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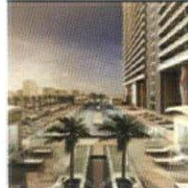
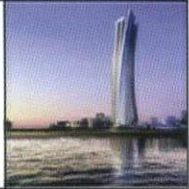
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Dance Institute of Washington ■ White House Redux ■ Restoring Terminal A at National Airport ■ Capitol Improvements ■ D.C. Dialogue



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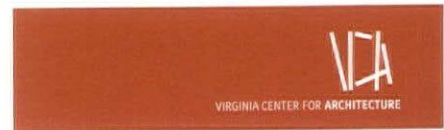
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FROM THE EDITOR

Re-district

In the swampy din of the Lower Potomac, between the agrarian South and the industrial North, the Federal District was created by geo-political arbitration in 1790. "Columbia," poetic shorthand and Latin patron of the new district (then 100 miles square), represented the United States herself – a republican spatial ideal. Washington, D.C. is unlike any other American city because it isn't American at all in its formal organization. The imperial plan of the city – quarters, terminating points, monumental nodes – evokes the re-imagined and re-districted cities of Europe in its governing order. Informally, it has been a great American experiment in both political and civil engineering: re-inaugurated hundreds of times over the years as Beltway politics shifted and its supporting urban fabric expanded.

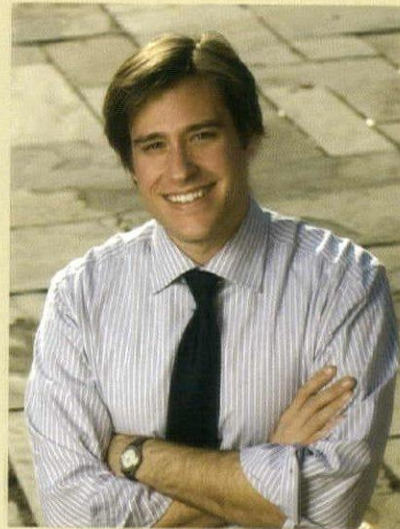
There are a lot of ways to approach the reality of an ecologically and architecturally diverse landscape. There are even more ways to approach an economically and socially stratified series of communities from Anacostia to Adams-Morgan. But, it's the idea of a "Columbia" that unifies all of these approaches. What makes this city special, very simply, is that it was founded with a greater sense of purpose than any other American polity. Unlike American centers of trade or commerce, which grew by accretion, Washington had boundaries before it had buildings. And, unlike the former British colonial capitals, which later became central to American statehood, Washington was relatively free of colonial memory.

I recently escorted some colleagues from Washington through the city of Richmond and, sitting high above it all in our 10-person van, one of them remarked, "Isn't it nice to be in a real city for once?" This is enough to make any Richmonder pivot their heads out of curiosity, but to a transplanted Richmonder writing an editorial about Washington, this was particularly interesting.


"What do you mean by that?" I coyly asked.

"Well, look, there are real differences from block to block," he continued, "and there is a lot of randomness. It's not something we're used to in D.C."

He may be right. To see Washington in person, or even to see "Washington" lit on the departure screen in another city's airport, is to understand that particular place as an invention. It is a place and an ideal outside of the typical development of American cities on the east coast. To the rest of the country, Washington may conjure images of a limited set of monuments or buildings. And, politically, the city's singular purpose as a federal district belies its multiple realities in the popular imagination. But, in the pages that follow our contributors examine a range of symbols that are both obvious and unexpected. There is no denying that Washington is a storehouse of images and monuments, but the stories behind those things speak about a working, living community.



—William Richards



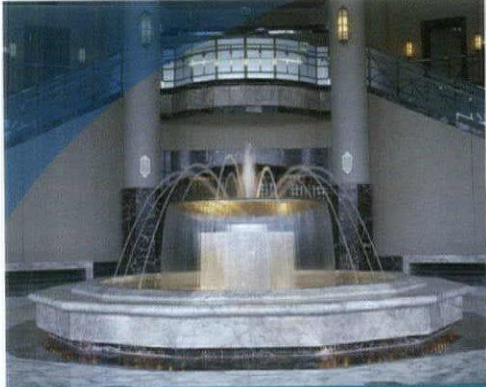

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On the cover:

Detail of White House Redux winner "Revenge of the Lawn."
Courtesy J.P. Maruszczak, Ryan Manning, and Roger Connah

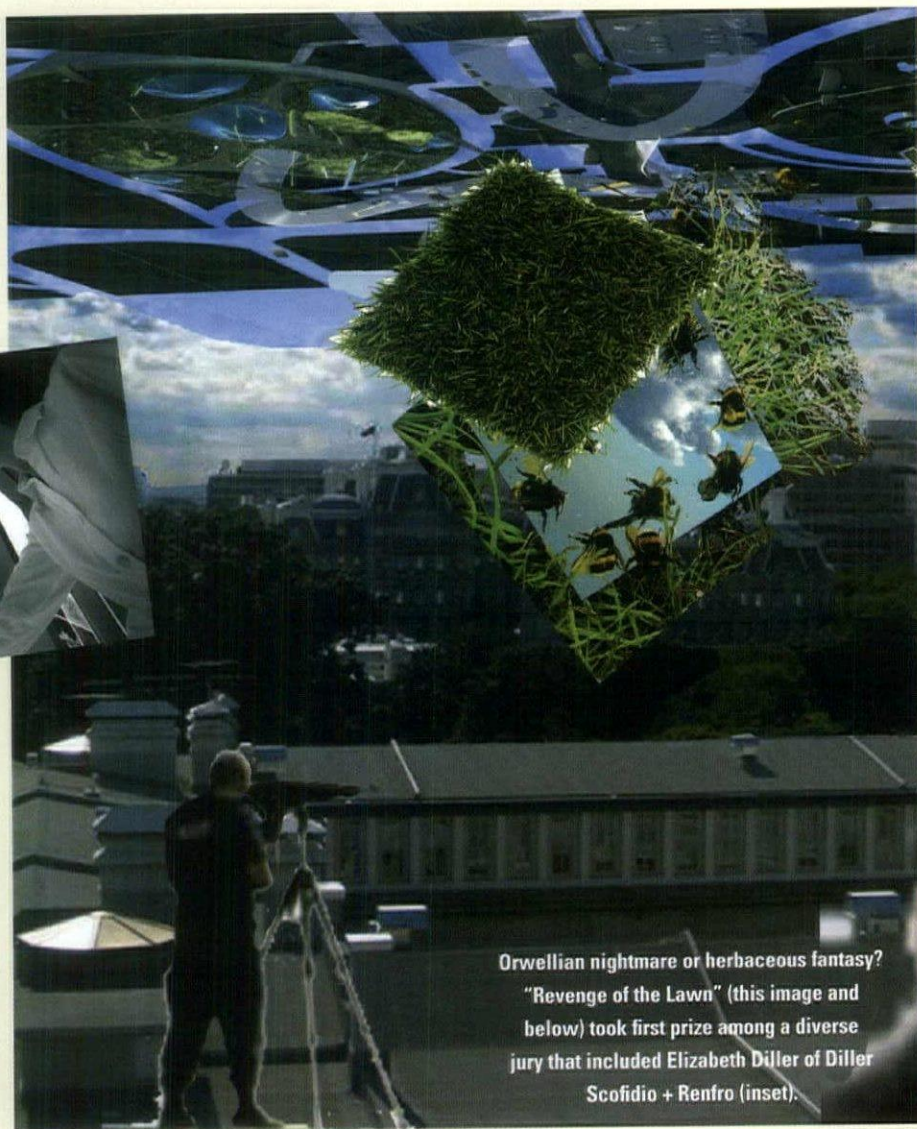
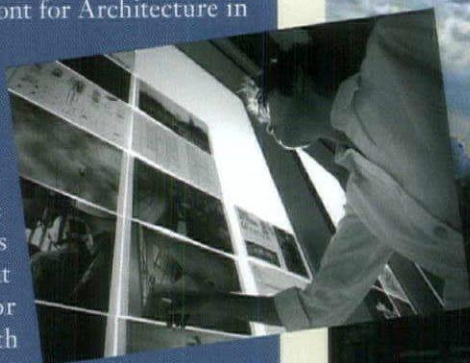
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The winner of the White House Redux design competition, sponsored by *The Architect's Newspaper*, the reprographics company NRI, and *Surface* magazine was announced last month at the Storefront for Architecture in New York.

Respondents were asked to revisit the design of the White House as its next occupant is poised for election. With \$10,000 on the line, no fewer than 500 entries tackled the very unique program of both private residence and executive branch office for an American president. The four winning entries, as well as 123 selected finalists, are featured in *White House Redux - The Book* (734 pages, \$39.00) and are on display in Storefront's newly restored Steven Holl and Vito Acconci gallery in New York. The jury included seven architects, historians, magazine editors, writers, and deans from the New York region.

First prize, *Revenge of the Lawn*, offers a dystopian view of President's Park and the White House grounds: overrun and wild, it's an herbaceous fantasy world with an uneven ground plane. Designed by J.P. Maruszczyk with assistance from Ryan Manning and the architecture critic Roger Connah, "Revenge" is disorienting and sublime, and only finalist to submit an animation (instead of just still images) that switches our perspective from flying bug to ground creature enveloped by the vegetation. Second place went to *12 Cautionary Tales* by David Iseri and team, which outlines a menu of possible futures: sustainable, autocratic, generative, and cinematic with nods to everyone from Bernard Tschumi to Hugh Ferriss. Third place, in a tie, went to Grant Gibson and Chris-Ann Marie Spencer's changeable *New White House* and Wayne Congar and Arrielle Assouline-Lichten's *White House 2.0*,



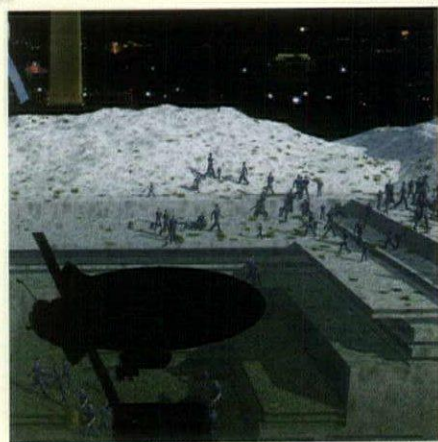
Orwellian nightmare or herbaceous fantasy? "Revenge of the Lawn" (this image and below) took first prize among a diverse jury that included Elizabeth Diller of Diller Scofidio + Renfro (inset).

White House Redux

Has the icon lost its charge?

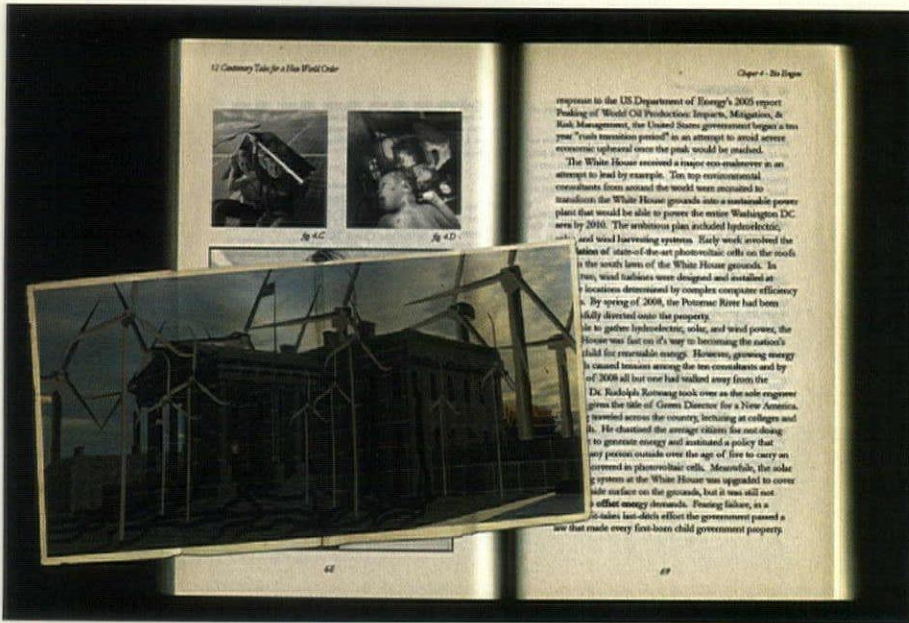
or building-as-blog. These last entries treated the physical artifact as an open-source canvas, of sorts, that would reflect, in the first case, the values of its inhabitant, and in the second, popular opinion.

The competition brief framed the White House as a home, a symbol of authority, a sacred Georgian cow, and a nerve center; a thumbnail image on the twenty dollar bill, a power brokerage site, or the subject of a vendor's t-shirt. In short, the core of this competition recognized the cultural and political importance of the building, but also its shifting meanings from one generation

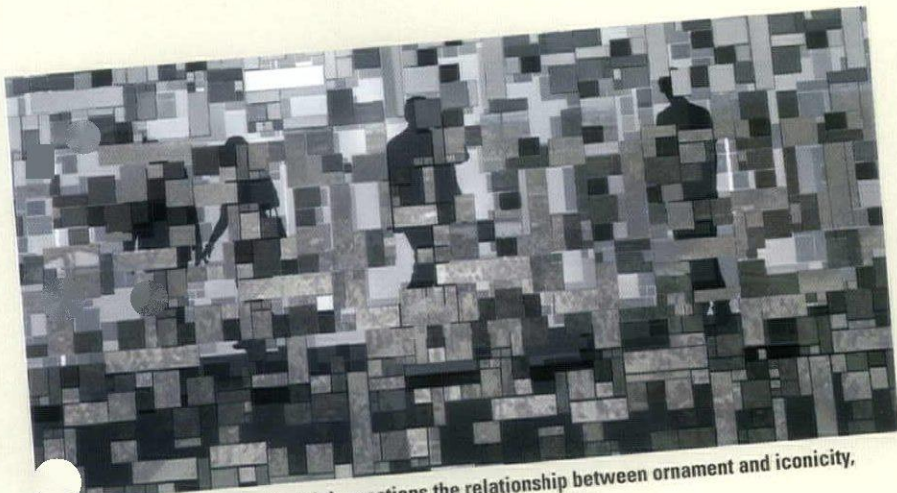


to another. As each of the winning entries proved, within this generation, the building's meaning can shift much more freely than it might have done in the past.

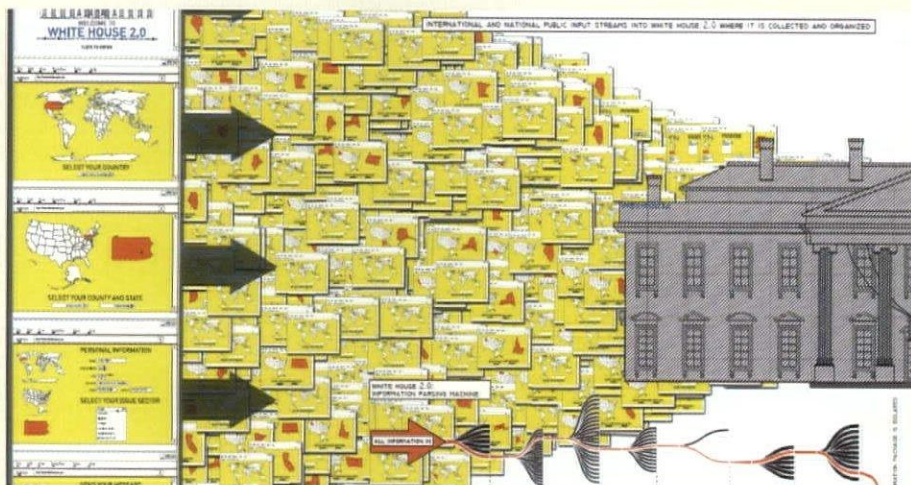
—William Richards



"Twelve Cautionary Tales for a New World Order" (above), which took second place, is an homage to the fictive, storyboard arrangements of the defunct Italian firm Superstudio.



