

OCULUS

an eye on new york architecture

The New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects

Volume 49, Number 1, September 1987



Snug Island Cultural Center, Staten Island

Photo: Michael Cala

OCULUS

Volume 49, Number 1, September 1987

Oculus

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 the American Institute of Architects
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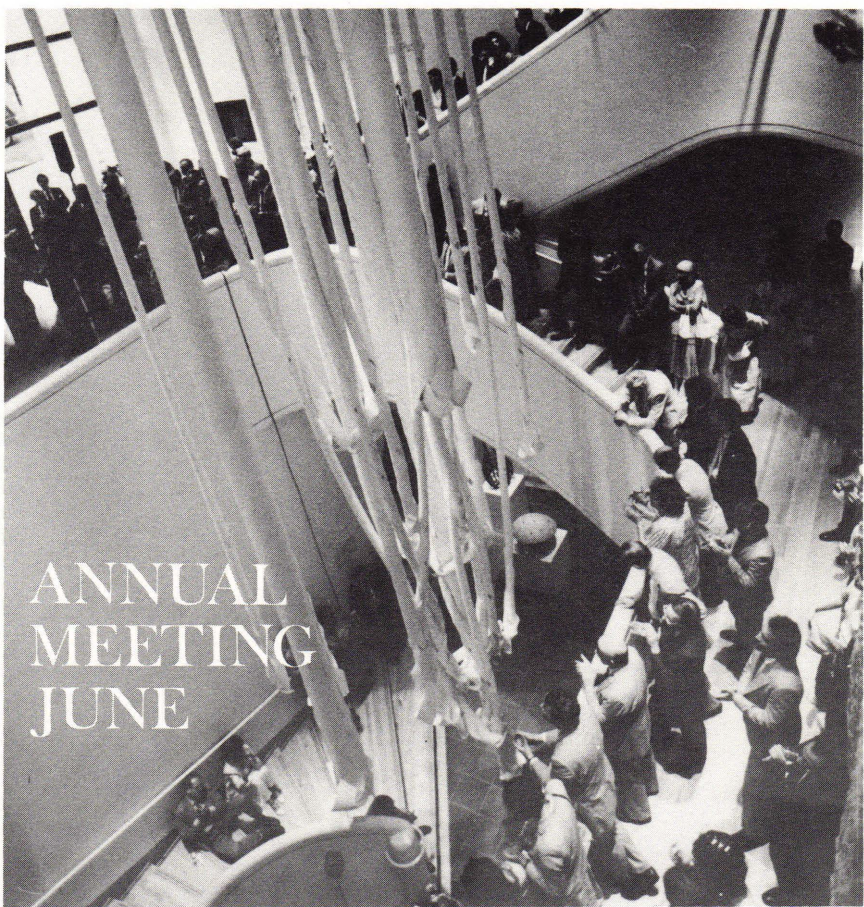
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Convention 88

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The American Crafts Museum, designed by Fox & Fowle Architects, site of the Chapter's Annual Meeting in June.

On Wednesday evening June 24th at the new American Crafts Museum on West 53rd Street, about 400 members and guests gathered for the Chapter's Annual Meeting. Outgoing president Randolph R. Croxton welcomed guests and presented Chapter awards; he then turned the gavel over to incoming president A. Eugene Kohn, whose inaugural address appears in this issue.

A reception followed amid an exhibition of textiles—"Interlacing: The Elemental Fabric"—along with selections from the Museum's permanent collection and contemporary American and European Glass from the Saxe Collection.

Awards

The Citation for Excellence in Urban Design is a new category of AIA Honor Award, which was given for the first time this year. The Institute asked chapters to nominate candidates. For this award the Chapter nominated and the Institute jury selected **The Upper East Side Historic District. The Landmarks Commission and the Planning Commission** were cited. Gene Norman represented Landmarks; Lauren Otis represented Planning; and **The Upper East Side Historic District** was represented by Halina Rosenthal,

president of the Friends of the Upper East Side Historic District. The District was cited as "a comprehensive Urban Design and Historic Preservation Plan that combines landmark designation with flexible regulations that complement many district and design controls. It results in the right mix of urban design, planning, and historic preservation actions necessary to conserve and nurture the special character of this area of Manhattan in an effective and feasible way."

Special citations given for meritorious work in their respective fields went to:

Creative Time for "giving architects and artists a public forum in which to operate and to speculate on the potential of creative collaboration."

Martin Filler "whose critical review, by its discerning rigor and integrity provides our profession with fresh vision."

Suzanne Stephens, "journalist, critic, and teacher; her enthusiasm for, and her perceptions of, the world of architecture vividly illuminate for us and for the public the work of our profession."

Michael Blackwood, filmmaker, for his *cont'd. p. 8*

Installation Address

Chapter president A. Eugene Kohn

The Year of the Architect

by A. Eugene Kohn

I would like to thank all of my friends, colleagues, and guests who have made this an especially happy Annual Meeting. And I congratulate John Laping, of Buffalo, who is with us today, on being elected vice president of the Institute.

I am pleased by your support and proud to represent this Chapter as its president in the year ahead. I must confess that prior to this past year, my interest and involvement with the Chapter could be considered minimal at best. During these past 12 months, however, I have witnessed a spirit, enthusiasm, and level of commitment that is all very special — on the part of: Lenore Lucey, Cathanne Piesla, the staff of the Chapter, the dedicated and excellent board members, the enthusiastic participants on the Convention Committee, and in particular Randy Croxton's performance as Chapter president.

Randy's will be a difficult act to follow. His devotion to the causes of the Chapter and its members, his gift of time, and the personal sacrifices he has made have been truly inspiring. I want personally to thank and compliment Randy, and would appreciate all of you showing, by your applause, our appreciation for his many contributions.

My year as president is sandwiched between Randy's and that of my successor, Marty Raab, who is a great asset to this Chapter and who, I know, will be a strong and extremely competent leader carrying on and extending the successes of his predecessors. I will try to give a great deal of substance to the space between the bread.

Public Outreach

We are beginning a very special year in our history, one that will be extremely important to us all. 1987-88 will be a year of opportunity for architects in general but in particular for New York architects and the New York Chapter. Each year we all speak of getting our message out to the public — telling who we are, what we do, how important we are to our

environment and to the quality of life in our cities. With the National Convention being held in New York City in May 1988, we have a special opportunity to realize this important goal. Throughout the year we will, through the media, forums, and many events, let people know about the quality that we can bring to their lives through architectural excellence.

I have just returned from the 1987 National Convention in Orlando, where a number of you were also. What had to strike all of us and give cause for concern were the projections by economists, who spoke of doom and gloom in the coming ten years. One of the statistics provided, which was based on the status of our economy in the international arena, was that one out of every three architects would be out of business in the next five years. This was supported by several developers, who spoke of a drastic shrinking market in office development — to 25 percent of what it was in the ten years from 1977-87. It became clear to me that it was certainly time for us as a profession to take steps to increase our influence in markets and in areas for design input that we are currently not involved in and to involve ourselves with civic and community issues and the like. It is a time for imaginative and bold action.

Convention 88

My role this year will be to devote my energies to bringing our message to the public and to greatly enhancing the perception by the public of the importance of excellent architecture. I will also be spending a significant amount of time promoting the 1988 Convention. We have a fine Convention Committee, headed by John Winkler and containing many of the leading architects of our community. They are doing a superb job in planning the Chapter's participation in the Convention. We will have tours to view the many assets of New York, a terrific one-of-a-kind Chapter party, a ball at the Museum of Modern Art, exhibits at a number of museums and retail establishments, and many other fine events. We want you all to support our Convention and get as many of your

employees and friends as possible to attend.

Everyday Business

In addition, the Chapter must deal with its everyday business, with ongoing issues such as liability insurance, licensing of interior designers, bidding of fees, and with new issues that will emerge. We will be continuing, in a very strong way, such programs as the Young Leadership Council and the Intern Architects Program. While I intend to provide the leadership for the Chapter, I am going to need a great deal of help. Lenore, Cathanne, and the staff are in for a tremendous amount of work this year, and hopefully, they will make me look good. I will be counting on and delegating authority and responsibilities to members of the board and the committee chairs so that this Chapter can flourish during this busy and momentous year. I would expect committee chairs and other committee members to develop programs that are coordinated with and focus on the theme and goals of the Convention.

A Council of Presidents

I hope to bring new programs forward this year, as well as to take advantage of the experience and expertise of our previous presidents. I look forward to formalizing a current informal gathering of some previous presidents into a council of presidents. They will meet once a quarter, or more often as required, to continue assisting the Chapter. The term of the president is but one year and he barely has time to get his programs underway before his term is up. The president also develops during the course of the year areas of interest in issues that often cannot be resolved in his or her term. I am hopeful that through the council of presidents these special interests and issues can have the benefit of their continued knowledge and effort.

I would like the Chapter to be a central point of communication and distribution of pertinent information, both technical and administrative, to all members so that we can improve

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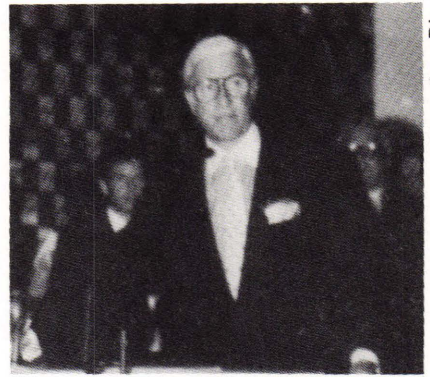
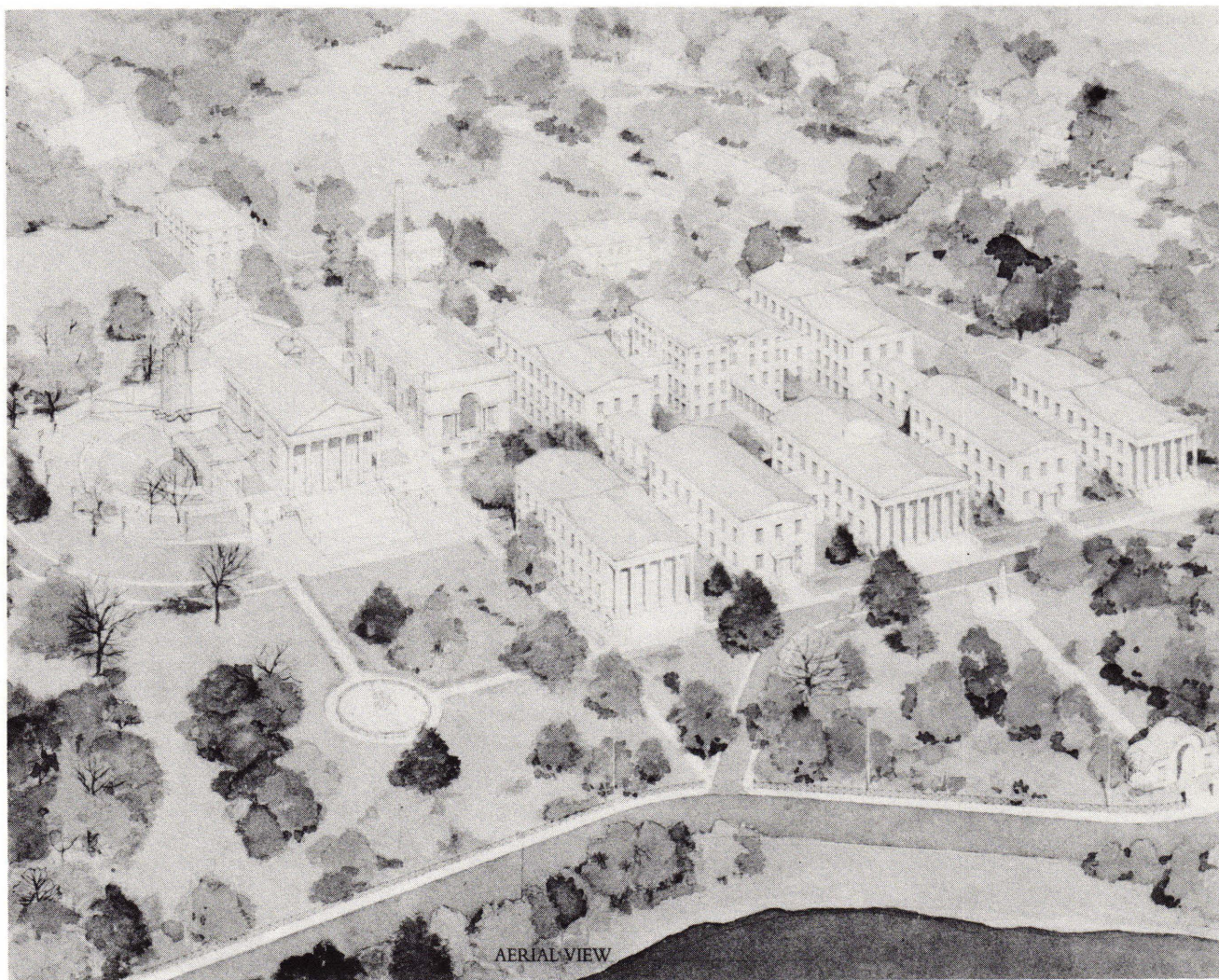


