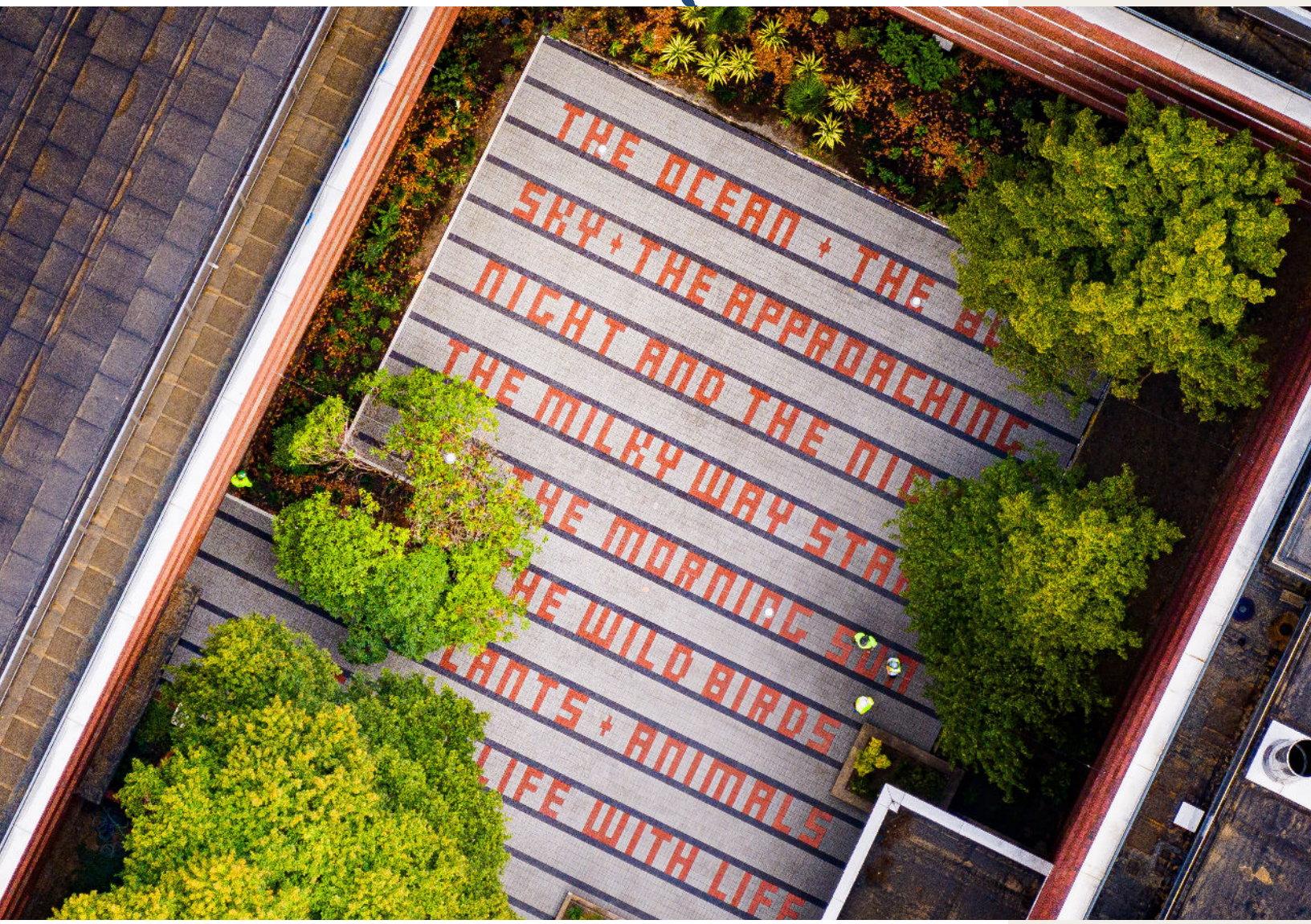
case study 1

CORDLEY HALL

Oregon State University | Corvallis, OR

WESTERN INTERLOCK INC.



The Concrete Advantage.

