

Press Information.

November 2018

## "Gathering Place" – the gigantic playground in Oklahoma is setting new standards

One of the largest playgrounds in the United States was opened in Tulsa, the second largest city in Oklahoma, on 8 September, 2018. Several hundred pieces of playground equipment including custom-built equipment and some one-of-a-kind objects have been set up at the so-called "Gathering Place", a park area of almost 67 acres on the banks of the Arkansas River. There are for example six gigantic towers connected by bridges – one of them spanning a distance of 18 metres at an amazing height of six metres. Accessibility (barrier-free aspects) was also taken into account when planning and constructing the bridges: a walkway suitable for wheelchairs leads directly to a "bridge distributor" via a building roof and from there to one of the towers and other parts of the playground.

The "Tulsa Towers", which were specially designed for the project, are 14 metres high and, with their top platform at a height of ten metres, offer a unique view of the surrounding area. Two of the towers are steel structures clad with larch wood. The others are completely made of larch round

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timber, all foundations consist of elevated steel feet. The “Tulsa Towers” already caused a sensation in their place of origin and production, Frasdorf in Upper Bavaria, Germany, where they were erected by the manufacturer for testing purposes on the company's premises in June 2016 following completion. Only after dismantling were they shipped to the USA together with the rest of the equipment intended for the large-scale project in a total of 38 sea containers. Two towers of similar dimensions are already standing on another prestigious large playground in the USA, namely the Maggie Daley Park in Chicago.

One of the special features that will inspire the expected one million of local, national and international visitors of all ages in Tulsa every year is the water playground. If not unique (worldwide), its vertical conception is most certainly extremely unusual: Archimedes' spirals installed on the outside of a tower allow the children to convey water from inside the towers via cranks and handwheels upwards using nothing but their own strength. From up high, the water is distributed to a channel system with the help of water wheels, water flaps and lock-like elements and can then flow back down. After this kind of intensive play, the children

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find niches for retreat in the green tree houses. These spherical objects made of fibreglass-reinforced plastic offer space for up to three children and evoke associations of a "science fiction city". Suspended from an articulated pendulum, they "float" a few metres above the ground. Ropes and rope ladders allow the kids to reach their cave-like hiding places, from where they can observe the park through small round peepholes.

The Science Fiction City was designed by Günter Beltzig from Hohenwart, Germany. He designed a play ship, a huge wooden elephant with a tube slide (made of stainless steel) as a trunk and a seating circle made of concrete elements especially for Tulsa. With its height of almost nine metres, more than twice the size of an African elephant bull, the wooden elephant is a visual exclamation mark and so is the high tunnel slide. The monumental dimensions of the installed equipment alone are an indicator of just how unique this project is, which Richter Spielgeräte (Frasdorf, Germany) implemented under the project management of Peter Heuken in collaboration with the renowned New York architectural firm Micha-

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el van Valkenburgh Associates (MVA), thereby turning the vision of a unique play world in Tulsa into reality.

Why is this place in the USA called "Gathering Place"? George Kaiser, the project's initiator and sponsor, has made it his top priority to ensure that young and old alike can enjoy a wonderful time together on this unique playground that offers a great deal of play value for all age groups. The story of the "Gathering Place" began with the George Kaiser Family Foundation and an extraordinary dream – to transform an area of over 400,000 square meters along the river into a dynamic, interactive environment. The privately financed area is open to the public and free of charge for all. With this "pro bono" commitment of the foundation, an inviting, natural space was created, in which the most diverse people can come together to discover, learn and, above all, play. This dream has now come true.

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Further information in the form of videos to the Gathering Place:

<http://www.richter-spielgeraete.de/tulsa-riverfront-park-oklahoma-usa-en.html>



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Gathering Place (54)



Gathering Place (24)



Gathering Place (27)



Gathering Place (28)



Gathering Place (23)



Gathering Place (25)



Gathering Place (29)



Gathering Place (33)



Gathering Place (31)



Gathering Place (30)



Gathering Place (26)



Gathering Place (32)



Gathering Place (34)



Gathering Place (35)



Gathering Place (36)



Gathering Place (37)



Gathering Place (39)



Gathering Place (38)



Gathering Place (40)



Gathering Place (41)



Gathering Place (42)



Gathering Place (43)

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Gathering Place (44)



Gathering Place (48)



Gathering Place (50)



Gathering Place (51)



Gathering Place (45)



Gathering Place (47)



Gathering Place (46)



Gathering Place (49)



Gathering Place (52)

Photos: Daniel Perales

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