Photo: Stan Ries

The Snug Harbor Music Hall Competition



AERIAL VIEW

Rafael Vinoly Architects were named the first award winners in the Snug Harbor Cultural Center's 1987 competition for the re-use of its 1892 Music Hall (see Oculus Feb. 87, p. 10). The second award went to James Stewart Polshek & Partners, and third place to Notter, Finegold & Alexander, Inc., of Boston and Washington, D.C.

An exhibition of the entries will open in the Newhouse Gallery at Snug Harbor—in the Main Hall directly facing the Victorian gate on Richmond Terrace—on September 12 and will be on view there until October 17. Thereafter it will travel.

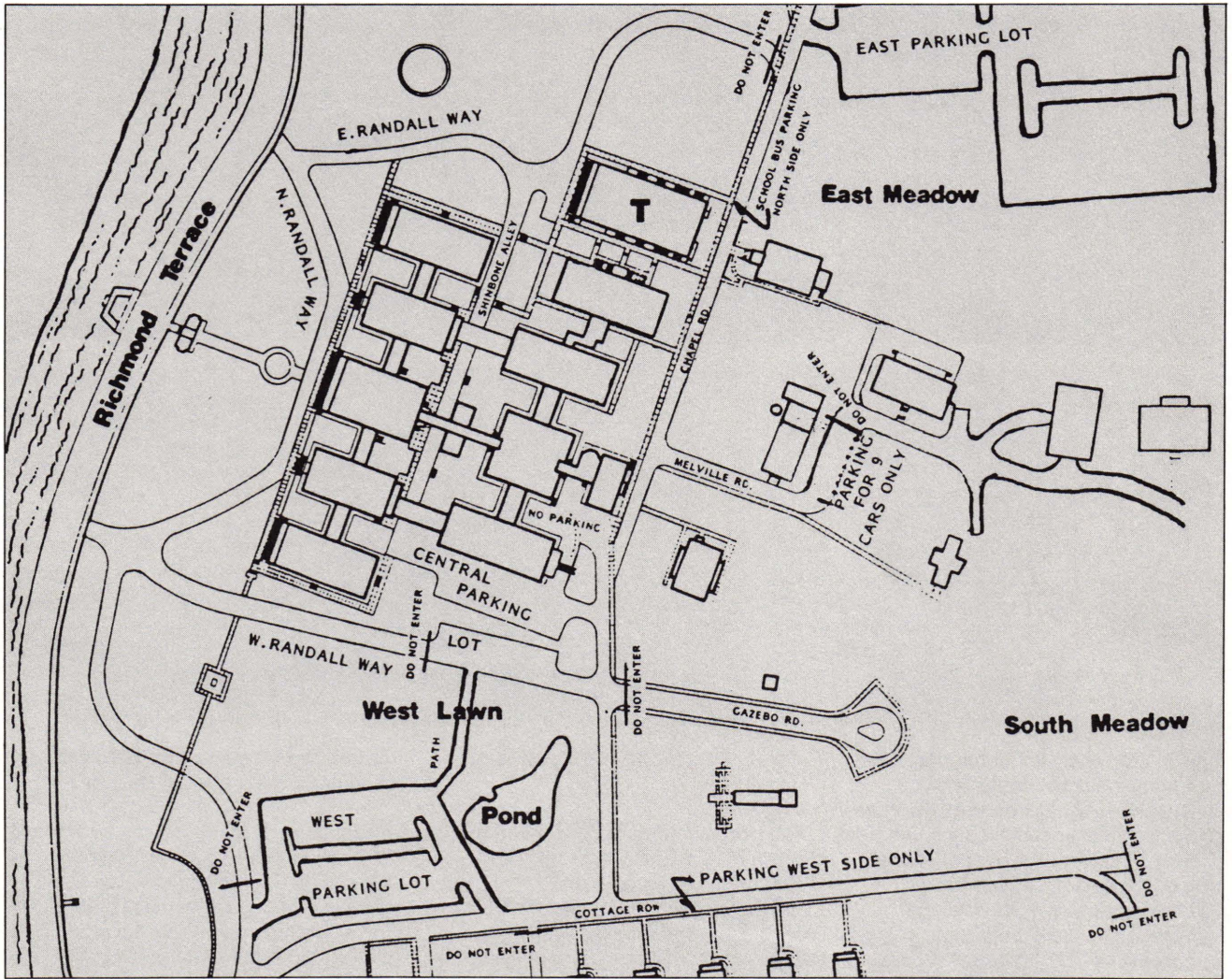
To get to Snug Harbor Cultural Center,

take the Staten Island Ferry to St. George, then drive or take the S-1 bus west along Richmond Terrace, which is the north shore of Staten Island, for about 15 minutes till Snug Harbor's three extraordinary Greek Revival pedimented porticos come into view—lined up like a condensed Paestum.

The three winners were selected from six finalists (see Oculus May 87, p. 30), who also included Allan Greenberg, Architect, of New Haven, Connecticut; the joint venture of Robert Meadows P.C. with Robert A.M. Stern Architects, both of New York; and Jan Hird Pokorny Architects & Planners with Armstrong Cumming Associates Architects, both of New York.

Facing page: The Snug Harbor Cultural Center complex with Music Hall at left. Drawing by Rafael Vinoly Architects.

Below: In the site plan of Snug Harbor Cultural Center "T" indicates the Music Hall.



The winning solution by Rafael Vinoly Architects, the jury stated, "carefully and precisely expanded the stage and back of the house facilities to the old vaudeville hall without unduly compromising its interior or exterior. It remained respectful to the character of the old building and to its constructional fabric without resorting to historicizing architecture."

The competition jury, consisting of nine members including three architects, a preservationist, a theater specialist, and three members of the Snug Harbor board of directors, included: James S. Rossant, chairman, Judith Daykin, Alice Diamond, Allan Weissglass, Denis Kelleher, Susana

Torre, Rafael Moneo, James Marston Fitch, and Charles W. Moore.

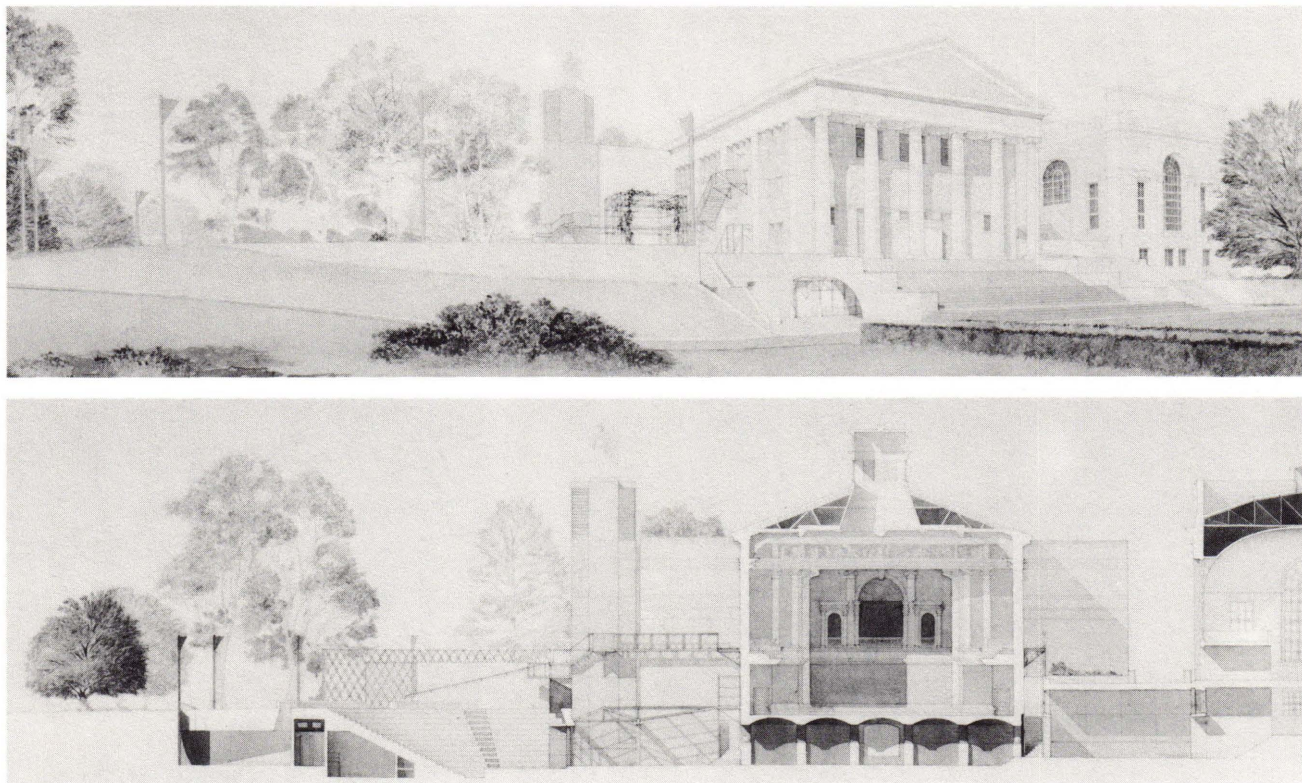
Technical advisors to the jury included Robert Davis, theater consultant for the Music Hall; Peter Rothschild of Quennell Rothschild Associates, landscape architect and master plan consultant to Snug Harbor Cultural Center; and Mark A. Hewitt, architect and Assistant Professor of Architecture and Historic Preservation at Columbia University, who was also professional advisor to the competition, and whose excerpted report and assessment follow.