"New White House," which questions the relationship between ornament and iconicity, tied for third place.



"White House 2.0," the other third place winner, valued transparency as a central feature of the White House as open-source community.

inform conducted its own, poll among area architects, wondering "If you had to redesign the White House, what's the first question you'd ask?"

What emerged is a patchwork of first questions in the design process that demonstrated a range of approaches. All agreed, however, that this was a tough challenge. As one respondent put it: "The problem is that we know too much about the White House – it's a fixed object on our mental landscape."

Where's the new location going to be? Once you know that, I'd ask "What is the use of the White House today?"

—Mark L. Giuliani, ALA, Giuliani Associates

My question would be about the ability to deal with operations and security on the campus. It's an iconic residence, office building, operations center, and obviously there's a lot of symbolism there. The building is set and needs to be maintained, and that would drive a lot of other solutions that wouldn't impact the historic fabric.

—Joseph Wells, ALA, HSMM

How would you like to change the image of the White House to reflect our place in the world? And, what would our compensation be? When would you like it done?

—Thomas L. Kerns, FAIA, Kerns Group Architects

The first thing I'd do is change the president. After, we can talk. But the first design question I'd ask is, "Why do you want to do this? It looks nice as it is."

—Richard Pierre Leroy, Assoc. ALA, Hughes Group Architects



Crisman Steams Ahead to Take Research Prize

Pelli: "Spectacular collaborations" repair Elizabeth River ecosystem

The Learning Barge utilizes wind and solar energy, recycled materials, and rainwater through the use of photovoltaic panels, wind turbines, solar hot water panels, radiant flooring, and composting toilets.

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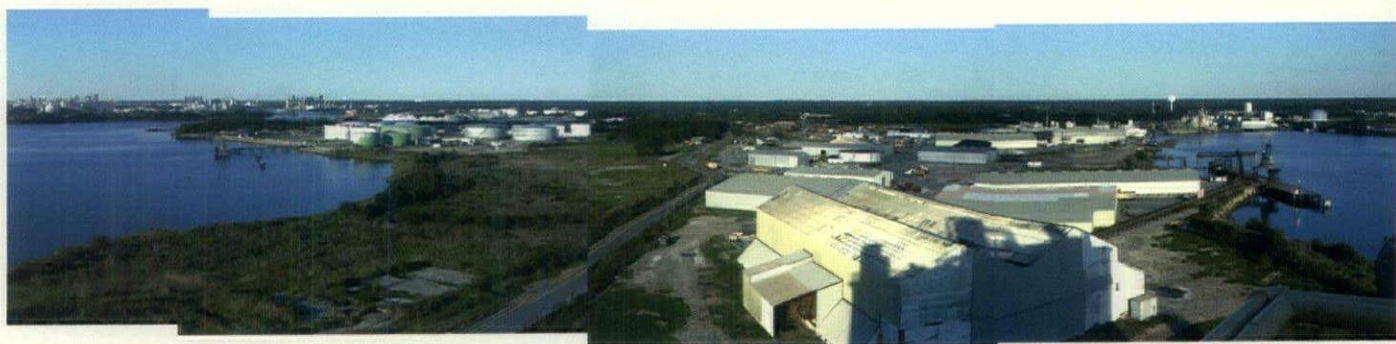
This past September, Phoebe Crisman, Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of Virginia and partner in the Charlottesville firm Crisman + Petrus Architects received the first Prize for Design Research and Scholarship from the Virginia Society AIA. Working with the non-profit Elizabeth River Project (ERP), Crisman orchestrated three connected projects to develop strategies for ecological regeneration. The Elizabeth River Watershed, the Money Point Sustainability Study, and the UVA-backed Learning Barge form what she calls "an integrated analytic and design methodology" for a polluted tributary of the Chesapeake Bay that connects Norfolk, Portsmouth, Virginia Beach, and Chesapeake. Together, the projects center on an ethical commitment to architecture; ecological stewardship and public education establish what Crisman calls a "proactive" model of design research.

In 1967, a catastrophic fire released huge quantities of creosote, resulting in high levels of toxins in the soil, ground water, and river sediment along Money Point. Crisman and her collaborators

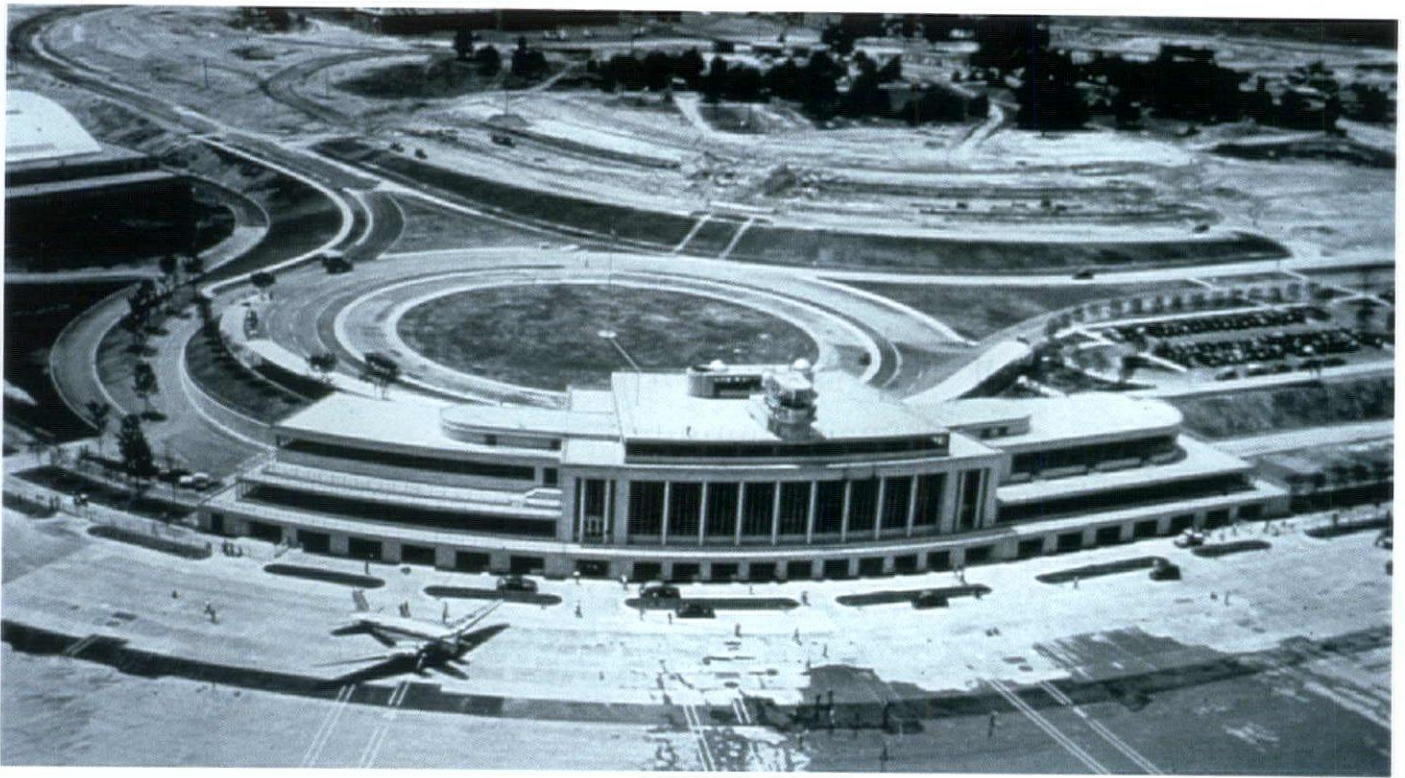
developed urban planning and building strategies designed to help regenerate the ecology of the area and a set of guidelines for sustainable development of the river uplands. Notably, the Learning Barge, developed in conjunction with UVA architecture students, acts as a mobile environmental field station. As a workshop for ERP research and the face of ERP's public education efforts, the barge addresses ecosystem repair and remediation for K-16 and adult audiences. "The Barge will enter the public realm," notes Crisman, "as a highly visible symbolic element revealing the common purpose that united restoration sites along the river."

Evincing "spectacular collaborations," according to lead juror Cesar Pelli, FAIA, Crisman's project also reflected the integration of architectural design, practice, and education. Crisman will present her work on the Elizabeth River at Architecture Exchange East, the annual design conference and exposition hosted by the Virginia Society AIA. Contact Wayne Connors at 804-237-1769 or wconnors@aiava.org for more information.

— Rhea George & William Richards



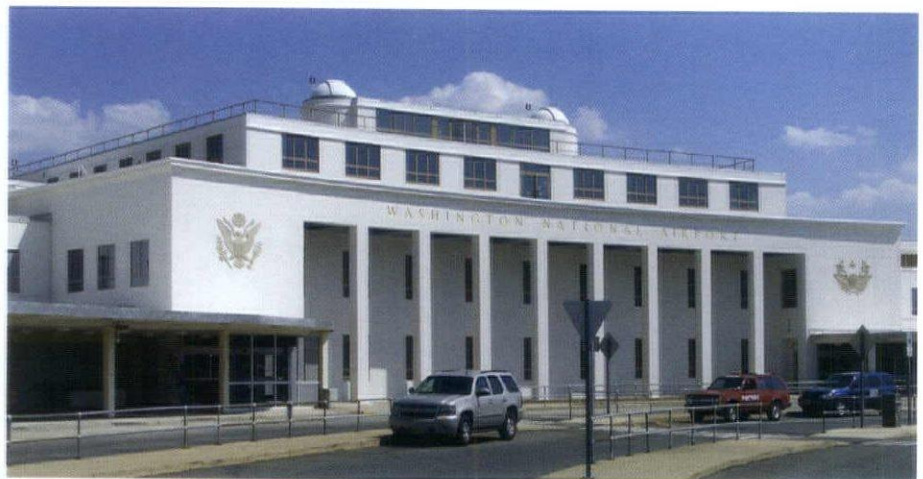
The Elizabeth River Project is a Portsmouth-based, non-profit organization, owns and operates a field station along the Elizabeth River.



Reagan National's Terminal "A" Rehabbed

A multi-million dollar renovation tells the story of the region's most colorful and important Federal projects.

The restoration of Historic Terminal A at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport is part of a multi-phase effort by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority to preserve one of the last remaining monuments to aviation's golden age. Situated between two operating terminals, a phalanx of hangars, and parking garages, its current position belies its importance as a template for modern airport design after opening in 1941. Replacing outmoded Washington-Hoover Field (on the site of the present-day Pentagon), National Airport had many advocates, most notably President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was instrumental in securing the Arlington County site halfway between the District and Alexandria. Today, the Washington, D.C. firm Shalom Baranes Architects and Maryland contractor Grunley Construction have ensured that Roosevelt's airport will be around for another 70 years.



Structural challenges were inherent from the start. With George Washington Parkway and Potomac River on either side, the airport's recessed curvilinear form conformed to its restricted space. As the first airport under Federal sponsorship, the Public Works Administration and the Civil Aeronautics Authority (forerunner of today's Federal Aviation Administration) supervised design and construction teams. But, it would take a massive landfill project along the Potomac shoreline by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers before runways and

Historic Terminal A's main entrance reflects nearby Mount Vernon's colonnaded veranda.

Courtesy Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority



Art Deco-style restaurant area converted to President's Lounge for Continental Airlines. Curvilinear windows face north towards Washington and memorials.

taxiways could be added, in turn adding 530 acres of land to the Commonwealth.

Consulting architect Howard Lovewell Cheney, a native Chicagoan with an extensive public building portfolio, chose a so-called Art Moderne and Art Deco blend with neo-classical elements honoring Washington's federal style. An amateur "blueprint enthusiast," President Franklin Roosevelt contributed one of the building's most recognizable elements: the colonnaded loggia at the main entrance. Evoking images of the veranda at nearby Mount Vernon, the loggia's ceiling is covered with a bright blue and gold concrete mosaic with engraved compass-shaped stars, a symbol since adopted by the Airports Authority for Reagan National.

"Uncovering Historic Terminal A's hidden qualities has been a wonderful part of this restoration process," says Henry Ward, Parsons Management's Cultural Resources Coordinator, "it's been a collaborative effort for all involved." Ward and his colleagues have restored both public and off-limits areas to their original function and, in some cases, reused them for new functions. Aided by old photographs and structural records, both Roosevelt's Presidential Suite, now the Airports Authority conference room, and the old airport post office, now the security processing office for airport employees, were restored.

At tarmac level, the Roosevelt suite provided privacy and accessibility for the president and his two successors as an arrival and departure enclave until 1961. Formica wood and plastic laminate wall panels (a new material in the early 1940s) are prominently employed. Inlaid on the dark green terrazzo floor, the famous Army Air Corps wing-and-propeller insignia alludes to the suite's former life. Also notable are Terminal A's phone-booth cubicles, converted to historic photo exhibits, and the original dining room, now the President's Club lounge for Continental Airlines. Unparalleled views of the airfield encircle its perimeter and above, a sky-blue ceiling that revealed an elaborate, molded-plaster lighting medallion in its center. Preservation architects peeled back the original pale blue terrazzo floor with elegant period inlays. The suite of spaces was completed when the passage connecting dining room and lobby was converted to an exhibit hall featuring Terminal A's history, airline memorabilia, and artifacts unearthed from nearby Abingdon Plantation, now part of airport property.

Though *The Federal Architect* touted Reagan National Airport (then, simply National Airport) "the finest air terminal in the world, both technically and aesthetically," propeller-powered aircraft soon gave way to the jet age and explosive passenger growth of the 1950s and 1960s. A series of struc-

tural additions followed, which mandated functionality over form. Historic Terminal A's identity became subsumed to a link in a larger structural chain, though its unique qualities would eventually attain National Historic Register status.

Dan Feil, FAIA, former project architect for Airports Authority, likens Historic Terminal A to an elegant dowager who had fallen on hard times. "She has great bones but needed full-scale restorative work," says Feil, a noted manager of renovation and expansion projects in the National Capital Region. "The original building fused three strong architectural styles. For all her disparate design influences, the building hangs together as a whole. It was and remains the job of design and construction teams to reawaken her inherent beauty; not only for the era she was built, but for the history she denotes as an early example of a new paradigm for civic aviation facilities."

The original 1941 terminal, the mid-century additions, and Cesar Pelli & Associates' 35-gate B/C Terminal of the 1990s, which handles most of today's passenger load, offer three distinct chapters of aviation history. As older terminals nationwide succumb to the wrecking ball, or are altered beyond recognition, northern Virginia is fortunate to retain two airports with distinctive architectural styles. Bernard Laramée, AIA, Airports Authority restoration project manager, applauds Historic Terminal A's refurbishment. "The building looks great once again, and is a testament to the teamwork among design and construction professionals. The responsibility for retaining this terminal's identity



Main Entrance loggia with blue Art Deco tile inlays (above) include Terminal A's original symbol and ornamental Art Deco, New Deal-era window etchings (below) announce the main lobby facing the tarmac.



Photos: Jonathan Moore

has been embraced by all involved. We at the Airports Authority are proud stewards of challenges met and a job well done."

"This building's intricate details and fixtures are the Airports Authority's commitment to be careful stewards of preservation," says Augustine Taormina, AIA, of Parsons Management Consultants, Airports Authority program consulting group. Built 37 years after the Wright Brothers' first flight, Historic Terminal A incorporated both style and functionality, which were objectives for convincing skeptics of aviation's safety, convenience, and comfort. Supervising Architect Louis Simon, and consulting architects Cheney and Charles Goodman, installed multi-tiered observation terraces and a dedicated rooftop "mirador" vantage station for the local weather bureau, which were innovative for their day. An unexpected success and from 1941 to 1942, its first operating year, National Airport drew more visitors than travelers by six to one. Remarkably, local newspapers claimed that the airport would likely become a "favorite park" among Washingtonians. "When the sun sinks beyond the range of hills to the west," one news source cooed, "the scenic areas of the airport will be among the most comfortable and interesting."

