evergreen trees.

The Ballard Commons fountain was designed by Swift Company, with assistance from Roman Fountains. The four seashell sculptures were designed by the Portland, Oregon artist Valerie Otani.