Snug Harbor

The Competition Process and the Finalist Designs: An Assessment

Mark A. Hewitt is Assistant Professor of Architecture and Historic Preservation at Columbia University, and was professional advisor to the Snug Harbor competition.

by Mark A. Hewitt



The 80-acre complex of buildings that now comprises the Snug Harbor Cultural Center has been at the center of the historic preservation movement in New York City for over 20 years. One of the nation's finest intact collections of Greek Revival and nineteenth century buildings, as well as America's first home for retired merchant seamen, Snug Harbor's historical significance was well established in the mid-1960s, when Staten Islanders and the newly formed Landmarks Preservation Commission fought to save the complex from destruction and redevelopment.

After that significant victory was won, the city and borough conceived of re-using the site as a cultural center. So in 1976 Staten Island's architectural and landscape masterpiece became the projected heart of its cultural life, with plans for the incorporation of both new and existing institutions including a botanical garden; children's museum; visual arts center; major galleries; a museum of history,

arts, and sciences; and a performing arts complex.

The process of planning for the re-use of the Music Hall points up the dilemmas facing both designers and institutional clients in reconciling new governmental and economic exigencies with changing philosophies of design, conservation, and historical interpretation. Snug Harbor's successful public-private partnership, in creating the Music Hall Design Competition under federal, state, and private funding, is an experiment to test the viability of its re-use.

The Music Hall

The Snug Harbor Music Hall, designed by the English immigrant architect Robert Gibson (1854-1927), is one of New York City's oldest legitimate theaters. Plans were initiated for its construction in June 1890, and the building was opened in the summer of 1892. Built during Snug Harbor's wealthiest period, it was part of the last large building campaign under Governor G.D.S.

Trask, and formed a new quadrant on the northeast corner of the site.

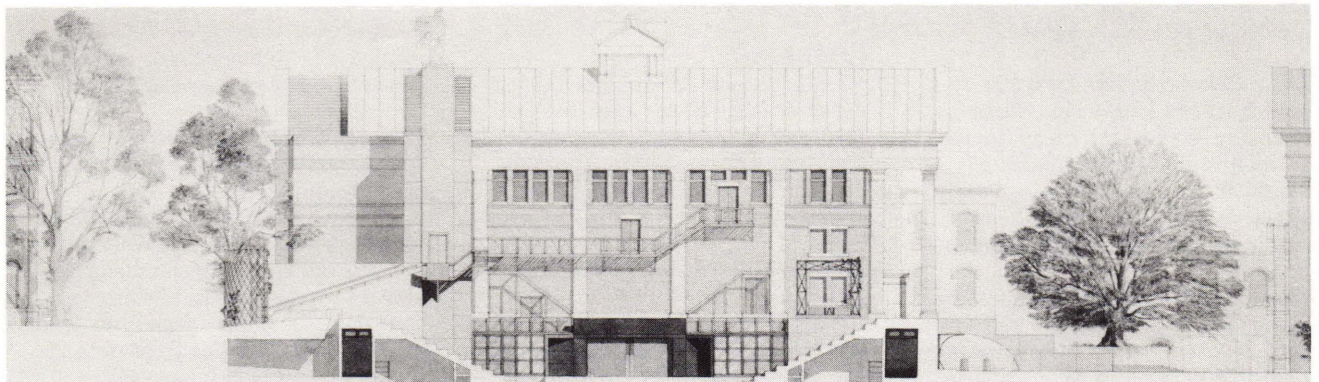
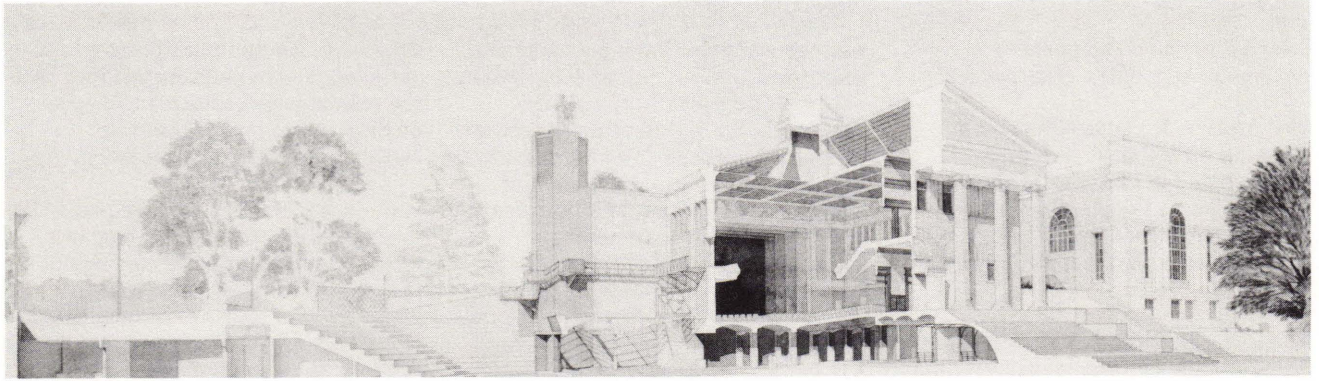
Following the model set up by Minard Lafever in the first Snug Harbor buildings, Gibson adopted the Ionic temple front as the Music Hall's formal image, and filled the rear of the gabled box with theater functions. The building was built of load-bearing brick that supports lightweight steel trusses. One of its notable features was its undercroft, constructed of tile vaults using the Guastavino system, and designed to allow radiant heat from a steam hypocaust system to pass up into the auditorium through grates in the floor. During the summer, heat was exhausted through the cupola, which could control the draft through a simple manual louver.

The theater was built as a vaudeville house, with a shallow stage, and a small orchestra pit, but without a tower for flying scenery. Its intimate auditorium, seating only 600, was designed for the captive audiences of sailors and officers whiling away their

First Award

Architect: Rafael Vinoly Architects, PC; Rafael Vinoly, principal in charge of design; Stephen A. Wanta, project director; Jay Douglas Bargmann, project manager; team — Jackie Welsh, Roger Sherman, Greg Karn, Jennifer Schab, Meredith Robinson, Marwan Al-Sayed, Tracy Aronoff, Edward Frierson

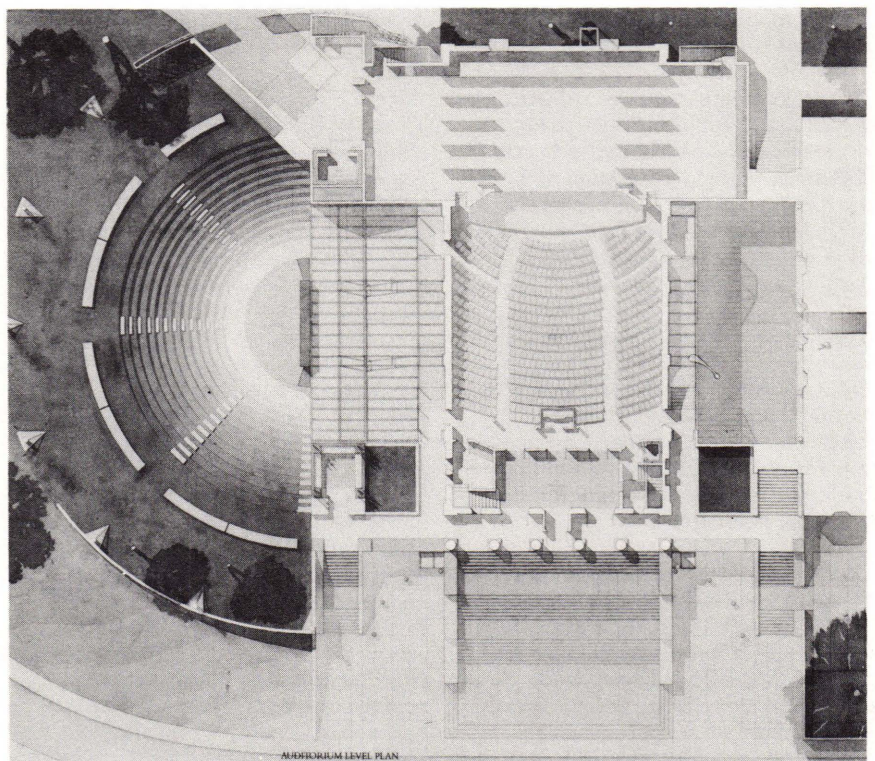
Restoration Architect: Giorgio Bellavitis, Architect
Theater Consultants: Knudson-Benson Associates, Inc.
Structural Engineers: Severud-Szegezdy
Mechanical Engineers: Cosentini Associates



twilight years in the harbor's Grecian setting. No extensive lobbies were required, since the audience did not linger in the building during intermissions, and would exit and enter quickly. The officers sat in velvet and gilt box seats in the balcony, the swabbies below in simple wooden seats, watching plays, minstrel shows, comics, dancing, or lectures. In 1911 an up-to-date film booth was added, allowing the "snuggies" to catch the latest motion pictures, first silent and later talking.

The decor of the Music Hall was never opulent, but it had a flavor in keeping with contemporary houses — Carnegie Hall (1889) and the old Metropolitan Opera House (1893). Using simple classical elements, mouldings, and a distinctive plaster frieze depicting Orpheus and the Muses above the proscenium, Gibson managed to give the boxlike auditorium an appropriate grandeur. Originally painted a chrome green with buff-colored and gilt trim, the hall must have appeared

cont'd. p. 14



Annual Meeting

cont'd. from p. 2

"clarity of vision and purpose in documentation of the creative art."

The Andrew J. Thomas/Pioneer in Housing Award went to **Joseph Wasserman** for "his passionate concern and service to People, Community, and Neighborhood by planning environments that inspire improved way of life."

The Harry B. Rutkins Memorial Award/Service to the Chapter went to **William A. Hall** "whose constancy of support and unbounded good will embody the highest goals of the Chapter."

The Public Architects Award in recognition of long-term efforts resulting in exemplary architecture or urban design, went to **Charles M. Smith, Jr.** for "his determined and effective advocacy of excellence within New York City Government."

The George S. Lewis Award, bestowed on someone who has made New York a better place in which to live and work went to **Mrs. Vincent Astor** "whose love for our City is evidenced by her special attention to its diverse environs."

Honorary Membership for rendering signal and valuable service to our profession was presented to **Cervin Robinson** "artist, craftsman, and author; his photographs are a record of the art, the craft, and the heritage of architecture. His work is an inspiration to our profession."

The Award of Merit, for contributions as a client, public servant, critic, or layman, went to **Professor George Collins**, "an inspiration as art historian, scholar, author, and teacher. For his lasting contribution to the understanding of architectural and planning heritage."

The Medal of Honor, the highest honor given by the Chapter to an architect, or firm of architects, for distinguished work and high professional standing, went to **James Ingo Freed**, who, "devoted to exploring the reality of design, draws the poetic from the ritual and tectonics within."