— Jonathan Moore



Bookmark

Buildings of Delaware

By *W. Barksdale Maynard*
Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press
2008, 353 pages, \$45

What sort of images comes to mind at the mention of Delaware? The du Ponts making gunpowder and collecting antiques? The tollbooths on the Delaware Turnpike? Chicken farms in a flat landscape on the way to the beach? Delaware is a small, quirky state that most of us dash through on the way to somewhere else – an easily ignored place seemingly of little consequence architecturally.

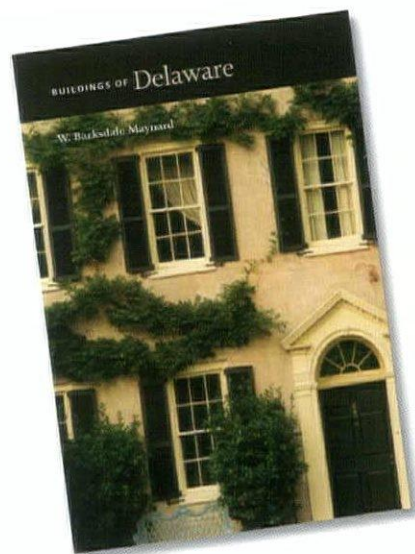
I lived in Delaware once and liked it a lot. Living on the fall line between piedmont and the coastal plain, I could choose the rolling Andrew Wyeth landscape of the Brandywine River Valley or head to unspoiled, seaside marshes. Delaware south of Wilmington was sleepy and agricultural – a land that time forgot.

That was forty years ago. Since then, Delaware has developed from a rural backwater with one provincial city into just an-

other gloppy bit of poorly planned and ecologically disastrous megalopolis. All the more reason to review the state's patrimony before there's nothing left. *W. Barksdale Maynard's Buildings of Delaware* (part of the Society of Architectural Historian's "Buildings of America" series) is a solid, well-written study of this "delightfully obscure" place.

Maynard covers the usual chestnuts of Delaware's architectural history: Swedish log cabins, colonial churches and Quaker meetings, along with the big estates of "Chateau Country" (he helpfully supplies a du Pont family genealogy). Famous out-of-state architects, such as John Notman, Carrere & Hastings, and Harrie Lindeberg, built for the well-connected; there are houses by Wright and Venturi, and a railroad station by Frank Furness. All that is just a wealthy crust on an otherwise vernacular pie. Hence Maynard's catholic definition of what constitutes important structures, for he includes just about everything of real interest: barns, shopping centers, highways, canals, lighthouses, and bridges. And suburbs: almost half the homes in the state have been built since 1980, yet ten percent of Wilmington's housing is abandoned.

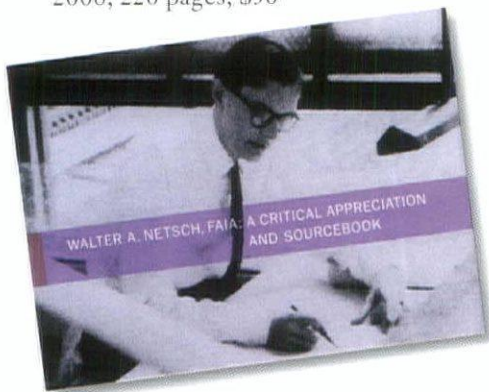
Such gems as Mike's Famous Roadside



Rest, a combination auto dealership, restaurant, and museum, and NASCAR's 140,000-seat Dover Speedway balance the state's obsession with bland Colonial Revival. And not far from the 1831 octagonal schoolhouse at Cowgill's Corner is the Air Force's new mortuary that allows "efficient processing during mass casualty situations." *Buildings of Delaware* is not preachy about preservation, but it certainly makes you want to visit the state before the book is more eulogy than guidebook. – *William Morgan*

Walter A. Netsch, FAIA: A Critical Appreciation and Sourcebook

Essays by: *Robert Bruegmann, et al.*
Northwestern University Press: Evanston, Illinois
2008, 220 pages, \$30



Walter Netsch, the Chicago architect and 32-year veteran of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, died this year having left a legacy of compelling and confounding built projects including the Powell Federal Building in Reston and the Montgomery College master plan in Takoma Park, Maryland. Situated between the heroic, corporate Modernism of the mid-twentieth century and the critical Modernism of the 1960s, Netsch represented both and was admired

by two generations of architects. His plastic, sculptural forms, such as the Cadet Chapel at the Air Force Academy and his research-based "Field Theory" reinterpreted design orthodoxies such as plan, volume, and form. For Netsch, Modern architecture was the language of a post-industrial age in its materials, scope, and intent, but it was also part of a continuum of rational thought extending from Gothic engineering, the Enlightenment *architecture parlante* (buildings that speak about their function), and a Beaux-Arts sense of proportion.

Walter A. Netsch, FAIA: A Critical Appreciation and Sourcebook is a useful interpretation of his career, organized as a series of essays, lists, and indices. Its sourcebook qualities offer a more comprehensive survey than any Google search and, as an appreciation, it provides a clear, if somewhat uncritical, professional context for the architect. Netsch's Field

Theory is the core of the book, however, and two dedicated essays about it outline an important transition from mid-century Modernism to the open and contradictory field of Post-Modernism in the decades that followed.

As a case study in this transition – or, perhaps, translation – Netsch's Field Theory is a window into the work of other important figures who bridged the gap between reason and expression: Louis Kahn, James Stirling, and Alvaro Siza. Notably, the book reprints 24 excerpts of articles, notes, and lectures by Netsch between 1954 and 2006, which allow him to explain himself (if briefly) by bridging another gap between design practice and public consumption. In a page-long set of lecture notes from 1981, Netsch begins by noting, "It is very difficult to display the concepts of 34 years' work," but this sourcebook is a laudable start.

– *William Richards*

How Green Was My College

By Scott Carlson

You can't learn anything about a college these days without hearing about what that college is doing for the planet, whether it is buying local food or shrinking its carbon footprint.

A number of organizations are eager to evaluate those colleges on their efforts. *Grist*, *Sierra*, and *Current* magazines and the Sustainable Endowments Institute all have had their lists of top green schools. Colleges on such lists have of course cited their high scores in their publicity efforts. But now sustainability may play an even bigger role in the marketing and enrollment game. The Princeton Review recently announced that it would issue green ratings — along with its ratings of student quality of life, campus fire safety, and so on — in coming college guides for prospective students. Peterson's is working on a similar effort.

The Princeton Review embarked on the green ratings after it was approached by ecoAmerica, a nonprofit environmental group that specializes in consumer research and marketing. Colleges featured in the Princeton Review will get a score of 60 to 99 based on how they responded to 28 questions, like "What percentage of your grounds are managed organically?"

One might think that sustainability advocates would favor such ratings as a way to push colleges to be greener. After all, colleges have an obsession with climbing ladders in rankings, especially those tied to admissions.

But some leaders in the sustainability field were at best ambivalent about yet another ranking system.

Among them were Julian Dautremont-Smith, associate director of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, or Aashe, who advised the Princeton Review on setting up the green evaluations. "I participated because I wanted to learn what they were doing," and to help make sure that if the evaluation did go ahead, it would be as good as possible, said Mr. Dautremont-Smith. "I have some of my own hesitations about the move toward rankings. I'm not sure that they are the best approach."

Sustainability is hard enough for most people to understand; measuring progress in sustainability is a much tougher job. Aashe will spend years working on the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System, or Stars, which is out in a test version. Many think that will ultimately become the gold standard of sustainability evaluations — a way for colleges to track their progress. Sustainability supporters favor it because the process is open; a college knows where it's getting points, and where it's missing them.

That's not necessarily the case with the Princeton Review's ratings, or others. Fred Volkmann, vice chancellor for public affairs at Washington University in St. Louis, said he did not fill out the Princeton Review's questionnaire. He told the Princeton Review that the university would rather participate in Stars.

"As soon as the Stars thing is under way, we would be glad to respond using that data," he said. "We know that we want every response we give to be apples to apples" compared with the responses of other institutions.

Some rankings performed by other organizations have been confounding in regard to who scores high and who they leave out — and why. And such lists hardly ever mention the tiny colleges, those lacking savvy marketing departments, that have qui-

Continued on page 14

Contributors to **Inform** Issue 4, 2008

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ety and steadfastly pursued sustainability — places like Sterling College in Vermont, where students grow a great deal of what they eat.

But the bigger question here is whether green rankings are a good idea in the first place.

“Rankings are inherently zero sum — there can be only one No. 1,” said Mr. Dautremont-Smith. “Campus sustainability includes a really collaborative group of people, and with some of these rankings, there is a concern that could undermine that.”

For example, at a recent sustainability conference, Wendell C. Brase, vice chancellor for administrative and business services at the University of California at Irvine, gave a presentation with lots of advice (and some frank confessions) about getting closer to carbon neutrality.

He hated to think how sustainability efforts would change if, say, carbon-reduction strategies became a competitive advantage.

“Most of our competition in higher education is friendly competition, particularly around green issues,” says Mr. Brase. “This isn’t about winners and losers. We all will win or lose together.”

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Capitol Continuum

The new Capitol Visitor's Center, by RTKL and the Architect of the Capitol, reinvents the visitor experience with new amenities and a reconstructed Olmsted landscape.

By Clay Risen

After six years of construction and an almost three-fold increase in its price tag, the Capitol Visitor's Center will finally open on December 2, 2008. But while the project has drawn catcalls from congressmen attacking it as government pork, the center has been worth the wait.

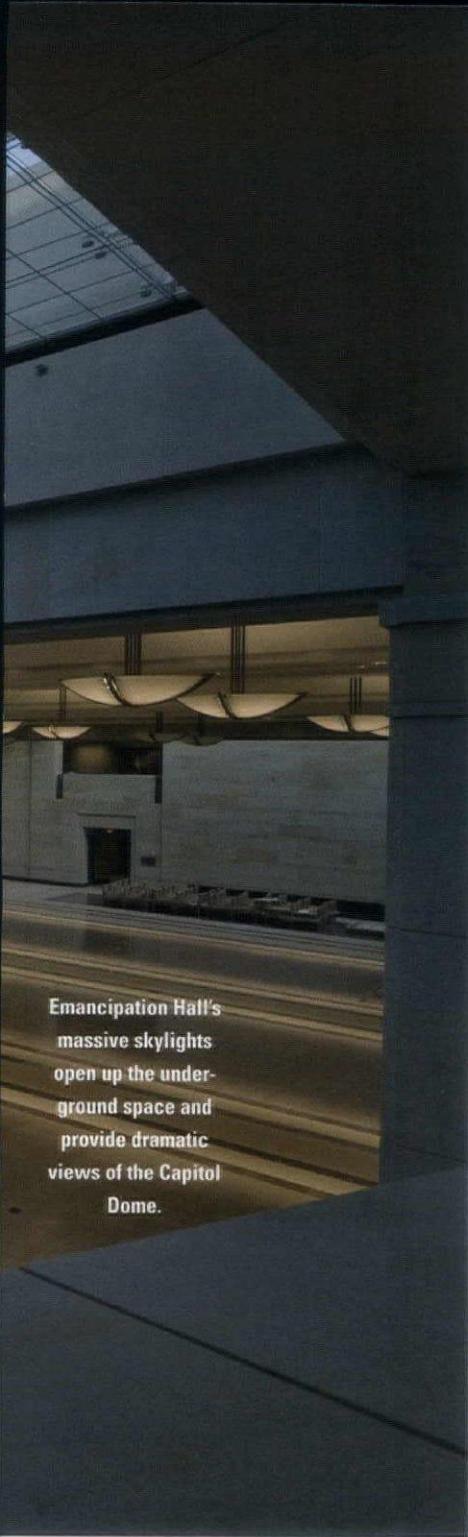
Located on three levels below the eastern grounds of the Capitol, the center delivers 580,000 square feet of new space, divided among a grand entry hall, an exhibition area, two theaters, a cafeteria, a gift shop, and new facilities for both the House and the Senate. At maximum capacity, it will be handle 1,500 visitors an hour.

The centerpiece is the 20,000 square foot Emancipation Hall, an open, two-floor space surfaced in granite and sand-

stone and lighted by 30-by-20-foot skylights providing views of the Capitol dome.

"One of our goals was to create an uplifting experience, even underground," says Rod Henderer of RTKL, which designed the facility in cooperation with the Architect of the Capitol.

Planners have long recognized the need for a formal visitor hall at the Capitol, one of the nation's most heavily toured sites. Visitors had to wait outside in long lines to get into the building; once they did, there were few amenities available to them—only five bathrooms, no dining facilities, and no gift shop—not to mention little educational information beyond what tour guides could provide.



Emancipation Hall's massive skylights open up the underground space and provide dramatic views of the Capitol Dome.



Visitors will enter the center from First Street, along a gently sloping walk.

“The Capitol is a fabulous looking building, but it is a working office building,” says Sharon Gang of the Architect of the Capitol’s office, which is responsible for maintenance and construction at the Capitol, the Congressional office buildings, the Library of Congress, and other nearby facilities.

At the same time, the architects involved wanted to protect the views of the Capitol and, if possible, reconstruct the 1874 Frederick Law Olmsted landscape plan for the building’s grounds, much of which, particularly the area just to the east, had been paved over in the mid-twentieth century.

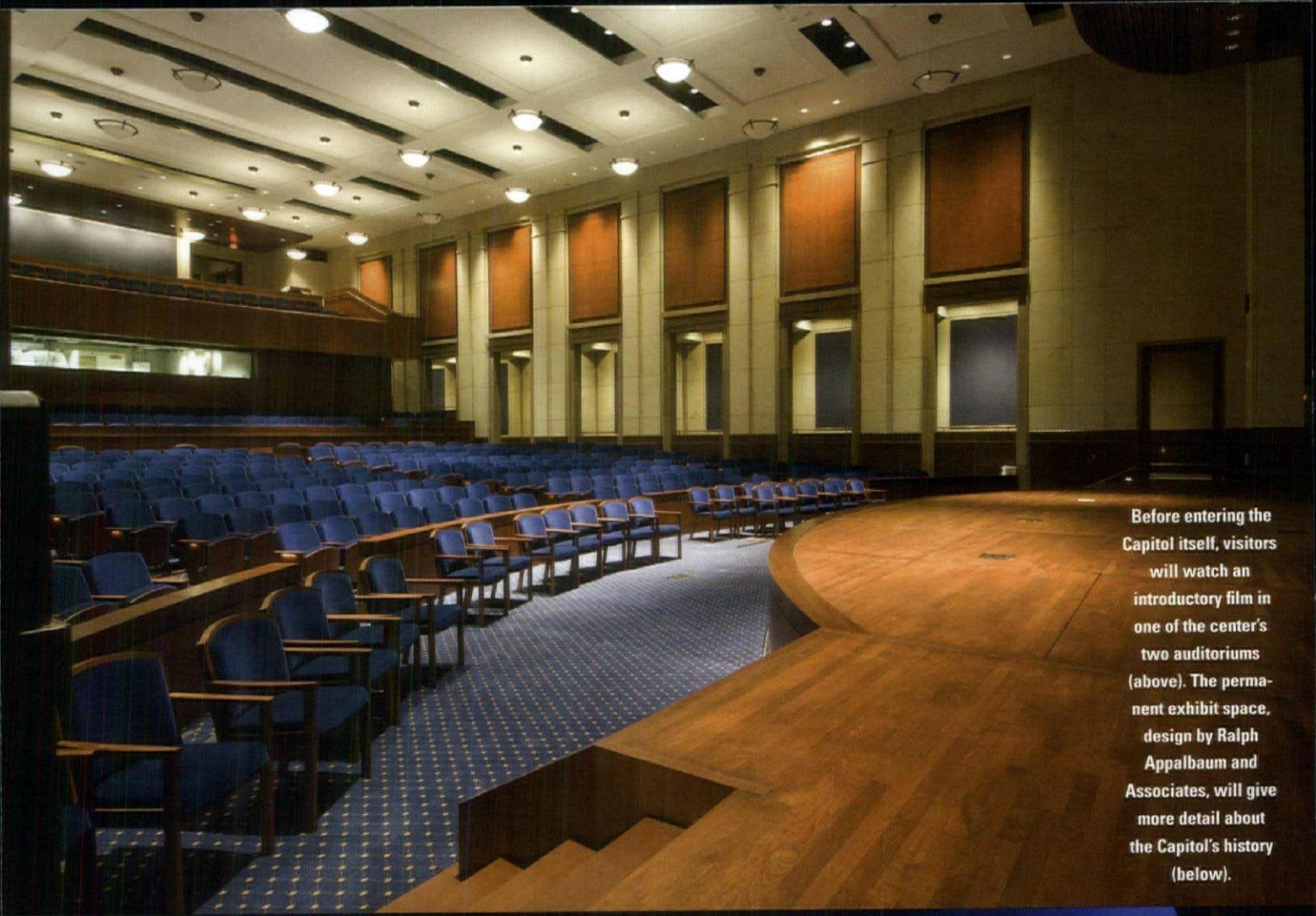
Security was yet a third concern, particularly after a fatal 1998 shooting inside the Capitol and the attacks of September 11, 2001. And all along, both chambers of Congress lobbied for

additional space of their own in the new facility. It quickly became clear that a massive structure was called for, and that the only solution was to place it underground. In 1999, Congress authorized \$265 million for a new facility.