PRODUCTS USED

Holland Stone 80mm

Charcoal, Pewter and a custom red to match brick walls on site

ARCHITECT

Hennebery Eddy Architects

henneberyeddy.com

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

Andersen Construction

andersen-const.com

VISUAL ARTIST

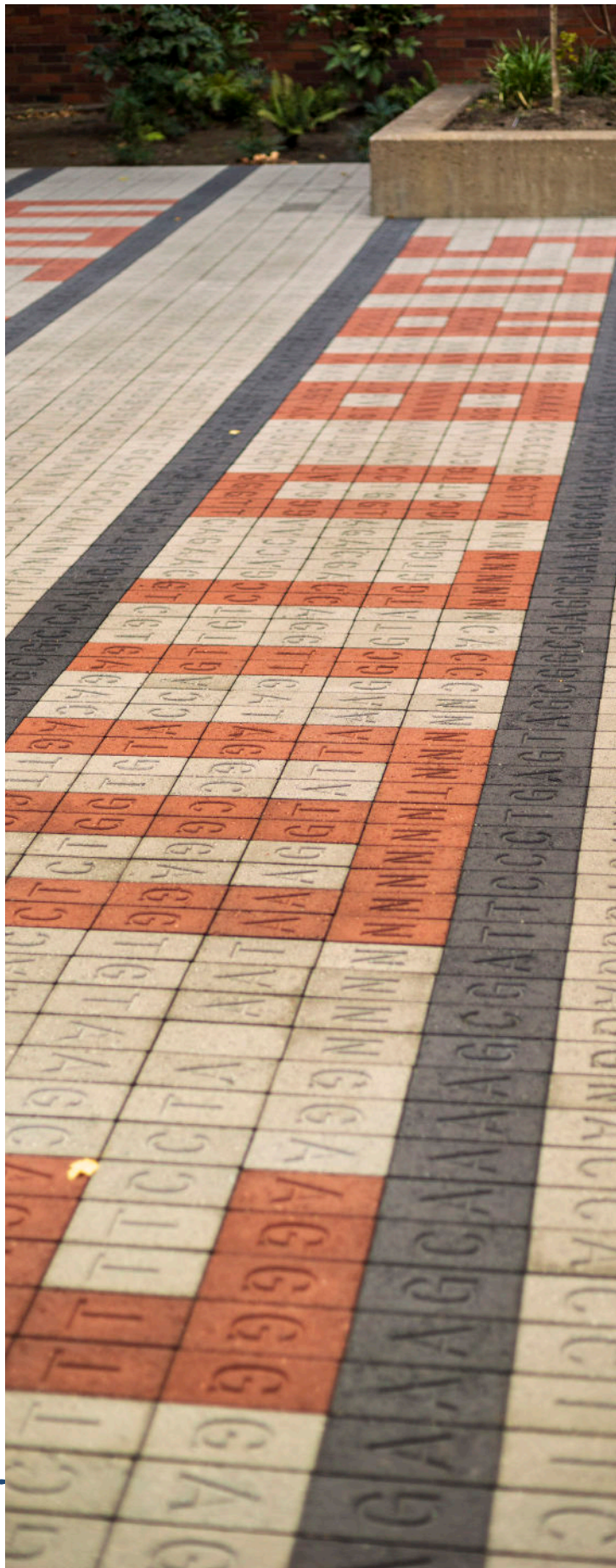
Ann Hamilton Studio

annhamiltonstudio.com

INSTALLER

Sequoia Stonescapes, Inc.

sequoiastonescapes.com



OBJECTIVES

This project is a commission under the Oregon One Percent for the Arts in Public Building Programs for the Cordley Hall Renovation at Oregon State University. Working with the departments of Integrative Biology and Botany and Plant Pathology, the artist, Ann Hamilton, proposed to emboss the courtyard pavement with the running sequence of the DNA code from the last universal common ancestor (LUCA), a code contained in the genetic material of all living things.