Installation Address

cont'd. from p. 3

our performance. It seems to me most important that we not be defensive in our attitude nor attempt to duck responsibility, but have a positive and outgoing approach. We architects are, after all, an important segment of society, and what we do influences our society for years to come. It is important that we not take ourselves or our work for granted. We need to continue to be concerned, despite the members of this Chapter's fine work to date, about the product we produce, about its design quality, and about the care of its execution.

Urban Issues

We must speak out on issues that concern us all, issues such as the future of our city and its quality of life, landmarks preservation, and such concepts as what density is appropriate for the city, what height limits, if any, should be imposed on our buildings. We must find with our colleagues—the City Planning Department, the Landmarks Commission, other city agencies, and community groups—a way to work together that is not adversarial but constructive, a way that produces the ideal, not the compromise.

Fees

To achieve outstanding architecture, quality design, and quality execution requires sufficient fees. We must, as architects, get the appropriate fee so we can, in fact, do our jobs well and pay our staffs equitably. Because in many cases, we are viewed as artists does not mean that we should not be good businessmen and profitable professionals. Somehow doctors, lawyers, and accountants have been able to create a perception that they are important and should be paid well for their services. In the building process, the real estate community and the investment bankers who arrange financing are deemed very necessary, more so than the architect, and as a result all do extremely well financially.

If we do our work in less than a professional and dedicated way because of low fees, we will not be pleased with the results, nor will our

clients, or the communities in which our projects are built. Remember that the pain of poor performance—poor quality—lasts longer than the sweetness of the cheapest price.

It is also mandatory that we make this profession attractive to young and talented people who are coming out of the universities. We must make it attractive not only by the long hours we encourage them to work and by the challenges we present them, but also by equitable salaries. Their situation does not seem fair when compared to their associates who graduate from business or law schools to very high starting salaries.

In order to achieve appropriate fees for our contributions and, therefore, appropriate salaries for our employees, architects must build the idea that we are needed. We must also provide our clients with reasonable choices by clearly establishing our differences and our specialties. I am mindful of the Justice Department's concerns, and I am in no way suggesting fixed fees or salaries by anyone. Rather I suggest a total upgrade of the concept of reimbursement for our contributions.

I am convinced that if this year we are able to continue to improve the public awareness of the importance of our profession, which, by the way, has been improving these last few years, then we will have achieved something very special and lasting for ourselves, for our clients, and for our community.

The Year of the Architect

Here in New York we are very fortunate to have a truly outstanding Chapter that can count among its members many of America's outstanding architects and architecture firms of all sizes. With the help, support, and commitment of all of our architects and of the friends of the Chapter, we can make this year The Year of the Architect, a landmark year and a landmark convention. If we are successful, and I am sure we will be, we will be rewarded and survive to continue to serve our world.

Chapter Reports

by Lenore M. Lucey

• **June** saw many Chapter members heading to hot and humid Orlando, Florida, for "Fact, Future, + Fantasy," the annual AIA convention. Regina Kelly, Chapter Convention Administrator, Mary Jean Winkler, and Convention 88 Steering Committee members staffed the New York Convention 88 booth, providing invitations to next year's convocation, New York City information, buttons, and friendly informative answers to questions. The overwhelmingly positive response to our presentations was gratifying; it promises a well attended Convention 88. Chapter members created a high profile in Orlando, representing a large number of award winners, professional development course leaders, and speakers, not to mention carrying the day in the Lego Building Project.

• **July** brought Planning Day, the Chapter's annual strategy and planning meeting for executive committee members and committee chairs, on July 15, 1987. It kicked off what promises to be an exciting year for New York architects and architecture. Gene Kohn, in his introductory remarks, urged the Chapter leadership to keep Convention 88 always in mind, to plan fewer programs, in order to make sure those that are presented offer higher visibility and greater attraction to members, the public, and the press. Many committees have already planned jointly sponsored events to broaden the attendance base, including a seminar sponsored by Compensation, Professional Practice, and Computer Applications that will be devoted to effectively using the computer as a compensation tool.

• **August** brought with it intense activity on the part of committees readying programs. Convention 88 committees will be completing plans for next May, due to Institute deadlines in early fall for mailings. Chapter committees will be meeting to decide on programs, speakers, and dates for the coming Chapter year.

If you have not yet requested appointment to either an appointive

committee or a convention committee, contact the Chapter office immediately. This is not a year to miss out on NYC/AIA activities.

Planning will also be getting under way for this year's legislative session in Albany. We still face an uphill battle over interior designer licensing; a number of other legislative initiatives are also in the works. You are reminded it is never too late to write your legislator in opposition to the Interior Designer Licensing Bill, or in favor of our own legislative initiatives. Use your legislative packet!

Dutch Architects

A group of about 40 Dutch architects, working in the specific fields of health-care buildings, will visit New York City in the first week of October 1987.

The architects are participants of the Foundation for Architectural Research in the Health Care sector, established in 1972 under the auspices of the Royal Institute of Dutch Architects. These Dutch architects would like to meet New York City architects who work in the same field to exchange views and experiences.

Peter Heerens, AIA and member Royal Institute of Dutch Architects, is their contact in New York City. Please call him at (212) 410-0198 if you are interested.

Hugh Aldersey-Williams writing on "Widening Horizons" in the *TWA Ambassador*, June 1987 said: "Not only can the best architecture directly affect an institution's bottom line, it also comes pretty cheap, representing a fraction of a building's total cost. The architect's fee is usually calculated as a fixed proportion of the building cost, and his expense must pale in comparison to these sums. It becomes economic then to import the best architect even from halfway around the globe."

Flame of Truth Award

by Lenore M. Lucey

A. Eugene Kohn, recently installed Chapter president, will be the recipient of the prestigious Flame of Truth Award from The Fund for Higher Education. The award is presented to individuals in business, government, and education in recognition of significant contributions to the advancement of knowledge, leadership in their selected fields, and service to society. Past recipients include Frank Borman, Thornton F. Bradshaw, Leonard H. Goldenson, and Marvin S. Traub, among others.

Gene will be honored at a testimonial dinner to be held October 14, 1987, in the Grand Ballroom of the Hilton Hotel in New York. Beneficiaries of the gala will be the fund for restoration of the Furness Library at the University of Pennsylvania, and the Sheltering Arms Childrens Service in New York. Restoration of the Furness Library is under the direction of Venturi, Rauch & Scott Brown Architects. Design for the Sheltering Arms building is by Voorsanger & Mills, Architects.

Dinner Committee Chair is Henry A. Lambert, President of the Reliance Development Group, Inc. He is being assisted by Co-Chairs: James A. Atwood, Mony Financial Services; Claude M. Ballard, Goldman Sachs & Company; G. Ralph Guthrie, Urban Investment & Development Company; Benjamin D. Holloway, Equitable Real Estate Group; Philip Johnson, FAIA, John Burgee Architects; Thomas J. Klutznick, Miller, Klutznick, Davis, Gray; Donald Knab, Prudential Investment Corporation; and A. Mack Pogue, Lincoln Property Company.

We all share the pride of our Chapter president's achievements and contributions being recognized by this prestigious organization. Gene is the first architect to be honored, and the beneficiaries are two very special projects deserving the support of the architectural community. The evening promises to be an exciting one, and the recognition is well deserved. For tickets please call the Fund at 212-354-4660.

OCULUS NYC/AIA

SEP 87

CONTINUING EVENTS

*Send Oculus Calendar information to:
New York Chapter/AIA, 457 Madison
Avenue, N.Y. 10022.*

*Oculus welcomes information for the
calendar pertaining to public events
about architecture and the other design
professions. It is due in writing by the 1st
of the month for the following issue.*

*Because of the time lag between
information received and printed, final
details of events are likely to change. It is
recommended that events be checked
with sponsoring institutions before
attending.*

MARIO BELLINI

Exhibition devoted to one of Italy's
leading designers. The Museum of
Modern Art. 708-9750. Closes Sept.
15.

NEW NEW YORK

Exhibition. The Queens Museum,
New York City building, Flushing
Meadow, Corona Park, Flushing.
718-592-2405. Closes Sept. 27.

TUESDAY 1

1961: Death of Eero Saarinen
(1910-1961).

EXHIBITION

**Vertical Architecture: The World
Trade Center.** NYC/AIA Members
Gallery. 838-9670. Closes Oct. 1987.

EXHIBITION

**Art Nouveau Bing: The Paris Style
1900** as promoted by Siegfried Bing.
Cooper-Hewitt Museum. 860-6868.
Closes Oct. 11.

WEDNESDAY 2

1666: The Great Fire destroyed
London.

EXHIBITION

**"Underground Images: The School of
Visual Arts Subway Posters,
1947-1987.** Cooper-Hewitt Museum.
860-6868. Closes Nov. 8.

EXHIBITION

"Three-fold Manifestation II"
sculpture by Alice Aycock on view at
Doris C. Freedman Plaza, Fifth Ave.
and 60 St. entrance to Central Park.
Sponsored by the Public Art Fund,
Inc. Bridget Schmidt 541-8423.
Through mid-October.

THURSDAY 3

1820: Benjamin Henry Latrobe died
(1764-1820).
1856: Louis Henry Sullivan born
(1856-1924).

AMERICAN CERAMICS NOW

27th National Ceramic Exhibition.
American Craft Museum. 956-3535.
Closes Oct. 18.

EXHIBITION

**Houses for the Hereafter, Funerary
Temples from Guerrero, Mexico.**
Metropolitan Museum of Art.
879-5500. Closes Jan. 17.

FRIDAY 4

MONDAY 7

1936: Boulder (now Hoover) Dam
opened.

TUESDAY 8

1947: Belgian architect Victor Horta
died (1861-1947).

WEDNESDAY 9

SCOTT BURTON

An exhibition of his work. Max
Protetch Gallery, 460 Broadway at
Prince St. 838-7436. Closes Oct. 24.

THURSDAY 10

FRIDAY 11

DEADLINE

To mail entries in the Ninth Annual
Interiors Award to: Interiors, 1515
Broadway, NYC 10036.

SNUG HARBOR EXHIBITION OPENS SAT. SEPT. 12

Entries in the Snug Harbor Music
Hall National Design Competition.
Newhouse Gallery at Snug Harbor.
718-448-2500.

CONSTITUTION CELEBRATION ON SAT. SEPT. 12

3rd annual Madison Day/Constitution
Bicentennial Celebration. 6-9 pm.
Octagon Museum, Washington, DC.
Contact: Ann Cooper 202 696 7467

MONDAY 14

TUESDAY 15

OPEN CHAPTER MEETING
The Convention Steering Committee will present an overview of plans to date.

BOSCOTRECASE WALL PAINTINGS
Permanent installation of 17 frescoes from a Roman villa. Metropolitan Museum of Art. 879-5500.

WEDNESDAY 16

1966: Harrison & Abramovitz's Metropolitan Opera House opened at Lincoln Center.

THURSDAY 17

ORIENTATION SESSION
Orientation and training session for volunteers on the Citizen's Committee for Children. It will monitor projects of the city's large barrack-style shelters. 2 pm. Citizen's Committee for Children, 105 E. 22 St. Contact: Judy Berck 673-1800.