In August 2002, construction crews began carving out a trench along the perimeter of the site, painstakingly filling it with a slurry wall—that close to the Capitol, even a minor cave in could cause fatal shifting in the ground underneath the massive structure.

“One crack in the Capitol would have stopped us in our tracks,” says Tom Fontana, the project’s spokesman.

Once the trench was complete, crews dug a 60-foot deep pit inside it, carting away 60,000 truckloads, or 600,000 cubic



Before entering the Capitol itself, visitors will watch an introductory film in one of the center's two auditoriums (above). The permanent exhibit space, design by Ralph Appalbaum and Associates, will give more detail about the Capitol's history (below).





Visitors will also be able to stop by the North Gift Shop or and eat at the center's cafeteria, two amenities never before publicly available in the Capitol.

feet, of earth. Construction moved quickly; the first steel elements went up in September 2003, and by President George W. Bush's second Inauguration, the roof elements were secure enough to support a troop review parade.

The excavation and structural work was completed by Centex Construction Company. In early 2005 Centex passed off work to the Manhattan Construction Company, which completed the electrical, masonry, and other internal work. Thanks to facilities and security measures added during construction the project will have cost \$621 million.

The Capitol Visitor's Center has three complex programmatic elements: enhanced security, enhanced visitor experiences, and enhanced congressional services. But the actual structure is eloquently simple.

Visitors enter the upper floor of the facility along tree-lined walkways descending from the intersection of First Street and East Capitol (alternately, they can walk along a center path that remains at ground level, leading to the newly refurbished Olmsted grounds). They first pass through security checkpoints, then proceed to a balcony overlooking Emancipation Hall.

Arrayed around the hall are the two theaters, dining facility, gift shop, and exhibition space, the latter designed by Ralph Appelbaum and Associates, which also designed the

display spaces inside Polshek Partnership's Newseum on Pennsylvania Avenue.

The 16,500 square-foot exhibition space includes two small, partially enclosed theaters, which provide live feeds of the House and Senate floors.

Opposite the entryway is a wide staircase flanked by escalators, which carry visitors and staffers up into the Capitol itself. The stairs rise 20 feet, parallel beneath the massive eastern entrance to the Capitol, with only a few feet of earth between them.

"As challenging as anything we've done, equally challenging was keeping the Capitol functioning while we broke through walls, tore down columns, and connected the two structures," says Fontana.

Significant effort went into matching the materials and look of the Capitol inside the visitor's center. The planners went so far as to seek stone with noticeable imperfections, because, Fontana says, "The walls in the Capitol had been painted until 1905," and the original designers cared little about the aesthetic quality of the material underneath. "We didn't want it to look too good," he adds.

The new stone, which covers some 200,000 square feet of wall space as well as columns and other details, came from many of the same sources as the original: Marble from Tennessee,



“jet mist” granite from Virginia, and sandstone from western Pennsylvania.

To the north and south of the visitor areas are three underground floors for the House and Senate, respectively, totaling 170,000 square feet. The House space includes a large hearing room, a committee room, and a press gallery, while the Senate space includes a TV and radio studio.

Separate entrances link the Capitol to the new congressional facilities, so that staffers do not have to pass through the public areas; likewise, witnesses, media, and other visitors to the new facilities can access them through a security desk in the visitor’s center.

An ancillary tunnel also links the visitor’s center to the

Jefferson Building at the Library of Congress. A truck tunnel, with its entrance 1,000 feet away, provides loading and unloading access for deliveries to the Capitol, giving more space on the grounds over to pedestrians.

Externally, the centerpiece of the visitor’s center is the renovated Olmsted grounds, which flank 200,000 granite paving stones that make up a new pedestrian terrace. “It was, for want of a better word, ‘disturbed,’” says Gang. “It was used as a loading zone, a pedestrian zone, and a parking lot.” Many of the original working features, including lanterns and fountains, had been poorly maintained or shuttered.

Moreover, during construction 68 trees had to be removed from the grounds. But 85 trees are being planted in their place,



By burying the visitors center just east of the Capitol Building, the architects were able to recreate Frederick Law Olmsted's original design for the Capitol grounds (left). Visitors can also access the Library of Congress' Jefferson Building (above, seen from the entrance to the visitors center).

Project: Capitol Visitor's Center

Architect: Office of the Architect of the Capitol (Stephen T. Ayers, AIA, Acting Architect of the Capitol; Bernie Ungar, Capitol Visitor's Center Project Executive); RTKL Associates Architects and Engineers (Rod Henderer, AIA, Design Principal, Michael McQueen, Managing Principal)

Landscape Architect: Sasaki Associates

Contractor: Gilbane Building Company

Owner: United States Congress

RESOURCES

SEQUENCE 1 CONTRACTOR: (site preparation, demolition, structural engineering): Balfour Beatty Construction Company (formerly Centex Construction Company); **SEQUENCE 2 CONTRACTOR:** (INTERIORS): Manhattan Construction Company; **EXHIBITION HALL DESIGN:** Ralph Appelbaum and Associates; **VIDEO DESIGN & INSTALLATION:** Cortina Productions; **CULINARY ADVISORS:** Restaurant Associates; **OPERATIONS CONSULTANT:** J.M. Zell Partners; **STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING:** Weidlinger & Associates; **MECHANICAL, ELECTRICAL, PLUMBING:** James Posey Associates

largely in the same locations as Olmsted's meticulously plotted arrangements, which frame key views of the Capitol dome. The fountains and lanterns were replaced, and all will be functional. Pools of water will surround the skylights.

The visitor's center is the largest addition ever to the Capitol, but it is far from the first. The rotunda and the original north and south wings were completed in 1824, but the dome was not finished until 1866. The terraces were added in 1892, and the eastern extension, including a port-cochere and the monumental stairs, in 1962.

"The building is an evolving structure," says Fontana. "When people ask me, 'When was the Capitol built?' I say it's not done yet."



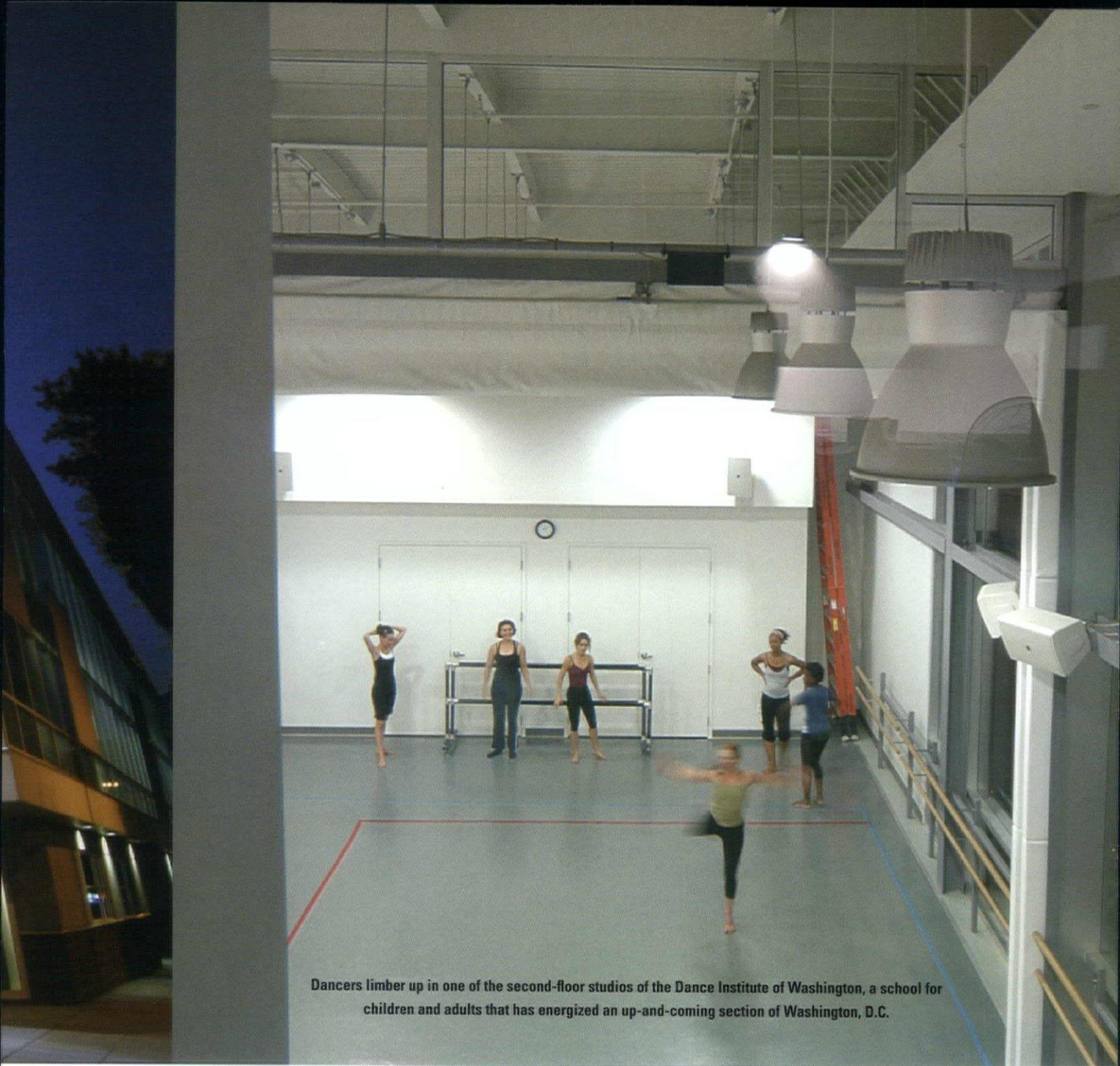
Grace_{and} Motion

As the principal architect for the Dance Institute of Washington, Milton Shinberg, AIA, was prepared for the project to be successful. He knew that his team had maximized the amount of useable space on a tight urban lot. He knew that the vibrant dance company would be well suited to its Columbia Heights neighborhood, which had undergone much revitalization in recent years. He knew that the mechanics of the building would work well—that the studios would be well lit, the barres at the perfect height, the floors absorbing the thumping impact of leaps and twirls. What he was not prepared for, however, was the emotional effect of seeing young children dance across the studio, arms outstretched, their faces alight with the pure joy of motion.

“As an architect, you start by thinking about your client and who’s going to use the space,” says Shinberg, who heads up the Bethesda-based architecture firm Shinberg.Levinas with

The Dance Institute of Washington enlivens a bustling, emerging neighborhood in Washington, D.C.

By Kim A. O’Connell



Dancers limber up in one of the second-floor studios of the Dance Institute of Washington, a school for children and adults that has energized an up-and-coming section of Washington, D.C.

longtime collaborator Salo Levinas. “The construction of the building was rather complicated, so all your attention then goes to the technical aspects of putting the building together. So when they had their opening [in November 2006] and the kids were dancing, the sweetness of that moment took me by surprise. It was very overwhelming.”

The Dance Institute of Washington began more than 20 years ago in a church basement as a summer program for underprivileged youth. Founded by Fabian Barnes, a former Dance Theatre of Harlem soloist who serves as the Institute’s artistic director, the organization has grown into a multifaceted dance facility that combines a school for children and adults (alumni have subsequently joined professional companies such as the Dance Theatre of Harlem, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and the Suzanne Farrell Ballet), community outreach

programs, and a professional dance company called Reflections. After operating for years in shared and rented spaces that were often too cramped, Barnes and his colleagues knew they needed a permanent home.

At the same time, the city was aiming to redevelop the Columbia Heights neighborhood, located on the 14th Street corridor in northwest Washington. Although it had been a pleasant middle-class enclave until the 1960s—anchored by the circa-1924 Tivoli Theatre, a stucco-clad Italianate movie house that still stands today—the neighborhood was devastated by riots in the wake of the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King. Numerous storefronts and houses stood vacant and forgotten for decades.

In the last ten years, however, the neighborhood has enjoyed a renaissance, with ample foot traffic and new shops and



Glass is the predominant element of the school's design, with two projecting volumes whose cantilevered roofs ascend toward the commercial heart of the neighborhood, while the rest of the building slopes down and readily complements the surrounding low-rise residential developments.

eateries sited around the Columbia Heights Metro station. Central to this transformation was a competition sponsored by the city's National Capital Revitalization Commission, which invited proposals for new residential and retail complexes at 24 sites throughout the neighborhood. Although it did not have a housing or major retail component (it does have a small shop where students can purchase dancewear), the Dance Institute proposed moving its new facility to the neighborhood—adding a cultural asset to the community that the commission readily favored. Shinberg-Levinas won the competition to design the facility, which was to include dance studios, offices, storage, and a childcare center (a separate entity from the Institute co-located in the building).

The lot was both auspicious and difficult. On one hand, the site is located two blocks north of the subway station and across the street from the Tivoli (now operating as the GALA Hispanic theater). Yet the multilateral site is also relatively small and awkward, with sharp angles and little space for parking. Shinberg and his colleagues—the firm employs ten architects—quickly came up with the basic elements of the design. “The lower level would be relatively closed and protective for

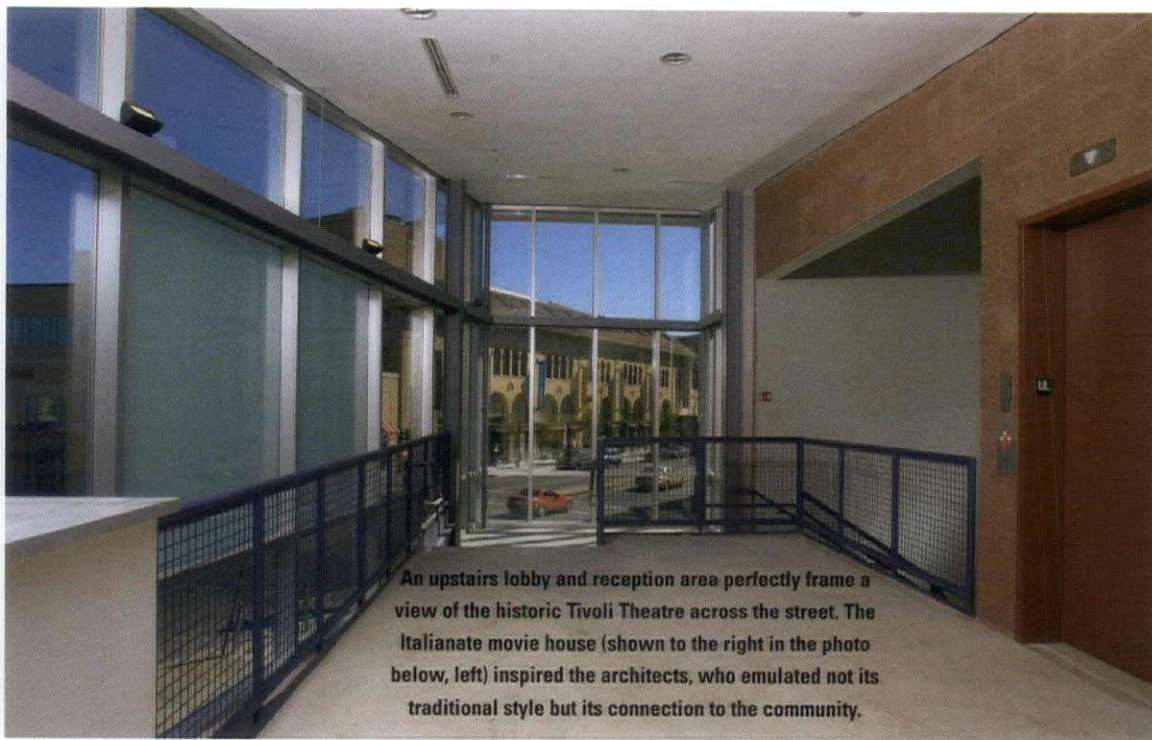
the kids in the daycare,” Shinberg says, “while the upper level would be very glassy, so the community could peer into the studios, and the building would broadcast its contribution and not be cloaked.”