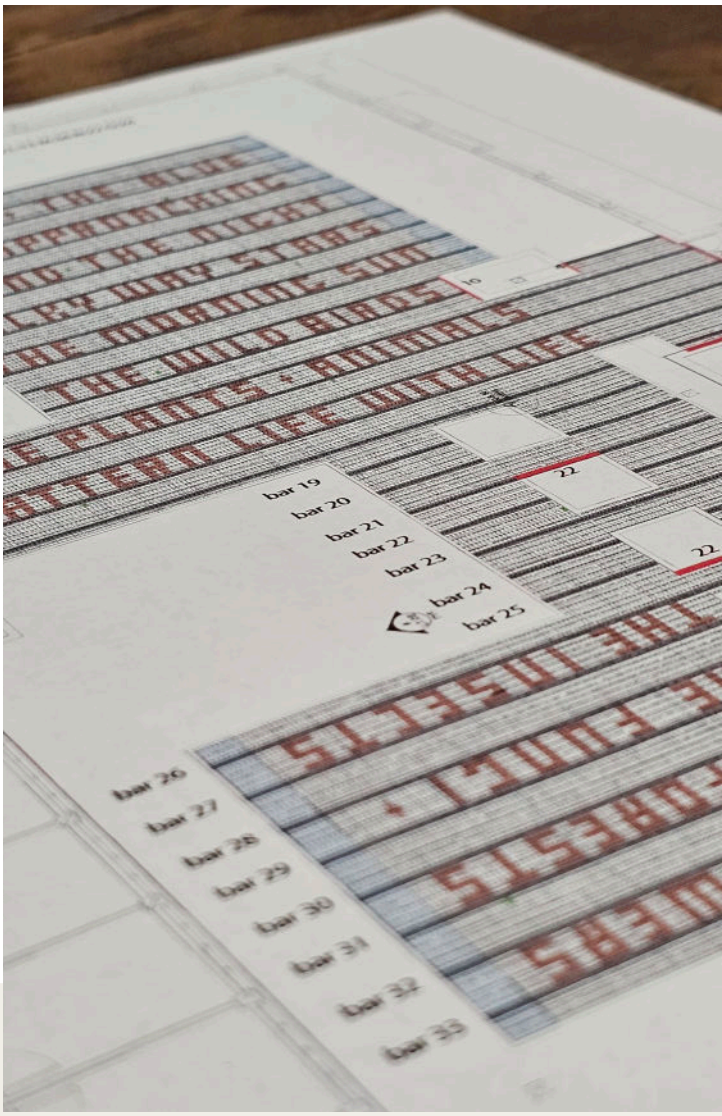
Oregon State University wanted to create a spectacular courtyard around Cordley Hall that reflected the innovative learning taking place in the building from students of the College of Science and College of Agricultural Science. The school wanted to create a physical representation of the DNA sequence of the last universal common ancestor (LUCA), a code contained in the genetic material of nearly all living things today, within the hardscape design.

CHALLENGES

Ann wanted to mimic the stamped street names in San Francisco, as well as an art installation in Portland by visual artist Buster Simpson. There were not any existing products that could fulfill this design requirement. With almost 30,000 individual pavers, production needed to be efficient and automated in order to meet the project deadlines. Additionally, the (LUCA) DNA sequence uses only five out of the 26 letters, so any existing alphabet pavers would result in a high level of waste.

The site itself presented another challenge. Cordley Hall was built as two separate halves, and the brick was two different shades on the east and west sides of the courtyard. Matching these two colors was going to be a challenge.

Ann also wanted to use a very light version of the Trade Gothic typeface. There currently is not a commercially available font that fits this description.



SOLUTIONS

To achieve this goal, the team chose segmental concrete pavers, which resemble alphabetic letters in printing. Each paver was custom stamped with a metal shoe to display a single part of the (LUCA) DNA code and laid out in sequence according to its color, direction, and marked letter.

Western Interlock worked with Ann's team to develop a custom typeface for this project. After some initial proof of concept tests to verify that stamped drycast pavers were even possible, they worked to determine what particular weight font would run the best. The first super lightweight font tested ran poorly. After a few more tests, Ann and Western Interlock were able to come up with a design that ran predictably well and produced a beautiful product.

After several trial runs and on-site tests, a custom red color was created to bridge between the two different brick colors on the building.

The installation team at Sequoia Stonescapes meticulously laid the pavers over the 6,000-square-foot courtyard.

RESULTS

The final installation is a stunning display of art and science, blending the fields of biology and design. The pavers, varying in color, create long strings of snaking letters that spell out a sampling of text by biologist William Emerson Ritter, reinterpreted to reflect the beauty and interconnectedness of life. The artist, Ann Hamilton, and the university hope the success of this collaboration and the beauty of the courtyard will inspire future collaborations between artists and scientists.

> “The real gift of this year is your wonderful work that made the project in Corvallis possible. I continue to believe [Western Interlock is] the only one who could have pulled the project off.
> ~ Ann Hamilton