FRIDAY 18

2-DAY SYMPOSIUM
"Celluloid Skvline," a symposium on New York and the Movies, sponsored by the Architectural League and the American Museum of the Moving Image. Sept. 18, 6:30-10:30 pm; Sept. 19, 9 am-6 pm. The Urban Center. 753-1722.

SITE PROJECTS, INC. OPENS
ON SAT. SEPT. 19
Max Protetch Gallery, 560 Broadway at Prince St. 838-7436. Closes Oct. 31.

MONDAY 21

INTERARCH 87
Fourth World Biennale of Architecture "INTERARCH 87" (Sept. 21-27). Sofia, Bulgaria.

TUESDAY 22

1890: Birth of Frederick Kiesler (1890-1965).

WEDNESDAY 23

THURSDAY 24

1854: Greek Revival architect Minard Lafever died (1798-1854).

FRIDAY 25

FRIENDS OF THE PARKS
TOUR ON SAT. SEPT. 26
To Mt. Pleasant Cemetery in Newark to explore "the 19th century cult of mourning— life, death, and immortality." 1 pm. Meet at Newark's Penn Station via PATH train. 473-6283.

MONDAY 28

CONFERENCE
Asbestos Management in Commercial and Residential Real Estate (Sep. 28-29) sponsored by NYU School of Continuing Education, the Real Estate Institute. Halloran House, 525 Lexington Ave. Information: 790-1300.

AMERICA BY DESIGN

First of the 5-part public television series about architecture and design hosted by Spiro Kostof. TV Channel 13. 11 pm.

DEADLINE

To register in the Municipal Art Society's New York Waterfront Competition. 935-3960.

TUESDAY 29

CONFERENCE
2nd Annual Conference: Asbestos Abatement in New York State (Sept. 29-Oct. 1). The Albany Hilton, Albany, NY. Contact: Education Division, Hall-Kimbrell Environmental Services, Inc. 1-800-0682.

WEDNESDAY 30

DEADLINE
For submission of entries in Rural New England Home Design Competition for Young Architects (see Competitions, Names and News). Contact: Liz King 925-4646.

Convention 88 Update

by John H. Winkler

Since I last reported in the May 1987 *Oculus*, we have moved forward considerably with Convention 88 planning. A final member has been added to the Chapter's Convention Steering Committee, Bartholomew Voorsanger of Voorsanger & Mills. Bart's Committee will be responsible for the exhibit and museum interface that may be required during the convention.

The convention theme, "Art in Architecture," and the dates have been determined: May 15-18, 1988.

As the Host Chapter we are responsible for certain specific convention activities including: Tours, Special Events, the Host Chapter Store, and the Host Chapter Party.

Special Events, under Convention 88 commissioner Richard Hayden, is empowered with creating programs for convention attendees, spouses, and children. Events that have been discussed include: art and architecture lectures held at museums, shopping tours to various areas within the city, a run around the Central Park reservoir, and behind-the-scenes lectures at special locations such as Lincoln Center. This committee is also responsible for the Host Chapter Store, which will be located on the exhibit floor at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center.

We are exploring ideas with commissioner Kenneth Walker and major retailers to help promote Convention 88, as well as architects, and architecture. We are planning to create a "special" environment along Fifth Avenue with graphics: display windows that contain architectural artifacts, drawings, and models; display windows designed by architects; and perhaps windows featuring clothing designed by architects.

Paul Heyer, Dean at Pratt Institute and Convention 88 commissioner for Students/Schools, has met with the deans of other local architecture schools. Currently among their plans is an exhibition of original student

work from the five city architecture schools along with a companion catalog.

The Host Chapter Party committee, under Convention 88 commissioner Michael Maas is now determining the location and logistics of a spectacular party. Watch for their announcement of the very special site and full report in the November *Oculus*.

In addition, we are planning a series of cocktail parties on Wednesday, May 18, 1988, hosted in architects' offices throughout the city. A check-off was provided on the convention survey form for Sustaining Member Firms to indicate their willingness to host such a party. If you have not already done so, send in your form now to be considered.

The above greatly summarizes our specific responsibilities and does not address all our roles in the planning of Convention 88. We provide advice to the Institute staff and convention committee on many aspects of planning and program. Paul Segal is the national committee member charged with program development. Other members of the Chapter's Convention Steering Committee have duties that will be discussed in future issues.

We continue to receive completed questionnaires; thank you very much for the wonderful response. If you are interested in working on a committee, but have not submitted a form, or have not yet been contacted, please call Regina Kelly at the Chapter.

At the September 5th Convention 88 meeting, each chapter member of the Chapter's Convention Steering Committees will summarize the work of their sub-committees, and will be available to answer questions. We look forward to seeing you there.

Letters

Dear Editor:

Two items in the June 87 *Oculus* compel me to write in response. One is the listing of Richard Upjohn's birth date (p. 9) as 1802 on one line and as 1807 on the next, then even more absurdly, his death date as 1978! I wonder how many other readers went to the DAB to find out for themselves that it should have read (1802-1878).

The other thing I find outrageous is the total disregard of the borough of Staten Island on p. 12 in the piece on the Department of Buildings. "All five boroughs" are mentioned in the text and below only four boroughs and phone numbers are given. Could you correct this oversight in an upcoming issue?

Wendy Shadwell, Curator of Prints
The New-York Historical Society

Ed. *The editors are grateful for all eagle-eyed readers who are eager for the news. The phone number for Staten Island's plan examination appointments—718-390-5184-5—had been inadvertently omitted from the information sheet that Oculus reprinted.*

Ed. *The following communication was received attached to page 11, Oculus May 1987, which presented the Storage Building, Bulk Mail Center by architects Hoover Berg Desmond, in Denver, Colorado, which won a citation in the Chapter's 1987 Distinguished Architecture Awards.*

Dear Editor:

This is a good reason to resign my membership, which I nearly did. Where has aesthetic judgment gone? I'm ashamed of us! Wake up!
Richard W. Snibbe

Dear Editor:

The great success of the New York Chapter/AIA's awards program has pleased almost everybody. The juries over the last four years have been composed of outstanding international professionals of high integrity. Over the same four years, AIA members and awards committee members have received approximately 13 percent of the awards each year. Last fall—for

Architectural Heritage Ball November 21, 1987

by Martin D. Raab

the first time—the number was coincidentally above average for awards committee members; the other times they received either an average number, less than average, or no awards.

No AIA member, awards committee member, or single jury member can manipulate three to six jury members of integrity, and no other jury member would allow such an attempt. As always, such was the honest selection of award-winning projects in the last two awards programs. Further, each of the 20 awards committee members could propose only one jury member, so as to avoid even the vaguest influence on jury composition.

In the national AIA Honor Awards Program and in the awards programs of all the largest local chapters—Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Houston, and Texas State—awards committee members can enter an unrestricted number of projects for any design awards program. By percentage, they have received no more awards than other AIA members. Nobody has ever questioned this procedure.

In this Chapter, in March 1987, the executive committee—without a single meaningful reason—instituted the restrictive rule that each awards committee member can enter only one project in any awards program. This rule insinuates that New York architects are less honest than architects in other chapters; it tries to “correct” this year’s jury decisions; it throws doubt on members receiving more than one award; and throws a false guilt over both the awards committee and the jury.

On April 1, the awards committee overwhelmingly rejected this rule. Nevertheless, the executive committee proceeded most undemocratically to block the abolishment of this rule. This means that the executive committee sold out the awards committee. The 1986-87 Chapter president and executive committee then further established a small “study group,” on which they

The second annual Architectural Heritage Ball will be held in the Grand Ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on Saturday, November 21st, at 7:30 p.m. This will continue the wonderful tradition started last year by the Ball held at the Low Library.

We have attempted to formalize the tradition. After looking into many significant architectural spaces we found that the logistics, security, and the donations required would significantly erode the funds available for scholarships, which is a major purpose of the Ball.

Incidentally, the \$20 million in restoration funds that the hotel has expended in the last few years helped the decision.

In addition, this year we are reaching out to our fellow members of the building community and inviting consultants, contractors, sub-contractors, suppliers, owners, and builders so that the affair will represent the New York’s extended architectural community.

This year’s auction for the benefit of the Scholarship Fund will concentrate on architecturally significant donations from the archives of members. Invitations to the Ball will be going out in early September.

placed the only two awards committee members (except the executive committee liaison) that supported the offensive restrictive rule, to rig the rule “recommendation” to what they wanted. They also put one of these two on this year’s executive committee for that! Without the executive committee retracting its unethical actions, the trust is not there.

Peter Pran
Co-Chairperson, NYC/AIA Awards Committee, 1985/86 & 1986/87 and Vice President and Design Director Ellerbe, Architects

Publisher’s Note: *Copies of the complete Design Awards Programs Committee guidelines are available from the Chapter.*

Competitions

The American Academy in Rome has announced the 1988-89 Rome Prize Fellowships Competition in the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, advanced design arts (architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning, and design arts including interior, industrial, graphic, fashion and set design). The deadline for the Competition is November 15, 1987. Fellows are selected by national, rotating juries of prominent artists and scholars. Rome Prize Fellowships provide winners with a stipend, travel allowance to and from Rome, housing, most meals, and studio/study space at the Academy’s 10-building facility in Rome. No courses are offered; Fellowship winners pursue independent study. For applications: Fellowships Coordinator, American Academy in Rome, 41 E. 65 St., New York City 10021-6508; or call 517-4200. Specify field of interest . . . **The Municipal Art Society** has received a grant from the Design Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts to hold an international, open “idea competition” for a 66-acre, four-mile strip of land on the Hudson River waterfront between Battery Park City and 44th Street. The idea-competition is aimed at architects, landscape architects, urban designers, and environmental artists, but it is open to anyone who registers with the Society by September 28, 1987. For more information: Virginia Dajani 935-3960 . . . September 11th is the deadline for postmarking entries in the Ninth Annual Interiors Awards sponsored by *Interiors* magazine. For more information: 764-7767 . . . Young architects have been invited to enter a “Rural New England Home Design Competition for an innovative new residential community in Litchfield County, Connecticut.” The Washington Ridge Conservancy is “a private, wooded enclave of 162 acres, with 22 home sites outside Washington, Connecticut.” Registered architects under 40 practicing in New England, New Jersey, and New York State are eligible to design a private country home and gardens with or without dependencies. Serving on the jury are Thomas H. Beeby, Dean, School of Architecture, Yale; Paul Buckhurst, Buckhurst Fish Hutton Katz; Alan Chimacoff, Professor of Architecture, Princeton; Robert F. Fox, Fox & Fowle Architects; Vincent Scully, Sterling professor of History of Art, Yale; and Robert A.M. Stern, Robert A.M. Stern Architects. Submissions must be postmarked by September 30, 1987. For more information and entry forms: Liz King 925-4646.

Snug Harbor

Second Award

Architect: James Stewart Polshek and Partners; James S. Polshek, design partner; Tyler H. Donaldson, design associate; Peter Talbot, project architect

Structural Consultant: Robert Silman

Mechanical/Electrical Consultant: Thomas A. Polise

Theater Consultant: Peter George Associates

Conservation Consultant: Building Conservation Associates, Inc.