The first mock-up of the building sited the main entrance in the central part of the volume, facing 14th Street directly. Even though this general concept had been approved, Shinberg had an epiphany standing at the site one day, making the risky decision to toss out that design and reorient the entire building so that the entrance was angled on the corner (like the Tivoli) and faced south toward the pulsing heart of the neighborhood. “We realized that we had to inflect toward the Tivoli and give it a little bow,” Shinberg says.

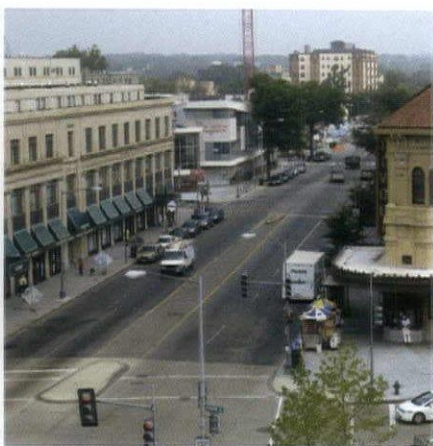
Like its lot, the building is unusually shaped, with no less than 21 corners, most of which are not 90 degrees. The building is dominated by two projecting volumes whose cantilevered steel roofs ascend toward the Tivoli and the public square beyond, while the sides and back of the building step down to complement the surrounding low-rise residential neighborhood. Although the lower level is clad in masonry with small window openings, to reflect the security needs of the child-



Milton Shinberg



An upstairs lobby and reception area perfectly frame a view of the historic Tivoli Theatre across the street. The Italianate movie house (shown to the right in the photo below, left) inspired the architects, who emulated not its traditional style but its connection to the community.



John Woo

Milton Shinberg



Milton Shinberg

A winding staircase leads students and visitors from a receiving area up to the studio level. Warm colors lend elegance to these front-of-house spaces.

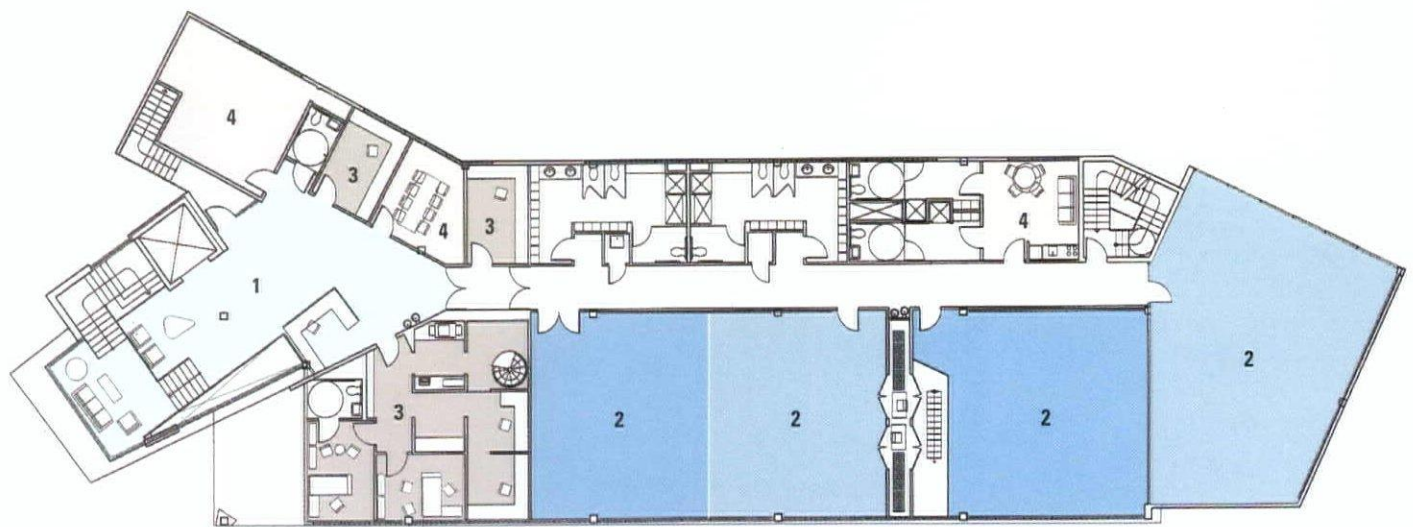
care facility, the upper level is primarily glass, punctuated with solid “floating” panels that give a sense of motion to the curtain wall. This abstraction of motion is complemented by the actual kinetic energy of the dancers, whom passers-by can watch as they go through their paces in the Institute’s two main studios (the larger of which can be further divided in two). Also activating the space are a series of etched glass panels that act as large screens onto which films of the dancers can be projected at night. The concept, Shinberg says, was inspired by the frieze at the Parthenon.

“It’s been really wonderful,” Barnes says. “The building has added to the streetscape, and it brings people’s attention up into the building.”

Inside, visitors and students enter a ground-floor receiving area and wind their way up a staircase to the main lobby, which offers fantastic views of the Tivoli and the streetscape below and is regularly used for receptions and other gatherings. Offices and a conference room give way to a long corridor—lined with performance posters, including one of Barnes as a younger dancer—that opens to the studios. (One office even has a theatrically inspired spiral staircase that leads up to a mezza-



The open expanses of glass in the studios allow passers-by to view dancers in action, but they also allow dancers to constantly be connected to the pulse and energy of the city.



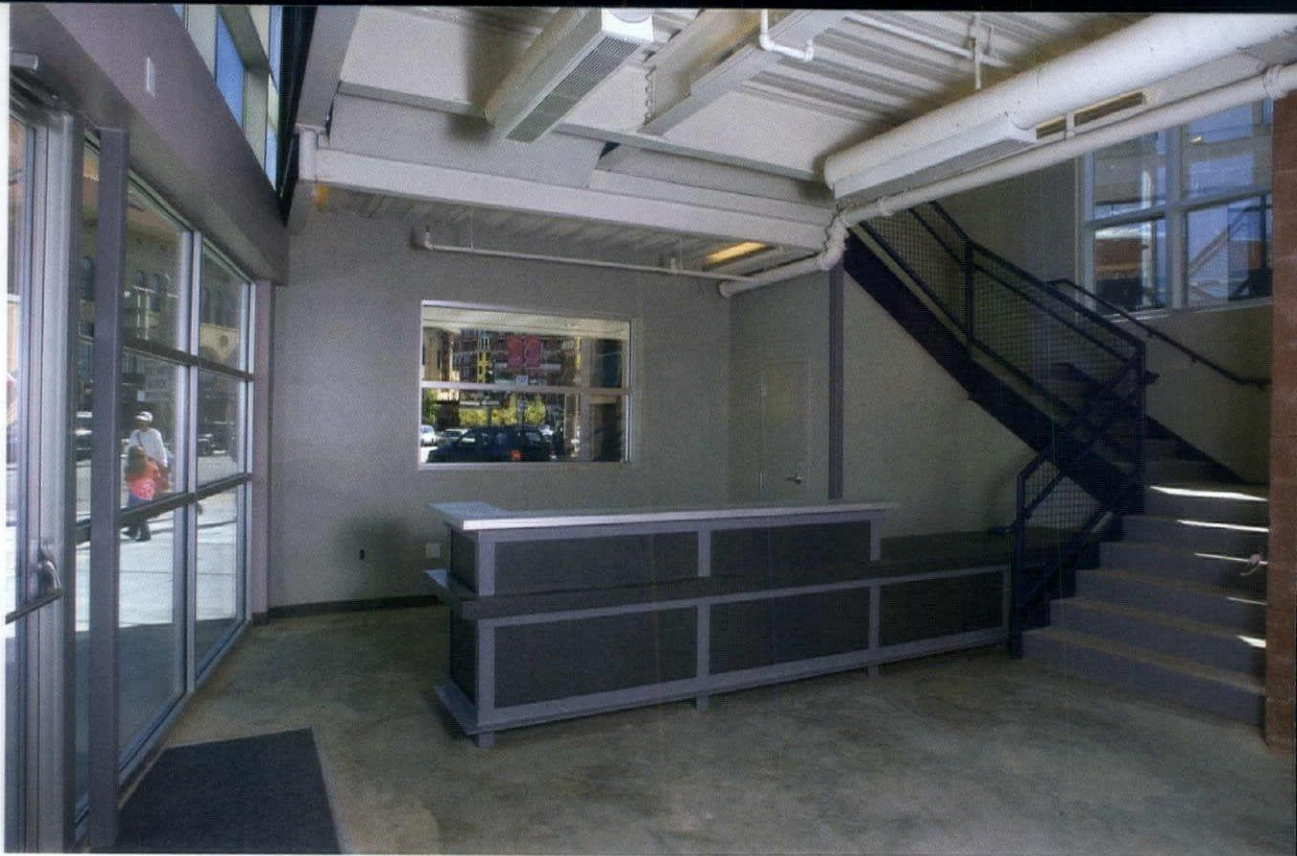
Second Floor Plan



- 1 Upper Lobby
- 2 Dance Studios
- 3 Offices
- 4 Conference/Community Space



John Woo



Interior spaces have a minimalist, "urban" feel, with exposed ductwork and concrete flooring.

nine level, from which Barnes and others can watch dancers in class.) In addition to the main studios, which have lofty 18-foot ceilings and ample lighting options that can set the mood for dancers, a third studio (or fourth, depending on whether the main studio is divided) sits toward the back of the building, facing the neighborhood instead of the main street. It is in this more private space that the children's classes are often taught, Barnes says, so that the young dancers are not too distracted by the world going by outside. The exposed ductwork and roof structure give the space an urban, "backstage" feel, while sculptures and warm paint colors lend elegance to the front-of-house spaces.

Rather than walk inside the Institute on a recent visit, Milton Shinberg wanted to first view the building from a distance, to showcase how it both complemented and energized its neighborhood. "We like to invest our time in important projects that have an element of public service," Shinberg says. "In addition to the Dance Institute, we've done charter schools and religious buildings, and all of which have ingredients of symbolism and expression and the strong beliefs of their users. We find ways to embody those beliefs in the architecture. We want to leave behind a body of work that is fulfilling in design and serves the community well."

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Teaching students young and old, the Dance Institute has produced alumni who have gone on to join prestigious dance companies.

Project: Dance Institute of Washington

Architect: Shinberg.Levinas Architects (Milton Shinberg, AIA, principal)

Contractor: American Property Construction Company

Owner: Dance Institute of Washington

RESOURCES

GLASS: General Glass Corporation (see ad p.47);

PLUMBING: James R. Ballard Plumbing and Heating, Inc. (see ad p.2); **CIVIL ENGINEERING:**

A. Morton Thomas & Associates; **STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING:** ShermoEngineering, LLC; **ROOFING:**

Alonzo Ours Construction, Inc.; **MILLWORK:** MCC Millwork and Cabinet Corporation; **LIGHTING:**

Cooper, Lightolier, Delray, Mobern, Lithonia

Minimal Intervention



The Smithsonian Institution, heralded as the world's largest museum complex and research organization, is composed of 19 museums, nine research centers, and the National Zoo. No wonder, then, that such a complex organization is saddled with a myriad of departments large and small. Unfortunately, several of these were operating until recently in less-than-ideal quarters in the venerable Arts & Industries Building, which opened in 1881 just in time for the inaugural ball of President James A. Garfield.

"That building badly needed renovation," says Christopher Lethbridge, an architect/project manager in the Smithsonian's Office of Planning and

In designing new offices for 18 departments of the Smithsonian Institution, SmithGroup invents a clean design vocabulary that adapts well to a wide range of needs.

By Vernon Mays



Eric Laignel



Prakash Patel

Reception areas are located for easy access from elevators, and glass-enclosed conference rooms allow daylight to penetrate deep into the building (left). Wall panels in the elevator lobbies highlight historic photos from the Smithsonian collection (right).

Project Management. “The heating and cooling were very bad. And it has a very inefficient floor plan.” The decision to renovate the Arts & Industries Building – a sprawling brick structure adjacent to the Smithsonian’s signature Castle – generated an urgent need for new office space to house the displaced divisions.

The chosen alternative was an existing office building south of the national Mall on Maryland Avenue, a location that offered the desired proximity for employees who need ready access to the institution’s museums. At the time the building, known as Capital Gallery, was undergoing an extensive modernization, including a new angled-glass addition on the lower levels to house a food

court. Three floors were reserved for the Smithsonian offices, and SmithGroup of Washington, D.C., was commissioned to handle the job.

But these were not merely to be standard offices, says interior designer Maggie Ngoc Phan. Rather, the building needed to accommodate a wide range of specialized needs, including rooms for scholarly research, staff training, material conservation, and archival storage for some of the nation’s most significant 19th and 20th century documents and artifacts. In that regard, the new facility is unique in the way it weaves together conventional offices and a host of sophisticated lab and storage spaces.

Yet in spite of the diversity of uses

and client subgroups that would occupy the building, the design team at SmithGroup sought to establish a design approach for the interior that would tie all the disparate elements together. “The approach was to develop a consistent design vocabulary for all floors,” says Phan, noting that the designers allowed enough flexibility within the system to satisfy the varied requirements of each division.

The task became even more complicated mid-stream. During the course of the project, the Smithsonian sold a building it occupied on Ninth Street and decided to relocate the departments it housed to Capital Gallery, as well. That meant leasing the remaining four floors of the building and more than doubling



the scope of the project in a second phase of construction. In the end, 18 different Smithsonian divisions were assigned to the building – occupying 225,000 square feet of space.

While each of the floors is densely packed with private offices, open workstations, and assorted meeting rooms, the clean, minimalist detailing of the interior affords a sense of openness and lightness that sets this project apart from the button-down offices found so frequently in establishment Washington. Even the elevator lobbies are part of the virtuoso act: A white, stretched-fabric ceiling glows brightly, filling the spaces

with ambient light and illuminating the gallery-like panels of photographs that cover the walls from ceiling to floor. One section of the photo wall is customized for each floor, with images chosen from Smithsonian collections that represent the departments occupying that floor. (Outside of the Horticulture Department offices, for instance, the panels include an image of an early experimental garden on Smithsonian property.)

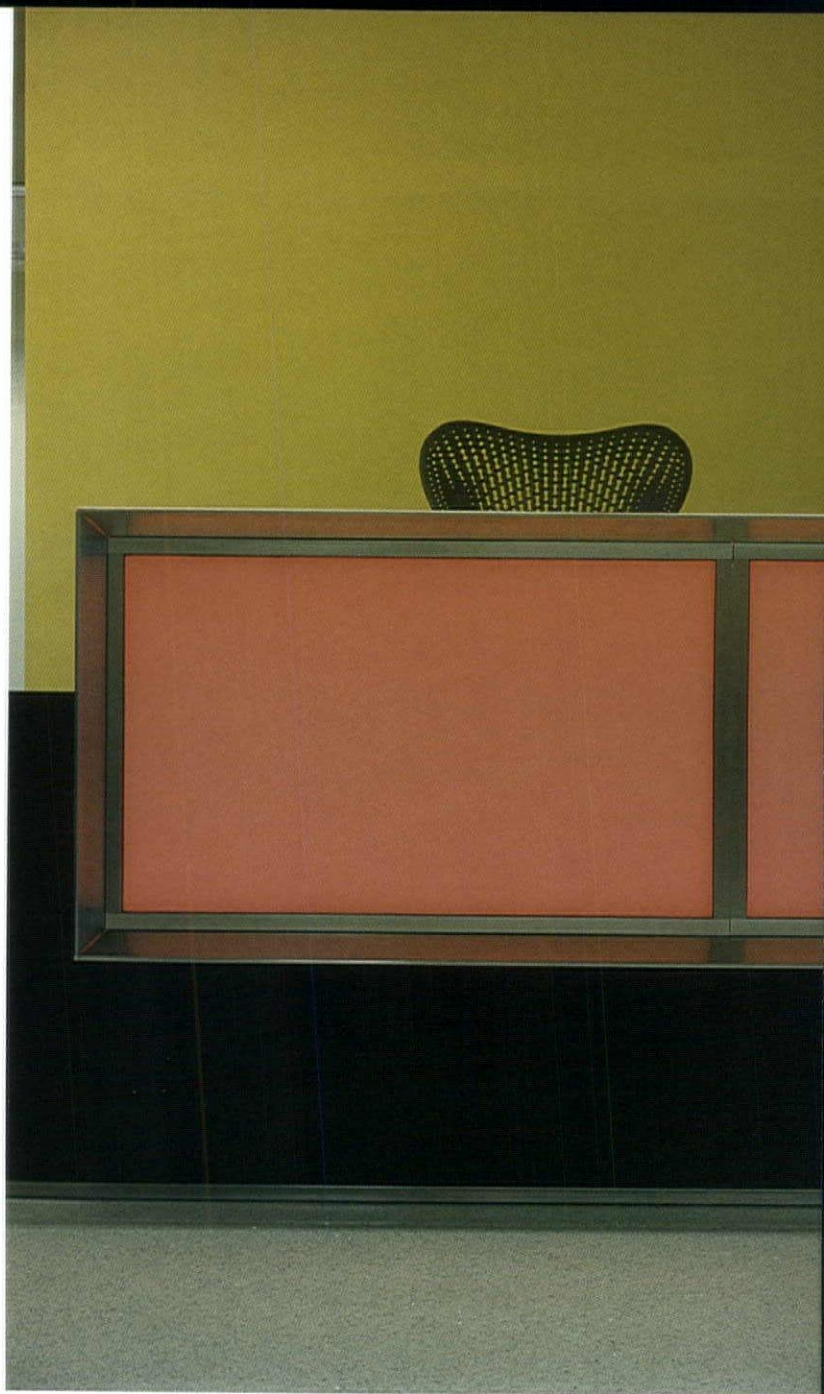
Custom-designed reception desks are a repeating element in the kit-of-parts that comprise the departmental offices. The base is a simple box constructed of elegant ebonized maple, which supports

a broad stainless steel frame infilled with translucent acrylic panels. Lights installed behind the panels cycle through a series of changing colors, or they can be controlled manually to remain static.

The public zone of each department and its meeting spaces are located directly off the elevator lobby. In most cases, conference rooms are treated as jewel boxes – rooms encased in clear glass and detailed at the seams in the most restrained manner. This strategy fosters the feeling of openness and also, in instances where the conference rooms are placed on the building perimeter, allows natural light to penetrate deep into the interior. This



In the Archives department, researchers are greeted in a spacious reception area and directed to an adjacent, glass-enclosed reading room (left). Custom-designed reception desks (right) feature backlit panels that cycle through a series of changing colors.



Photos: Eric Laignel

is less successful in isolated cases where the department managers have chosen to apply translucent film to the glass.

In the context of an interior whose planes and surfaces are mostly neutral, color is used as an accent to provide a touch of edginess and establish a rhythm within the space. Each of the institution's individual departments was allowed to create its own personality by selecting a primary accent color from a palette of green, turquoise, yellow, or red. Complementing the bright hues are secondary accent walls painted taupe.

A simple use of materials defines each of the space types, with terrazzo floor-

ing and articulated ceilings and walls featured in the public areas. The flooring choice – a custom terrazzo, which contains fragments of mirrored glass in the aggregate and creates a pleasing, random glitter on the surface – has been popular with the new tenants. And its durability promises a long-lasting finish. At various points in the building, solid walls are configured as zigzags – a reference to the building's exterior geometry, as well as a way to avoid monotony.

The existing shell building presented its own set of limitations. Originally erected as a three-story structure, and later expanded upward, it came with un-

usually short floor-to-floor heights on the lower three levels. That, says Phan, made it challenging to produce floor layouts that were open and airy. In addition, the original building was engineered with a small structural bay – closely spaced columns and lots of them – which literally produced many obstacles to work around. Still, where possible, the design team preserved long vistas through the building and took every opportunity to provide views to the exterior, which maximizes daylighting and provides a means of orientation for the people inside.

The Smithsonian “tenants” vary



To complement the neutral interior, color is used selectively as an accent. In some locations, solid walls are configured as zigzags with ceiling light fixtures arranged to emphasize the playful geometry.

widely in function and size, requiring spaces ranging from 1,800 square feet to more than 40,000 square feet. Perhaps the most intensively programmed area is the third floor, where the institution's Archives department is located. Here, visitors are greeted in a spacious reception area, where researchers arrive when they come to examine archival records. Three reading tables sit in plain view in the glass-enclosed reading room, which is strategically located beside the reception desk for close monitoring. Nearby are additional reference rooms for document reading, microform reading, and

listening to audio files. A conservation lab – outfitted with a broad, shallow tank for bathing documents – rounds out the department's specialized facilities.

Through a secure door into the staff area, a long room with long, counter-like work surfaces is labeled "Processing." Here, behind a ribbon window cut into a zigzag wall, Smithsonian staff members handle archival materials that are en route to someplace else: to the Smithsonian's long-term collections area in Pennsylvania, perhaps, or to the more frequently-used reference collection. One group of documents is sim-

ply being reorganized, and transferred from older containers into newer ones. Outside of the processing area, highly sensitive materials are kept in a walk-in freezer, where they are less prone to disintegrate.

Careful environmental control is critical on this floor, where more than 5,500 square feet of space is devoted to compact storage of archival material. "We have everything here – ledger books, videotapes, old document boxes," says archives preservation manager Sarah Stauderman. "In the world of archives, this is really good storage."



Prakash Patel



Third Floor Plan

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Reception Archives | 6 Processing Room | 11 Video |
| 2 Library / Reading Room | 7 Archival Storage | 12 Microfilm |
| 3 Locker Room | 8 Conference Room | 13 Pantry |
| 4 Staging Room | 9 Conservation Lab | 14 Copy |
| 5 Freezer | 10 Audio | 15 Reception Horticulture |

Stauderman notes that the consistent 60-degree temperature and relative humidity of about 50 percent offers a great advantage over the former quarters in the Arts & Industries Building. "It was quaint, it was adorable," she allows. "But it was not secure, it was not safe, it was not good environmentally, and it had pest problems."

Lethbridge agrees that the improvement for departments that were formerly housed in Arts & Industries "is the difference between night and day." But he points out that other gains were made across the board, such as upgrading

digital technology and adding videoconferencing capabilities.

So now, more than 160 years after British scientist James Smithson donated a small fortune to create "an Establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge," his namesake institution has taken new steps forward by creating this innovative, forward-thinking workplace. In the process, the project's contemporary design affirms the institution's status as a progressive leader in scholarly research and public education.

Project: Smithsonian Institute at Capital Gallery
Architect: SmithGroup (Anthony Maher, AIA, project manager; Maria Kofod, AIA, project architect; Maggie Ngoc Phan, AIA, project designer)
Contractor: James G. Davis Construction
Owner: Smithsonian Institution

RESOURCES

STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING: Thornton Tomasetti;
LIGHTING: mcla; **AUDIO-VISUAL:** PPI Consulting;
RESILIENT FLOORING: Jenot Group – Lonseal;
ACOUSTIC PANELS: Armstrong, Decoustics, Carnegie Fabrics; **LOBBY GRAPHICS:** Vomela

Design Dialogue

Washington, D.C. is a city of juxtapositions – some planned, some developed over time. There are obvious, hard boundaries and main arteries that carve its landscape, but there are also less obvious forces that shape its physical character: infrastructure, economics, race, and topography. Three experts from three different spheres offered some explanations Washington, D.C.'s urban morphology: how it has been shaped and how it continues to shape our experience of the city. **Scott Berg**, author and expert on the city's founding urban principles, **William Morrish**, architect and educator, and **Mike DeBonis**, staff writer for the *Washington City Paper*.

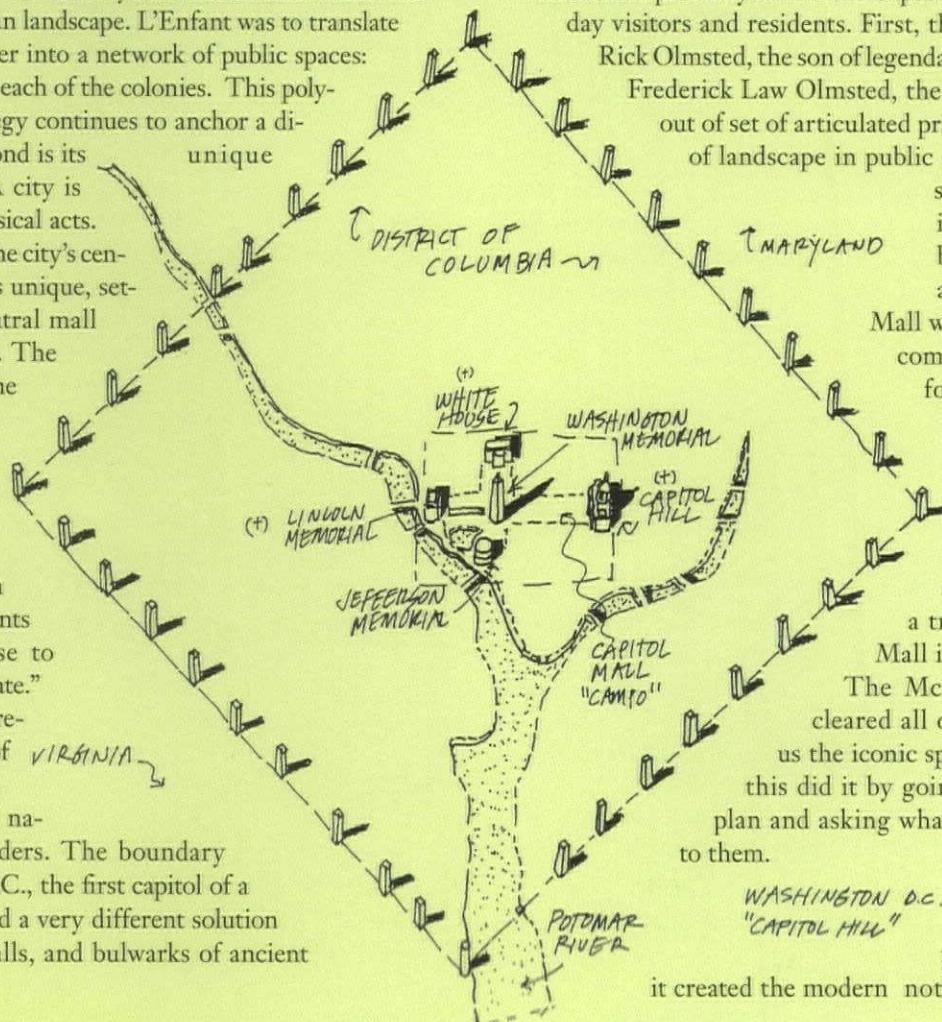


What is the most successful element of L'Enfant's scheme?

Scott Berg: Several different answers come to mind, but I'll settle on one: The way his scheme managed to accommodate the future. L'Enfant's final design filled "only" 6,000 acres, about nine square miles, at the core of the federal district, but in his first meeting with George Washington he confidently predicted that within a century half a million people would fill the district's one hundred square miles. This, at a time when the Philadelphia, the most populous city in America, contained about 40,000 people and covered about two square miles. To me, the most remarkable roads on L'Enfant's plan aren't those that eventually become Pennsylvania or Massachusetts Avenues; rather, I'm most intrigued by the many avenues that leap beyond the edges of his plan, turning into dotted lines as they do so: the future Rhode Island Avenue, New York Avenue, Wisconsin Avenue. 217 years later, these have indeed become major arteries in and out of the city, providing the lifeblood for the growth that L'Enfant was so sure would occur.

Mike DeBonis: I think you have to look at the way L'Enfant calibrated his scheme to the natural surroundings he found on the site. The way the street grid and landmarks have been oriented to the city's waterways and topography—and the way that has been stretched in the subsequent decades to the rest of the city have had the greatest impact on the city's development.

William Morrish: There are two. The first is the challenge of creating a new national capital with 15 colonial clients, who were competing for political identity and commercial access into the new capital urban landscape. L'Enfant was to translate this contest of power into a network of public spaces: one arterial hub for each of the colonies. This polycentric urban strategy continues to anchor a diverse city. The second is its urban boundary. A city is defined by two physical acts. The first is setting the city's center. Washington's is unique, setting out both a central mall and 15 public hubs. The other act is to set the city's boundary. The process is an ancient custom. The ancient Roman ritual of circumscribing a new urban settlements boundary gave rise to the word, "inaugurate." Each four years we re-enact this ancient of city building when we inaugurate new national political leaders. The boundary for Washington, D.C., the first capitol of a democracy, required a very different solution than the moats, walls, and bulwarks of ancient city precedents.