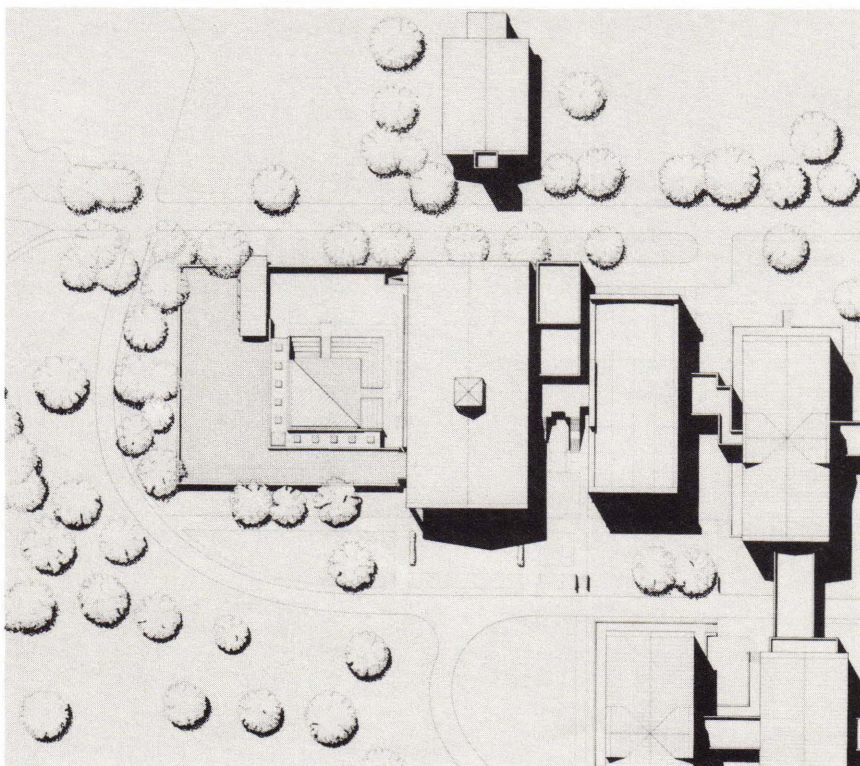
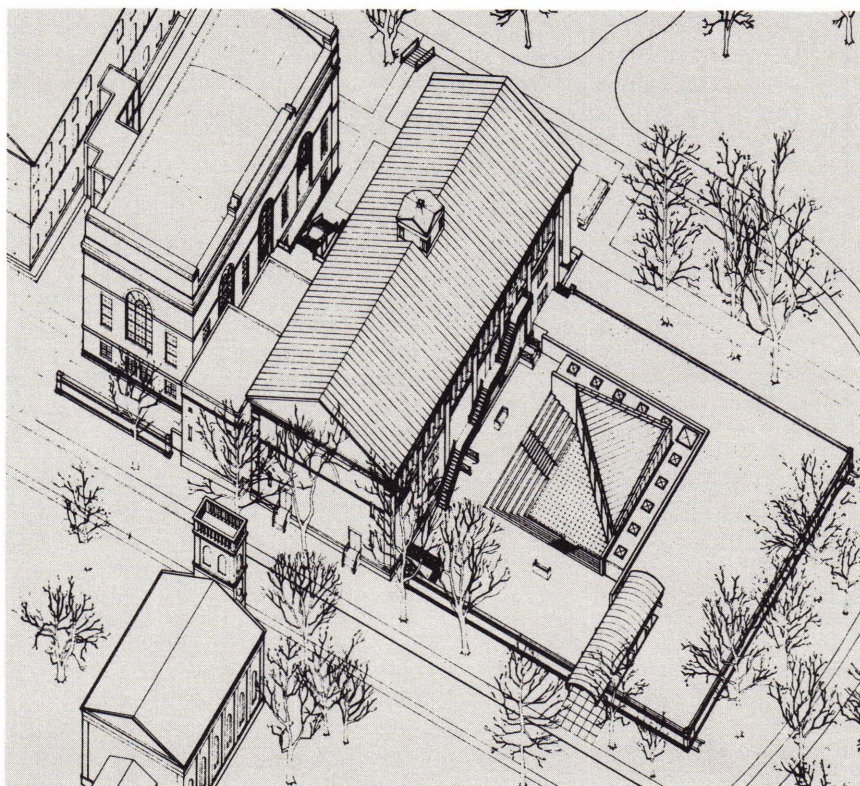
cont'd. from p. 7

resplendent under the golden light of its gas lamps, as they were 'miraculously' lit all at once via a clever spark lighting system. In 1902 the interior received a painted re-decoration in a somewhat Art-Nouveau vein, but retained its basic elements. Owing to both the proportions of the space and the simple decorative elements, there is a charm and freshness to the auditorium that cannot be found in any other New York theater. Its significance as a rare and intact example of an 1890s performance hall made its restoration a goal of preservationists, historians, and theater enthusiasts.

The Program

It was with this unique space in mind that Dr. Michael Hardy, Snug Harbor's President/C.E.O. and a theater professional with broad knowledge of historic and contemporary facilities, conceived the idea of re-using the Music Hall as a new multi-use theater. (With an increasingly ambitious and popular schedule of musical, dramatic, and dance events year-round in the newly-renovated Veterans' Memorial Hall and Great Hall, the performing arts play a crucial role in the operation of the cultural center.) In 1986 Snug Harbor retained Robert Davis Associates, Theatre Consultants, to prepare a program study that would evaluate the possibility of converting the old hall into a technically up-to-date performing arts facility that could offer companies something different in the character of the performance space, and draw specialized theater, music, and dance groups in much the same way as the Brooklyn Academy of Music has done.

The Davis study proposed the addition of new rehearsal, dressing room, lobby, and backstage space amounting to 19,000 square feet, almost double the area of the existing building, and accepted the limitations of the Music Hall in terms of sight lines, limited seating, and lack of a fly tower in order to ensure the preservation of the building's essential form and character. It also proposed and evaluated three alternative designs.



Third Award

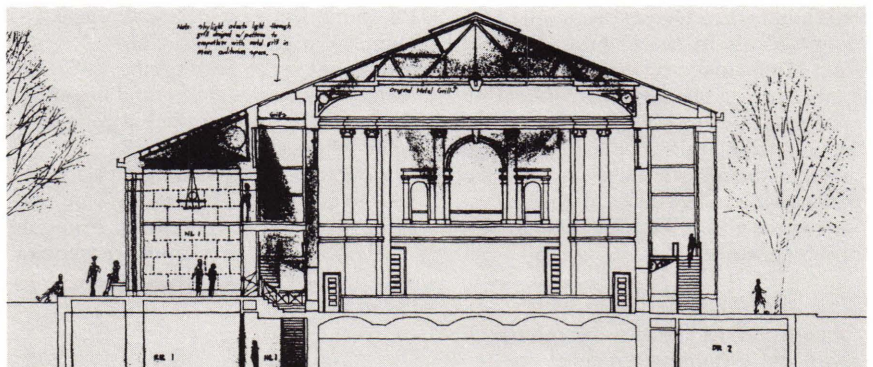
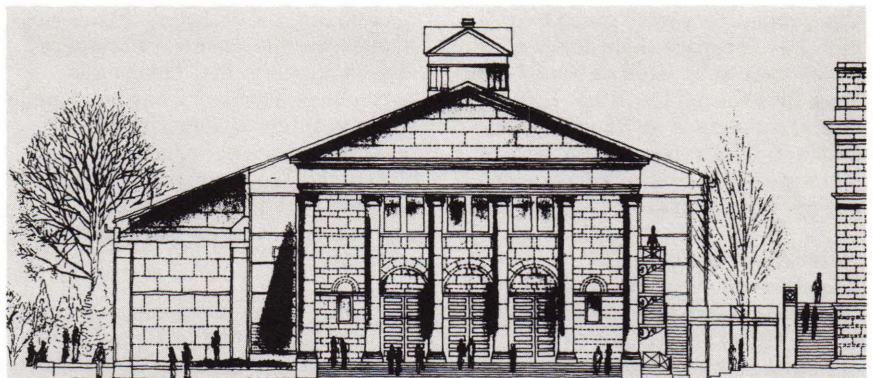
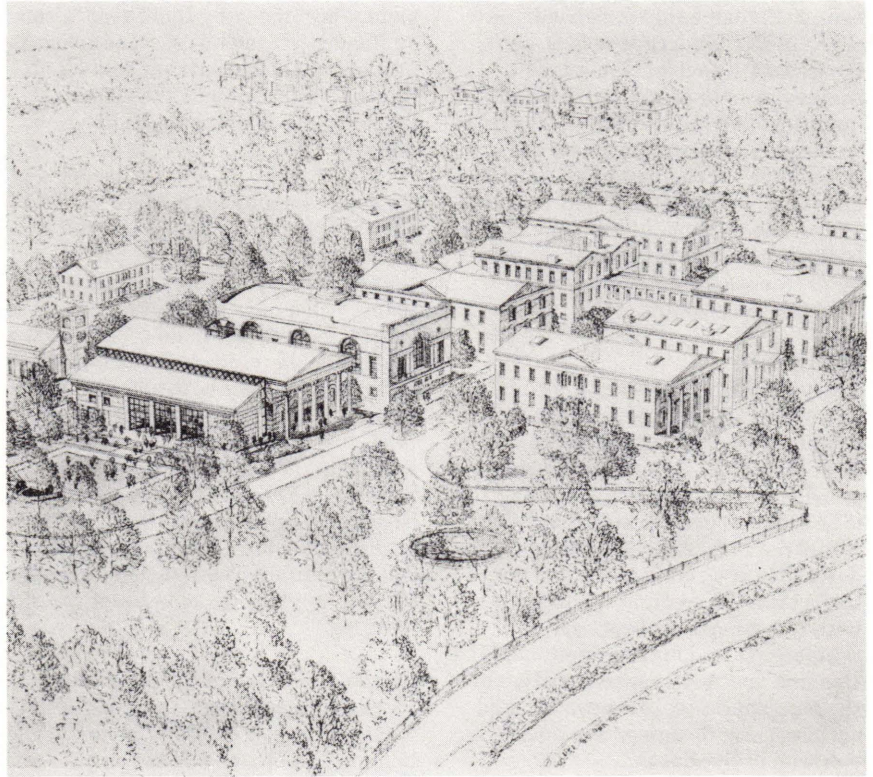
Architect: Notter, Finegold & Alexander, Inc.; George Notter, principal; Tony Hsiao, designer; Jim Monteverdi, project manager
Landscape Consultant: Carol Johnson
Theater Consultants: Joshua Dachs, Jules Fisher Associates

After considering the architectural repercussions of these schemes, a design competition was seen as the most effective means of bringing the best design talent to bear on the difficult site issues, preservation problems, and the challenge of planning a workable and beautiful addition. Asking architects to compete for a preservation project was a relatively unusual idea, since re-using old buildings generally involves technical evaluation, probes, extensive documentation, and much re-designing due to hidden conditions. Specialist architects are therefore most often retained after interviews. For this reason, a two-stage national competition (funded by the N.E.A. and N.Y.S.C.A.) was devised, which would allow a screening of technical qualifications by an advisory panel before the design phase, and a professional jury to evaluate the finalist designs.

The competition advisory panel was composed of representatives of city and state organizations with jurisdiction or interest in the Snug Harbor site, including the Municipal Art Society, Art Commission of the City of New York, State Historic Preservation Office, and New York City's Departments of Cultural Affairs, General Services, and Parks.