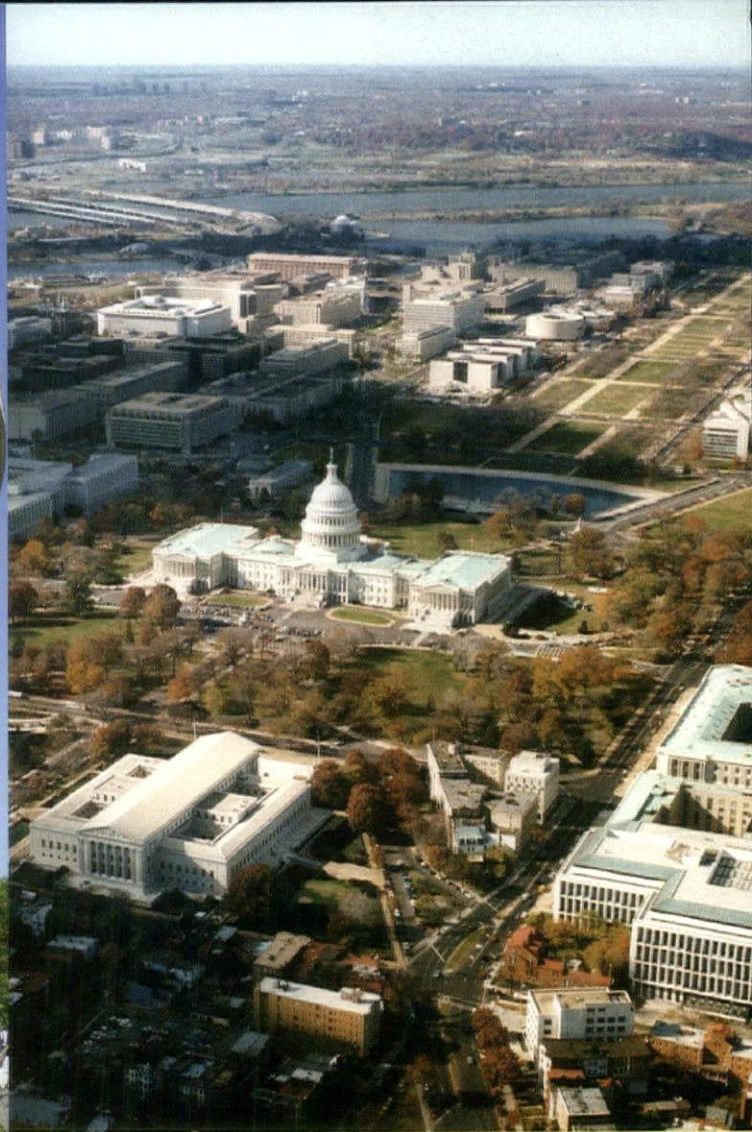
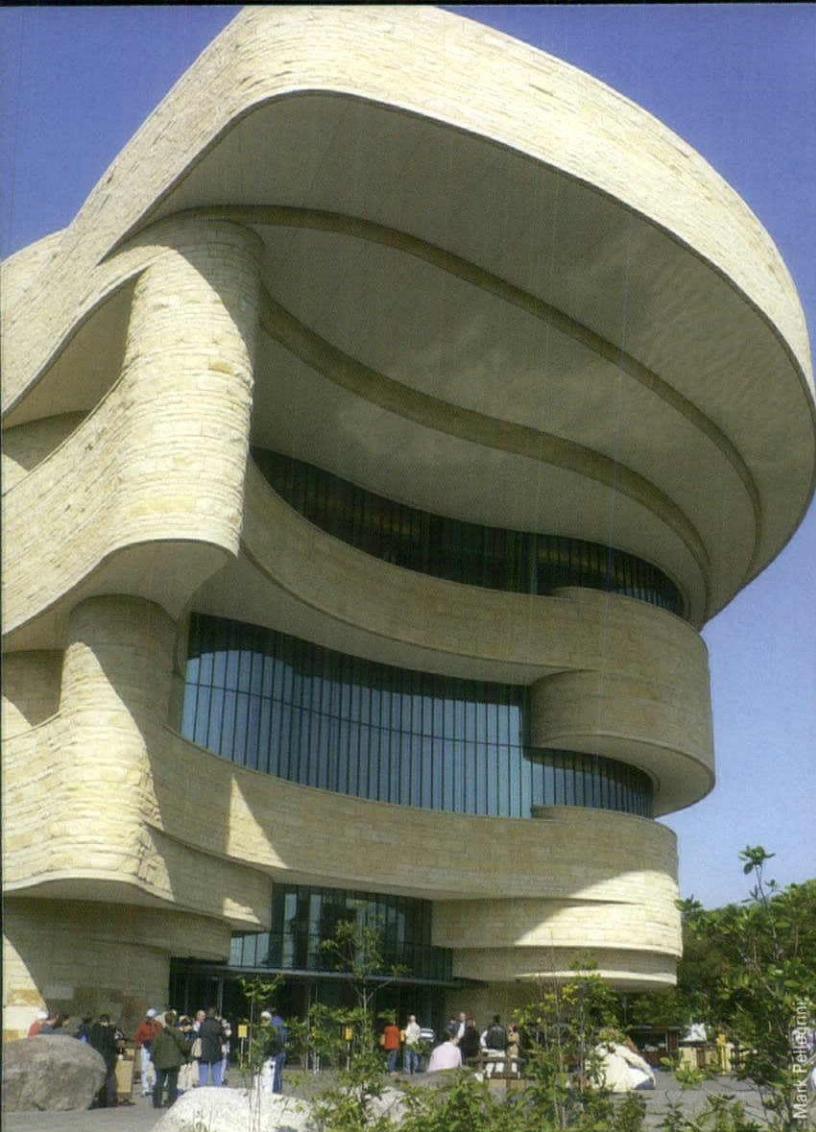
L'Enfant, Ellicott and the African-American surveyor Benjamin Banneker produced a revolutionary idea of an open boundary, defined by 40 stone markers placed one mile apart, which created a perfect square. No city in history created such a boundary dedicated to open trade and free movement, and it should be celebrated as a series of world heritage landmarks, not buried inside neighborhood fence walls, lost to commercial parking lots, or buried in the woods surrounded by trash.

Why was the McMillan plan so important?

WM: Many historians cite Daniel Burnham's stunning 1909 plan for Chicago as the beginning of modern American city planning: the development of integrated urban infrastructure and park systems. But, in fact, it was the 1901 McMillan plan that architect Daniel Burnham, landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and Charles B. Moore tested ideas for a new urban landscape. Their plans were for a living national capital, based on open commercial boundaries, network of arterials, polycentric hubs and connections to perimeter landscape features and habitats. The focus on water was key to the creation of civic promenades along the rivers, but more importantly, to the celebration of public water works.

SB: Because the McMillan Plan was the document that sparked the public rehabilitation of L'Enfant's reputation, a process that reached its apotheosis in 1909 when L'Enfant's remains were removed from their unmarked grave in Prince George's County and reinterred in Arlington National Cemetery. But two other factors are probably have more impact on the city's modern-day visitors and residents. First, thanks in great part to Rick Olmsted, the son of legendary landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, the McMillan Plan grew out of set of articulated principles about the role of landscape in public spaces that now seem self-evident. Second, it's almost impossible to overstate what a god-awful mess the Mall was in 1900, before the commission did its work: formal gardens here, patches left to nature there, a high fence at the foot of Capitol Hill, no sightlines to speak of, and worst of all, a train depot slicing the Mall in two at Sixth Street. The McMillan Commission cleared all of that away and gave us the iconic space we see today, and this did it by going back to L'Enfant's plan and asking what that plan had to say to them.

MD: Certainly you could point to how it created the modern notion of the National



Mall as a sort of sacred space. But I think the most important legacy of the McMillan Plan is less tangible – the idea that constant vigilance is necessary to maintain the distinct character of the District. Now whether that idea has well-served the District from an architectural standpoint is, of course, debatable. The Commission of Fine Arts was a creature of the McMillan era, and has been certainly criticized as stodgy over the decades, as sort of retarding architectural innovation in the District. But that emphasis has at the same time contributed mightily to the sense of place in the city.

What elements of D.C.'s topography give it a place-identity?

MD: First and foremost, you have to look at the District's waterways. The Potomac is of course used in a metonymic sense to refer to the city and the federal government, but I think you can also look at the way the city fails to interact with the river the way it could as a reflection of the disconnect between federal and local Washington. The Anacostia River and Rock Creek, too, both to this day have immense resonance as racial and socio-economic barriers. Beside that, I think people, convinced (falsely) that D.C. is built on a swamp, often forget about the hilly topography east of the Anacostia, particular on the St. Elizabeth's campus and its environs. It's an underappreciated part of the city.

SB: More than anything, it's the city's placement at the junction of two rivers, the Potomac and what was then known as the Eastern Branch and today is called the Anacostia. The spatial relationship between the White House, Capitol, and Mall has little to do with notions of "constitutional equilibrium;" rather, L'Enfant's placement of the "Congress House" had everything to do with the westward view over and beyond the Potomac, just as his placement of the "President's House" had everything to do with the view down the Potomac to Alexandria, George Washington's home town. The original dominance of the two rivers has lessened, thanks to the landfill that created East and West Potomac Parks in the 1880s and nearly halved the width of the Potomac – not to mention the neglect of the Anacostia – but this meeting of the waters still determines the basic placement and orientation of every key element in L'Enfant's plan. Even Pennsylvania Avenue owes its primacy in part to the two rivers, placed it as is where a dirt road once ran between the ferry crossings on the Potomac and Eastern Branch.

WM: There are many features that the landscape Architect Ian McHarg referred to in *Design with Nature*, that define the city's "given form." First the city is a composite of a range of landscape ecologies, starting with a tidal landscape to the east and a terrace of land that is bounded to the west and north by the Piedmont landscape. But, also, there are two key topographic prospects: the McMillan Reservoir and St. Elizabeth's



Hospital. McMillan reveals the hydrologic structure of the city and its method of capturing and cleaning water with gravity. St. Elizabeth's hospital reveals the city's position at the confluence of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, with the surrounding Piedmont landscape feeding into the Federal terrace.

How could circulation and transit be improved in D.C.?

SB: Washington, D.C. is blessed with an intelligent system of public transportation; what the city is not blessed with however, is the funds to make sure that that system can thrive. The recent vote in Congress to provide \$1.5 billion in support to Metro is heartening, but in light of the \$10 billion necessary to sustain and upgrade infrastructure, not a real solution. As we all know, \$2 gasoline is unlikely to return; any money spent today on rail lines, bike paths, and bus routes—to name just the most obvious targets—will provide a handsome return on investment, both financially and in terms of quality of living, well into the future.

MD: I think the most enduring circulation problem has been moving people east to west across the city north of downtown with having to bring them through the city core. Outside the District, of course, the problems are much more pressing, particularly in Virginia, where they're having trouble expanding

a car-oriented network to support new commuting patterns. I think the problems inside the District are relatively miniscule, and what the District is now trying to do with streetcars I think could go a long way towards addressing them.

WM: Invest in the Metro and supporting connections systems. More!

Which neighborhood is quintessentially D.C.?

WM: There are two that tell the two important stories of the people who work and live in Washington, D.C. Capitol Hill for the scale of its housing, the small front gardens, the Eastern Market and the important Afro-American history tied to Lincoln Park. The other is Watts Branch: home of Marvin Gaye, Nanny Helen Burroughs, and an extraordinary ecological stream corridor, which has been the focus of this community's collective effort to renew and reconnect the community together.

SB: Some might name Georgetown and Alexandria, and those are good choices, except that the former is best known for its separateness from the city and the latter isn't in Washington at all. Capitol Hill, especially Lincoln Park, comes to mind as well. But I'll say Dupont Circle, because it harkens back to an



idea that L'Enfant cherished: that his “squares” would be counter-centripetal force, operating not in opposition to the core of the city but in a kind of push-pull synthesis, drawing people outward to lively and diverse residential “nodes” around the city, places where a broad cross-section of people would work, live, and recreate. The creation of public space, in L'Enfant's mind, was as much about providing a context for private life as it was about housing branches of government or civic meeting spaces.

MD: Well, it's impossible to say what the quintessence of D.C. is, but I'll say that Capitol Hill continues to be one of the most successful neighborhoods in the city in terms of hosting a walkable, vibrant part of town with a mix of residential and commercial uses located close to a major employment center. I think Brookland, in the Northeast Washington, too, deserves some attention for being a wonderful residential neighborhood on a somewhat less dense scale.

How does D.C. compare to other national capitals?

MD: It holds its own, no doubt about it, especially when compared with other planned capitals. In terms of cultural amenities, I think that outsiders' snobbery towards the city's supposed lack of them becomes less and less tenable by the day. It's a great

cosmopolitan city on a manageable scale that makes it livable for folks who might not find London, Beijing, or Moscow livable.

SB: When L'Enfant and George Washington thought about the future of the federal city, they imagined Paris or London: a center, the center of American social life, commerce, and government. (They would never have used the words “politics,” “culture,” or “entertainment,” but those realms were probably implied as well.) Of course, it didn't happen: New York City over the years claimed two-thirds of the glory and Washington became more a symbol to the rest of the country than a real place. This is the central tension of the city: how to reconcile its overwhelmingly federal identity with the fact that it's a place where lots of people live and work, a city unlike any other and just like every other at the same time.

WM: Its designation as a district and its subservience to Congress makes it both politically and economically weak. Other national capitals are great cities beyond their function as seats of power. Their leaders invest public dollars making those capitals exemplary of national ideals and values. Although its leaders have made great strides, Washington D.C.'s state of disrepair reflects our nation's lack of interest in the state of our cities.



How does D.C. change from quadrant to quadrant?

SB: First all of all, socio-economically, but that's not news. I think a better answer might have to do with the various possibilities inherent in each zone of the city. For a city filled with power, Washington is still a city of much promise, with chances to do good and great things. An example of this is the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative, launched in 2000 to save the river and its environs in Southeast from a history of official neglect. The ambition is there, the need is there, but so far most of the accomplishment has been in the form of planning documents. But what planning documents! I want to be optimistic enough to think that action will eventually be taken, money raised and spent on projects like this, projects that place residents front and center.

MD: Well, I think people forget there's tremendous diversity within the quadrants in terms of neighborhoods and demographic patterns. Each quadrant has rich and poor, white and black, and people tend to stereotype NW as the white quadrant and SE as the black and poor quadrant. It's simply not true. Even SW, with its history of urban renewal at the hands of the federal government, displays a great diversity of uses—residential, commercial, industrial, and military.

WM: Follow the landform. There is great diversity in it and its and civic spaces.

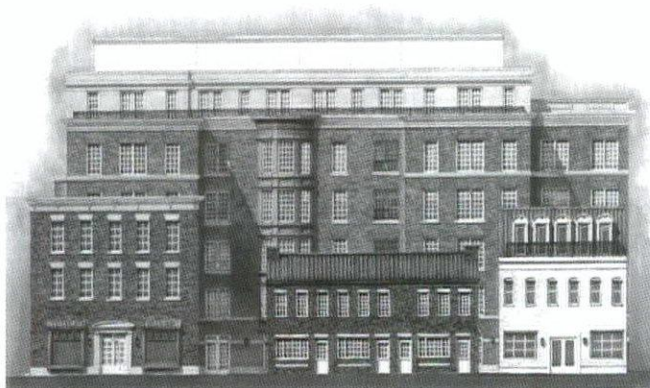
Which is the better airport: National or Dulles?

WM: I like the arrival the National Airport. Coming into the city from the west along the Potomac River, you make a right turn into the airport and have this grand view up the length of mall over Lincoln Memorial, to Congress. At the age of eight, in 1956, I was transfixed by this powerful view of this unique American political landscape.

SB: I live in Reston, Virginia, carved out of the woods in the 1960s as a European-style "new town" and sustained in its infancy by its location along the toll road leading to the brand-new Dulles airport. So I'm partial. But boosterism aside, what other building in America expresses its reason for being as well as Eero Saarinen's swooping main terminal at Dulles? No objection here to the recent renovations at National, which cured a whole host of visual ills, but Dulles is a piece of architectural history.

MD: As much as I love seeing the Saarinen terminal rise on the horizon as I approach Dulles, I've always thought the scale, location, and transportation connections of National have made it the more successful airport (reflected, of course, in the fact it costs more to fly out of there). I think the Pelli terminal is a great space and I use DCA whenever I can.