The parameters and restrictions placed on the design by the site, the functional requirements, and working under New York City's bureaucratic mechanisms might have so discouraged architects as to make a competition untenable. Nevertheless, it was crucial to Snug Harbor to demonstrate that high technical standards of preservation and design innovation did not have to be exclusive.

The design program, prepared in consultation with the Advisory Panel and Robert Davis Associates, stressed several key issues that competitors would have to consider. First, the interior was to be restored and, with the exception of adding new seating, mechanical systems, and some technical equipment, could remain



Snug Harbor

essentially unchanged. Second, the surrounding landscape was to be treated with special care—tree removal was to be minimized, and the massing of the new addition was to be well-considered in relation to the prominence of the building's portico and its view from Richmond Terrace. Third, the internal functioning of the backstage and new lobby areas was to be as smooth, commodious, and workable as possible.

The Entries

Forty-five firms from eight states submitted qualifications to the competition Advisory Panel in February 1987. After deliberation, the panel chose six finalists, stressing that it had endeavored to pick firms that would not only submit excellent designs in the competition, but could undertake the commission to build with the utmost professional competence and management skill. The finalists were representative of the best specialist preservation and architectural design professionals working in the East.

The competitors were given two months to prepare their designs, which were submitted on June 1, 1987. Each firm toured the Music Hall and site, accompanied by Snug Harbor staff and the Professional Advisor, and a month question-and-answer period was designated.

Ideologies

The six solutions of the finalists represented two poles in current architectural design as well as opposing points of view on the relationship between old and new building fabric. One attitude, made possible only by the emergence of Post-Modernism during the past 15 years, prescribes stylistic replication or sympathetic re-interpretation. The second, which might be called critical modernism, allows the co-existence of contrasting materials and design languages as a foil to the existing building fabric.

Since the Music Hall is (at least conceptually) a classical temple, with an uncompromisingly frontal stance

and rather imposing Ionic decoration on its north facade, it seemed to invite proponents of the current revival of interest in traditional and classical languages to address its idiom directly.

This was done by both Allan Greenberg, using a below-ground garden court to the east of the theater, and by the Meadows/Stern team, which built an entirely new theater linked to the old building via a rotunda. (This element, which loomed rather intrusively between the two temple fronts, borrowed heavily from the Greek Revival design of the Philadelphia Exchange by William Strickland.) A third Post-modern classical scheme by Jan Hird Pokorny with Armstrong Cumming, added a smaller temple-like addition linked by a glass "hyphen" to the east of the old building.

On the other side of the debate in current discourse are those architects who continue to employ the modernist language in contradistinction to traditional building fabric. Years of questioning the orthodox theories of modern architecture have tempered the old position that "contrast is better than harmony," and have made a gentle, minimal approach to interventions, a persuasive alternative to mimicking an older building's style, materials, or typological characteristics in a new addition.

This was the approach adopted in both the winning scheme by Rafael Vinoly Architects and by the second place winner, James Stewart Polshek & Partners. Both architects devised a means of placing most of the additional space underground—in the former case by berming and lowering the grade in front of the building by some 7 feet, in the latter by surrounding the addition with a low wall to conceal it from view. The final third place entry, by Notter, Finegold & Alexander, was a frank "saddlebag" addition to the east side of the building.

The Jury Decision

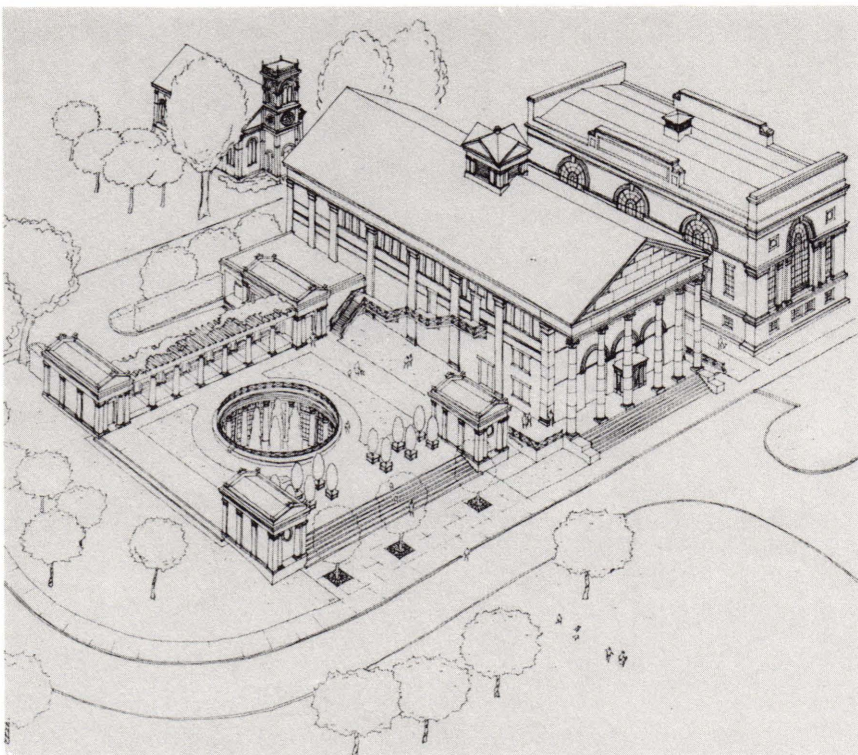
The jury was persuaded by the more straightforward, and in many ways less intrusive, stance taken by the Vinoly and Polshek schemes, which left the Greek temple alone to stand on its pedestal, untrammelled by smaller classical progeny or competing structures. Perhaps the most difficult problem posed by placing much of the program underground was the potential undervaluation of the new public spaces—the lobby and the rehearsal room—and the connection between them and the old lobby behind the portico.

It was here that the winning solution proved itself ingenious. By utilizing the space under the Guastavino-vaulted undercroft of the auditorium as lobby, and by creating symmetrical public spaces on both flanks of the building (one the glassed-in new lobby, the other the rehearsal room), this design offered a large, accessible, and varied set of spaces, from which the audience could experience the new and old buildings as a seamless composition. It was also the only solution that gave the audience the benefit of several stairway connections to the lower lobby.

The Vinoly design was in essence a revealing, an unveiling of the hidden beauties of the old building, and in this respect it represents an extraordinary and provocative answer to the dilemma of converting old buildings to new uses. Rather than seeing modern building technics as constricting and intrusive, these architects used technology to subtly strengthen the qualities of a fine old structure, but also in the process to create a far richer and aesthetically more complex building.

Aspects of the site planning in the Vinoly scheme were no less thoughtful than the architectural interventions—the disused and truncated Neptune Fountain was linked to the composition by an axis terminating on a copper elevator tower, capped by a statue of Aeolus, the king of the winds. The backstage additions were

Architect: Allan Greenberg, Architect;
design team — Allan Greenberg,
Yvonne Galino, David Harlan, Theresa
Angelini, Daniel Lee



simple and the loading dock extremely functional, while not intruding on the entrance to the chapel directly behind the theater (one of the trickiest aspects of the problem to solve). Members of the jury praised the back of the house and stage design as very well worked out.

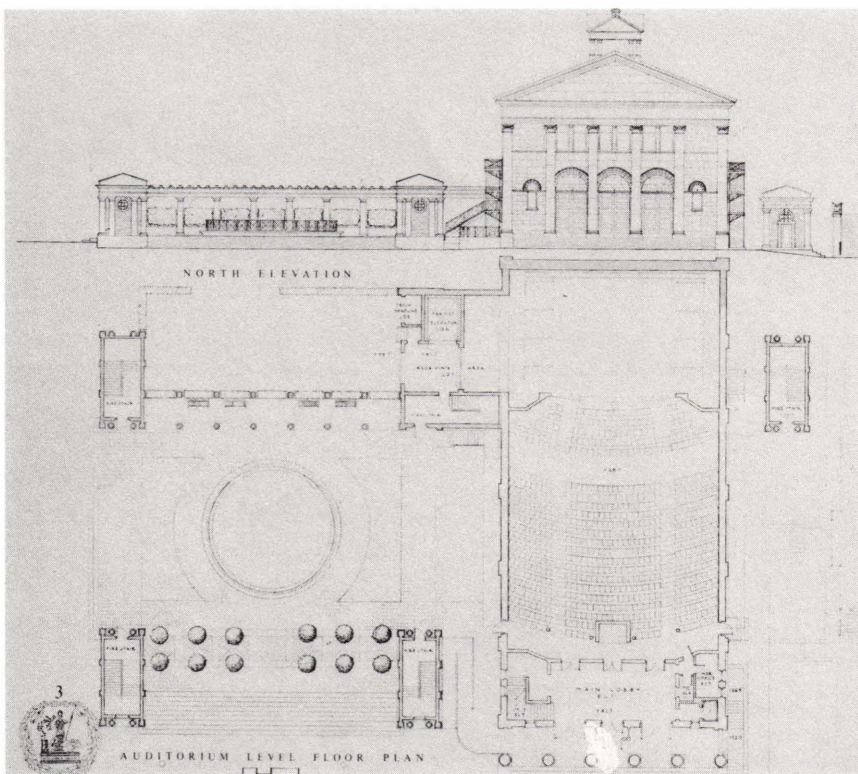
An Assessment

Whereas the jury was unanimous in its choice of a winner, its discussion raised important issues concerning the intention to re-use the old theater, the sensitive questions of site planning, and the philosophies taken by the entrants.

The largest and the most important question was: could the Snug Harbor site and its buildings absorb the heavy traffic and eventually be refitted to institutional use as a cultural center without unduly compromising its ambience and historical integrity? This issue is one also before the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission and the Parks Department, which must oversee the interventions on the site. Positions have already been articulated in landmark designation reports and in the press. Eventually the projected master plan for the site will have to resolve some of the conflicts between new uses and existing artifacts.

The Music Hall program begged the question by stressing that not all of the fabric of the old building, nor the adjoining site, needed to be treated as sacrosanct. In effect, the sponsor argued that conserving the auditorium and the facade, as well as the northeast quadrant of the site, with its specimen trees, was enough.

The Meadows/Stern design took the radical position of suggesting that such a conversion of the Music Hall would effectively destroy it — therefore, if a new theater was required it should be built as a modern Greek revival building. A linkage to the Music Hall, which would be restored as a period piece and used for lectures, would give the center a complex of performing facilities offering maximum flexibility.



Snug Harbor

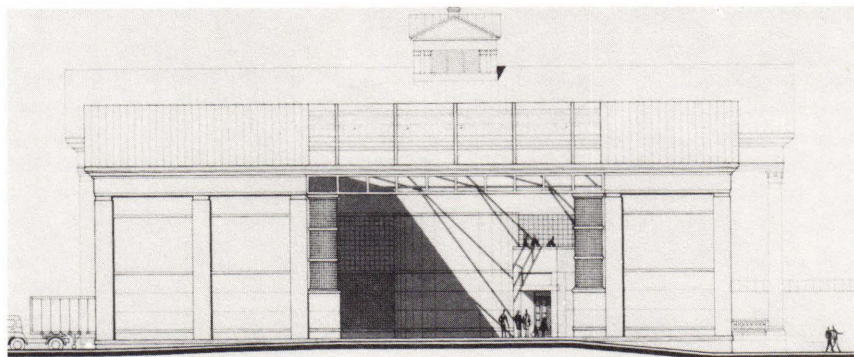
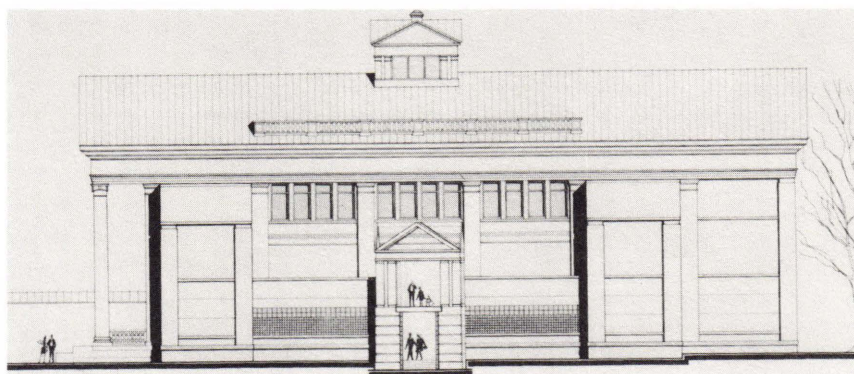
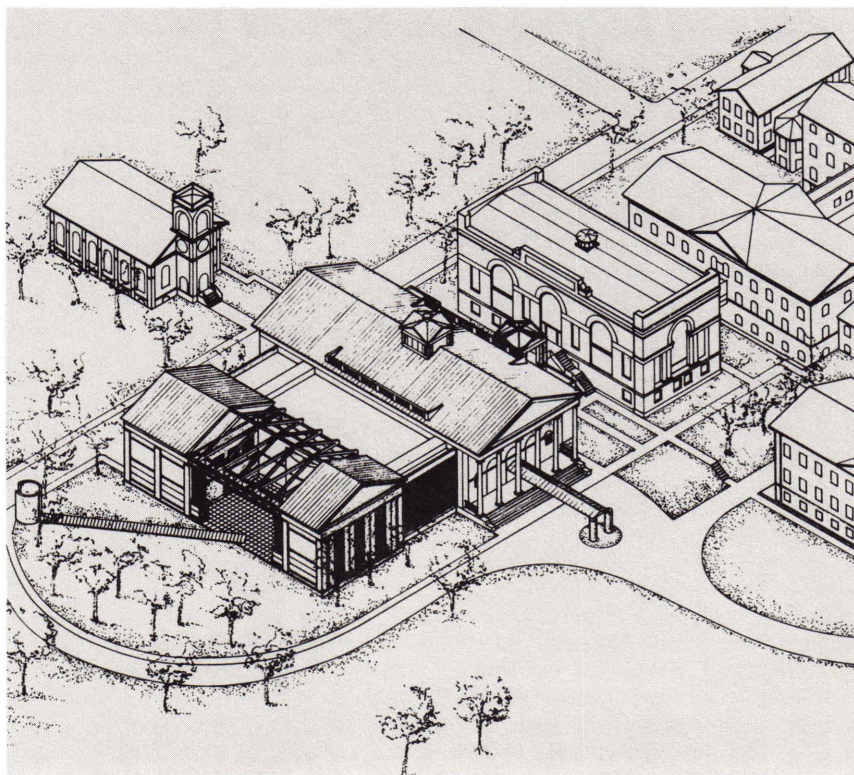
Architects: Jan Hird Pokorny Architects & Planners; Associated Architects, Armstrong Cumming Associates; Jan Hird Pokorny, principal; Leslie Armstrong, principal; Robert Motzkin, associate; Richard Pieper, architectural conservator; Ramsey Dabby, senior architect
Theater Consultants: Roger Mogan, Roger Morgan Studio, Inc.

However, this proposal called into question the purpose of the competition itself as a demonstration (or lack thereof) of the viability of making old buildings pay their way with new uses.

The most potent demonstration of the idea that the Music Hall could become an expanded building that retained its original character might have come in the schemes that confronted its architecture directly and tried to engage it. A seamlessly designed modern classical theater or a building with unassuming and sensitively planned additions would have made a strong case for further expansions on the site. Unfortunately, as the jury correctly surmised, neither of the two above-ground schemes seemed adequately to consider the formal architectural and massing problems of adding to a prostyle (front porch) classical building. The sheer expediency and simplicity of the Notter, Finegold & Alexander design proved attractive to the jury, which then went on to question its realization — as one juror stressed: "You can't have a fat Ionic temple." Classical architecture, even of the most basic kind, demands absolute attention to proportion in plan, section, and elevation, something that eluded both the Notter and the Pokorny/Armstrong Cumming designs.

The architect with the best understanding of the style of the Music Hall, Allan Greenberg, chose to leave the building relatively untouched. Where an Erechtheum scheme might have been attempted, most of the addition was buried. The key element of this scheme was the decision to lower the level of the stage some 12 feet in order to provide for a modified fly tower, but this left some unfortunate planning dilemmas unresolved, a fact that the jury quickly seized upon.

The fact that the most persuasive solutions were the two that, in many respects, eschewed architecture and concealed the most obtrusive elements of the program may be



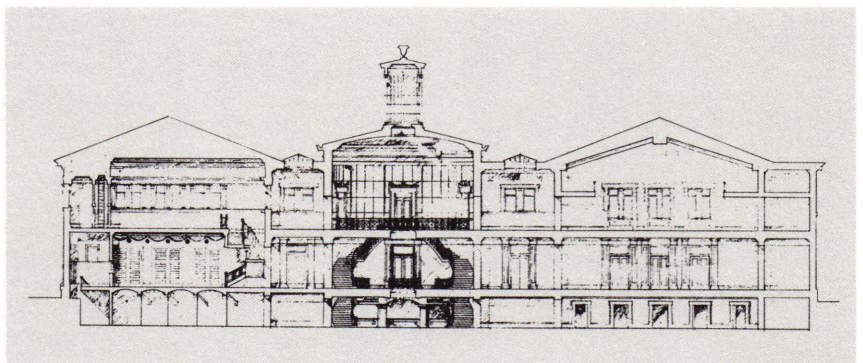
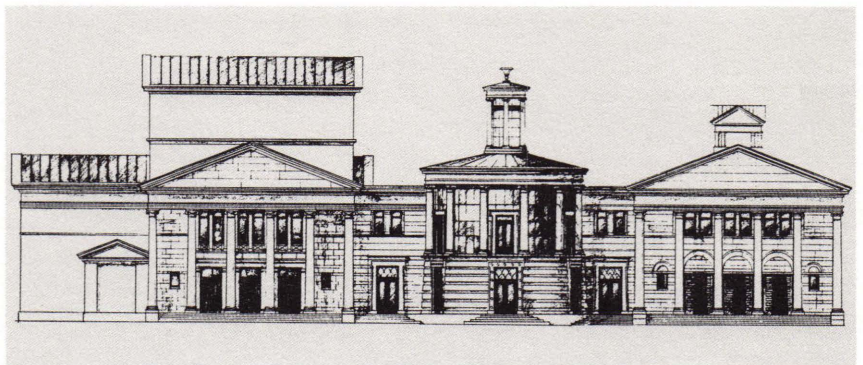
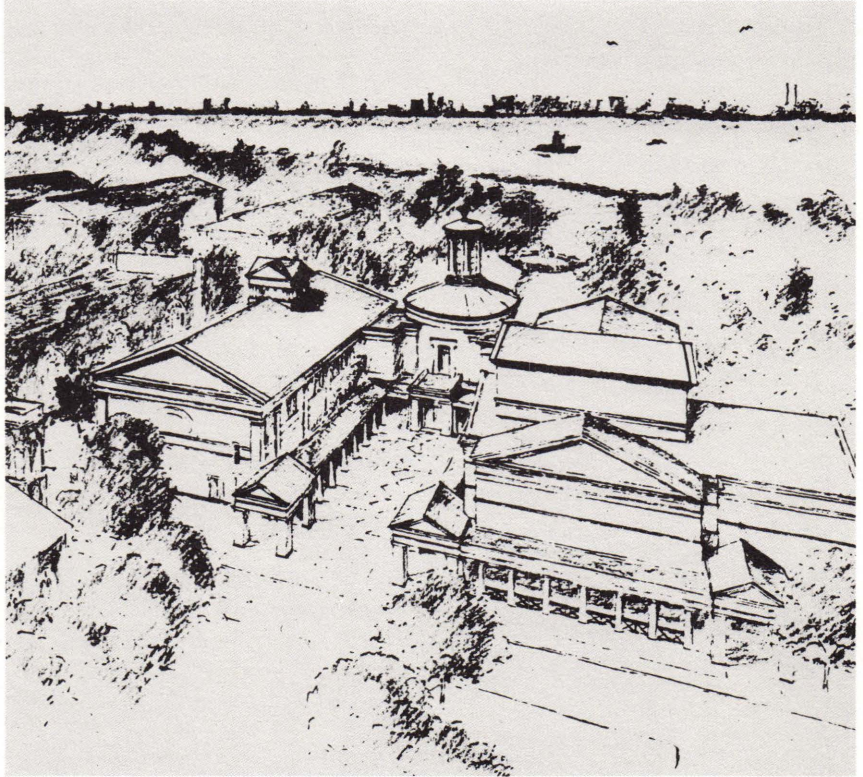
Architects: Robert Meadows, P.C. with Robert A.M. Stern Associates; design team — Robert Meadows, principal; Robert A.M. Stern, principal
Mechanical Consultant: John L. Altieri, P.E.
Structural Consultant: Robert Silman Associates, P.C.
Theater Consultant: Brannigan-Lorelli Associates

indicative of a prevailing preservation philosophy, which avoids, rather than confronts, controversy. In an era where landmarks laws threaten and constrict design professionals as well as institutions, it is perhaps unfortunate that living with change in historic buildings has become an untenable prospect. Meanwhile, many architects continue to seem loathe to take on the stylistic and technical challenges posed by historic buildings on their own terms.

This fact notwithstanding, the winning scheme offered a cogent proposition: that in the most gentle of ways a good building could be made better by foregrounding, pointing up faults as well as positive aspects, confronting in some places, and deferring in others. Perhaps, as in the admired works of the Italian architect Carlo Scarpa, such a complex strategy of give and take is indeed the most promising answer to converting the venerable artifact into a tool of future use.

The Rafael Vinoly design stands as a remarkable testament to the success of an idea at Snug Harbor, as well as a proof that with careful and intelligent study the conflicting exigencies of adding new uses to old buildings can be resolved.

The Music Hall Design Competition challenged conventional wisdom in several ways — first, by suggesting that a preservation problem could be approached via the competition process; second, by incorporating public and private parties into the planning process to facilitate implementation and funding; third, by suggesting that an old theater with its technical limitations could still function as a modern performance facility with minor alterations to its structure but without compromising its aesthetic integrity. As far as it has gone, this experiment has been a success. It has proven that innovation and conservation of historic resources do not have to be exclusive, and has once again placed Snug Harbor at center stage, fully in the spotlight of preservation in New York.



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