On the Boards



Architect: Baskervill, Richmond

Project: DSF Group - Kimpton Hotel, Alexandria

The new Kimpton Hotel is a 107-bed 5-star hotel with two levels of underground parking. It will feature a high end restaurant, wine bar, full service spa and roof decks overlooking historic Alexandria. Tel: 804-343-1010 / www.baskervill.com

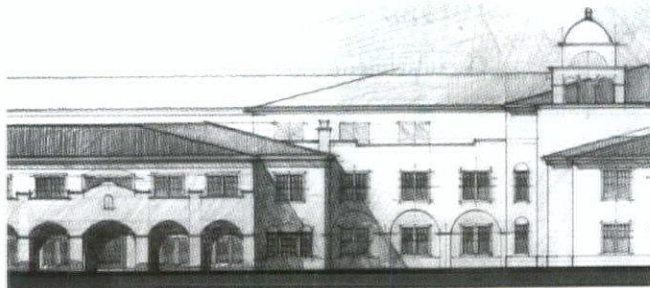


Architect: BCWH Architects, Richmond

Project: New Fluvanna High School, Fluvanna County

New Fluvanna High School, seeking LEED certification, will use the natural resources of its site to make the building as efficient as possible. It will be oriented to lower heat gains and provide natural light. Tel: 804-788-4774 / www.bcwh.com

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Architect: BeeryRio, Springfield

Project: Sunrise of Pleasanton, California

Sunrise of Pleasanton is an assisted living building set along the hills of Pleasanton Hills Regional Park in Alameda county California. The mission vernacular is reminiscent of the regions San Jose District and surrounding area. Tel: 703-426-9057 / www.beeryrio.com

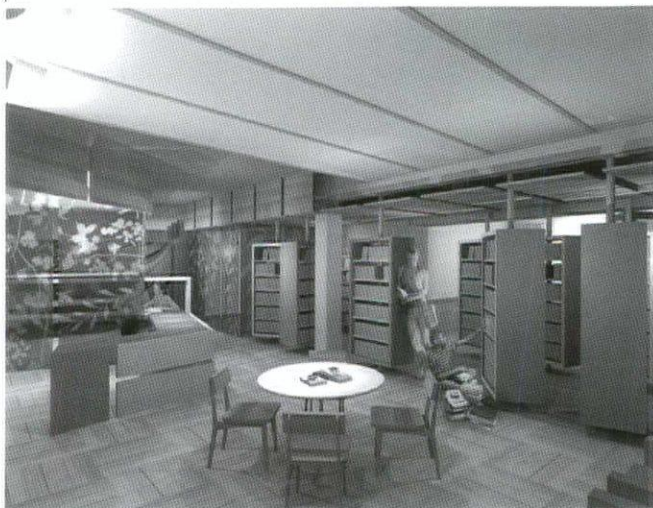


Architect: Clark Nexsen Architecture & Engineering, Raleigh, NC

Project: James Madison University CISAT Residence Hall - Design Build, Harrisonburg, VA

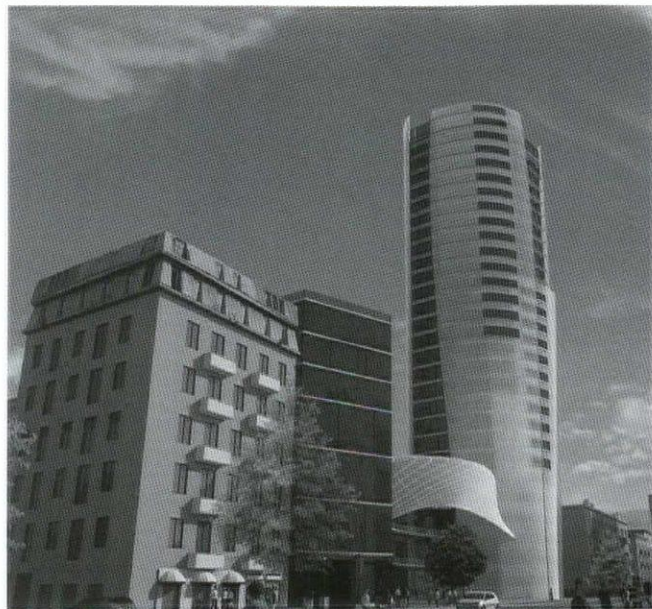
The JMU CISAT Residence Hall is a new 422 bed dormitory for incoming Freshmen students. The building consists of two towers that are 5 stories in height and a connector pavilion that is 2 stories in height. Tel: 919-828-1876 / www.clarknexsen.com

On the Boards



Architect: Geier Brown Renfrow Architects, LLC, Alexandria
Project: Lab School Library, Washington, DC

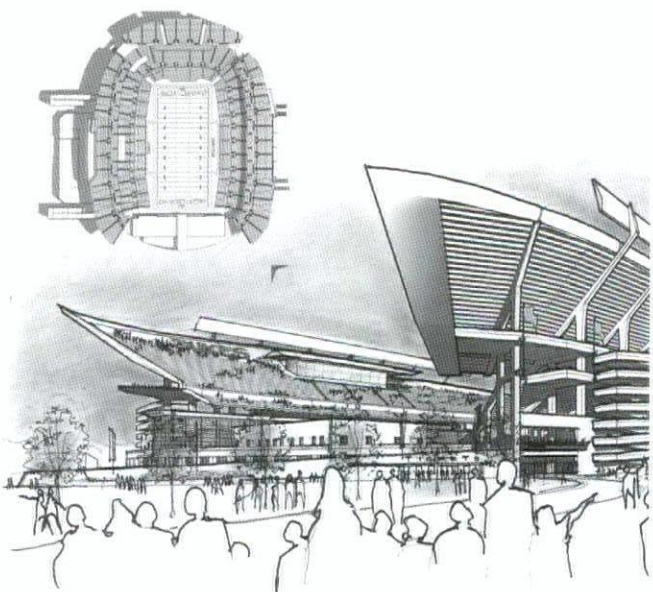
A renovation of an existing classroom building will provide a new library / media center for this innovative, art-based independent school. Tel: 703-836-9775 / www.gbrarch.com



Architect: Gresham, Smith and Partners, Charlotte, NC with Architectural Group and Partners, Tbilisi, Georgia
Project: Redix - 64 Chavchavadze Avenue, Tbilisi, Georgia

This 380,000 s.f. complex includes a 27-story residential apartment tower, pool and spa, office space, retail shops, restaurants, and a 3-floor parking garage. Tel: 704-752-1011 / www.gspnet.com

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Architect: HKS Architects, Richmond
Project: James Madison University Bridgeforth Stadium Renovation and Expansion, Harrisonburg

The James Madison University replacement football stadium grandstand will provide 20,000 seats, premium seating, pressbox and, other amenities. Future planned phases add another 20,000 seats. Moseley Architects serves as AOR. Tel: 804-644-8400 / www.hksinc.com



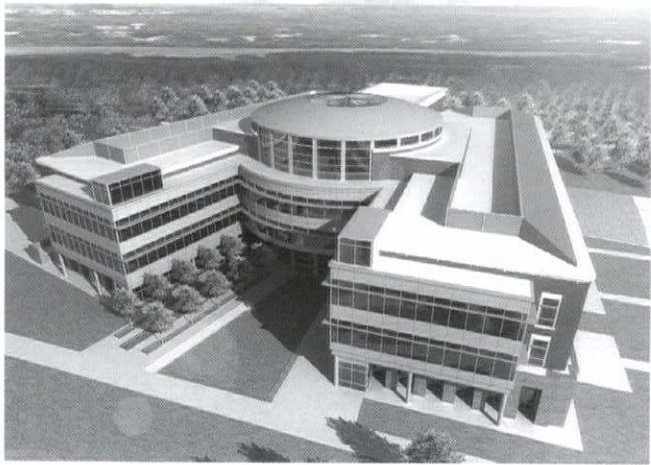
Architect: HSMM AECOM, Virginia Beach
Project: Public Safety Operations Center, Lexington, KY

Organized around a natural, light-filled atrium, this 46,000 s.f. mission-critical facility is designed to be both secure and sustainable (LEED Silver), protecting critical communications employees and infrastructure. Tel: 757-306-6730 / www.hsmm.acom.com



Architect: INNOVATE Architecture & Interiors, Portsmouth
Project: 1168 First Colonial Medical Office Building, Virginia Beach

The design on this 32,000 s.f. state-of-the-art brick and glass medical office building is a direct response to the site and context. Tel: 757-393-9900 / www.innovate-arch.com



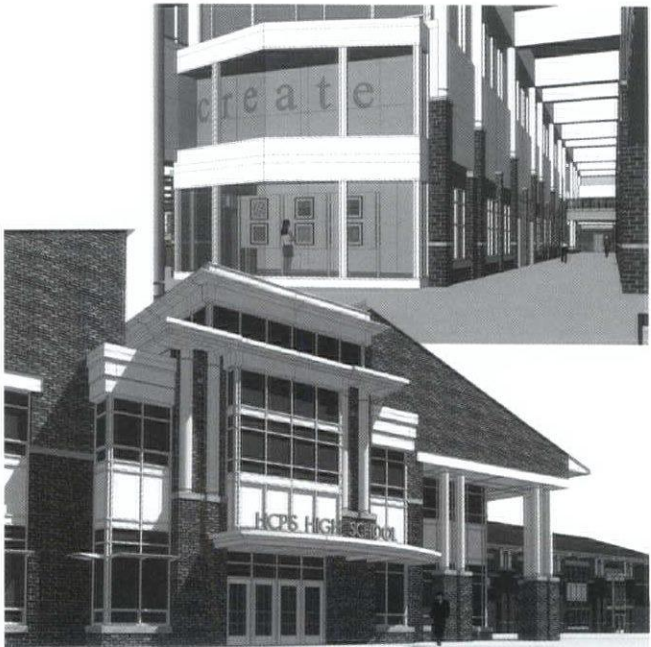
Architect: Kishimoto.Gordon.Dalaya PC, Rosslyn
Project: NRUCFC Corporate Headquarters, Loudoun County

KGD is providing master-planning for the 42-acre campus as well as full-service architectural design for the 125,000 s.f. Phase One building. Tel: 202-338-3800 / www.kgdarchitecture.com



Architect: Mitchell/Matthews, Charlottesville
Project: Charlottesville First Assembly Church, Albemarle County

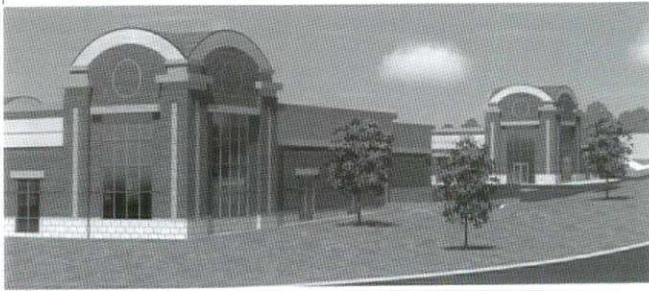
The master plan for this 4.23 acre triangular site includes a 30,000 s.f. modern addition with 250 parking spaces to serve worship, fellowship, and education programs while integrating the building form with the streetscape. Tel: 434-979-7550 / www.mitchellmatthews.com



Architect: Moseley Architects, Richmond
Project: Henrico County High School No. 1

This new two-story, 255,000 s.f. high school will serve a growing student population. Clerestory windows are featured throughout student commons areas, the main gymnasium and the media center. www.moseleyarchitects.com

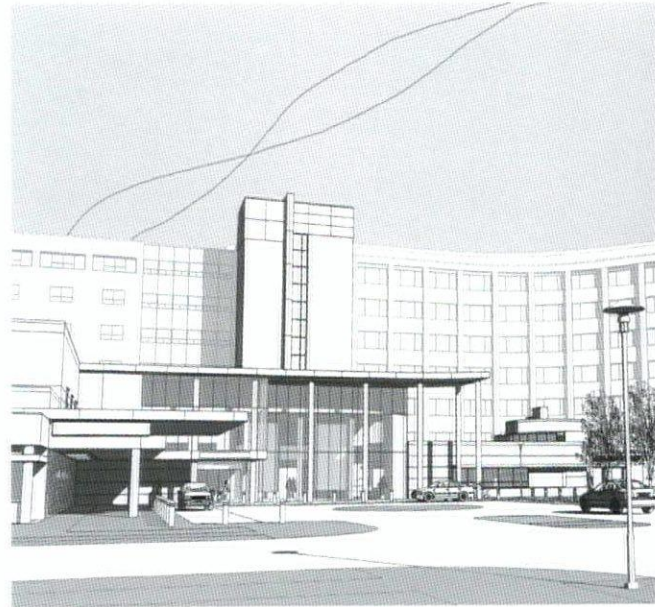
On the Boards



Architect: nbj Architecture, Glen Allen

Project: Hollymeade Town Center – Phase 2, Charlottesville

The buildings in this retail development are designed to enhance the day lighting by introducing clear story windows with a vaulted roof system and will be LEED certified. Tel: 804-273-9811 / www.nbjarch.com

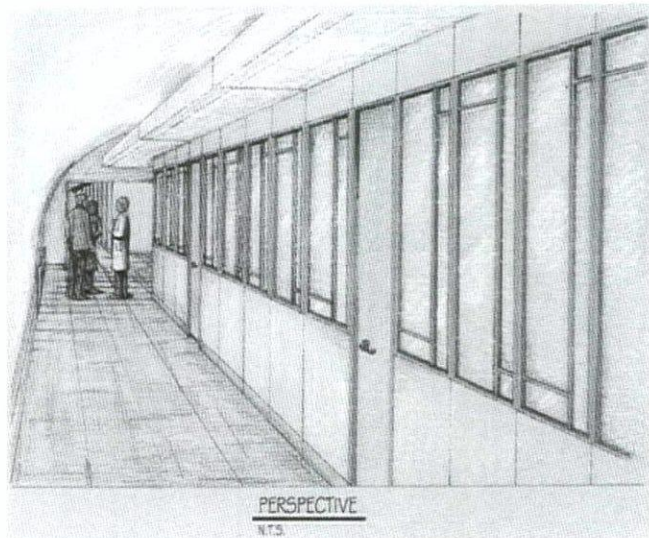


Architect: Odell Associates Incorporated, Richmond

Project: St. Mary's Hospital Expansion, Decatur, IL

The first phase of this campus master-plan combines 75,000 s.f. of new public and clinical spaces with 15 acres of site redevelopment. The architecture defines a new arrival court scaled to the pedestrian. Tel: 804-287-8200 / www.odell.com

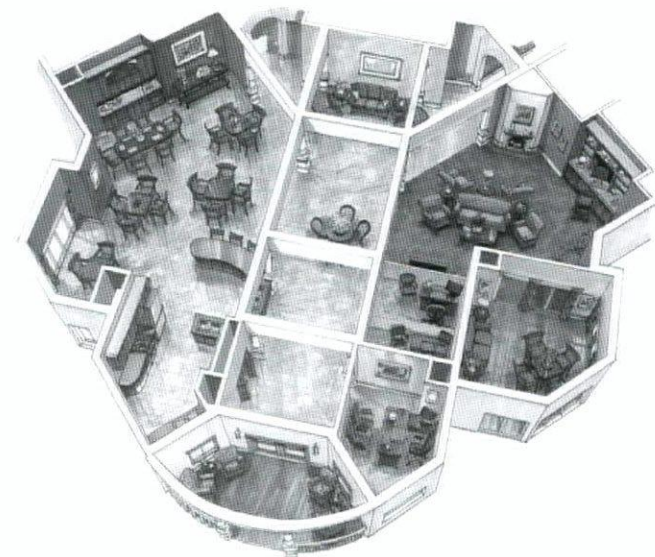
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Architect: PSA-Dewberry, Fairfax

Project: UVA Atrium Offices, Charlottesville

The project consists of developing office spaces on the upper level of a connection link and maintaining a corridor that connects the west complex with the hospital. Tel: 703-698-9050 / www.psa-dewberry.com



Architect: SFCS Inc., Roanoke

Project: Indian River Estates, Vero Beach, FL

This home-like concept is the heart of a new healthcare building. Each of six skilled nursing households will be home to 20 residents. Tel: 540-344-6664 / www.sfcs.com



Architect: SmithGroup, Washington, DC
Project: 901 K Street, Washington, DC

901 K Street, a new 265,000 s.f. office building, is designed to achieve LEED Gold. Tel: 202-842-2100 / www.smithgroup.com



Architect: Wiley & Wilson, Lynchburg
Project: Wiley & Wilson Lynchburg Office

Inward focused, outward looking describes the firm's offices. Collaboration is achieved by focusing workstations around a light filled atrium while continuous windows provide mountain views. Tel: 434-947-1901 / www.wileywilson.com



Architect: William Henry Harris & Associates, Inc., Richmond
Project: Richmond Montessori School

Proposed new facilities include classroom, office, and support spaces for parents and teachers. New performing arts auditorium and sports fields complete the sustainable and "green" design. Tel: 800-473-0070 / www.harrisarchitects.org



Architect: George, Miles & Buhr, LLC (GMB), Salisbury, Maryland
Project: Onley Community Health Center, Onley

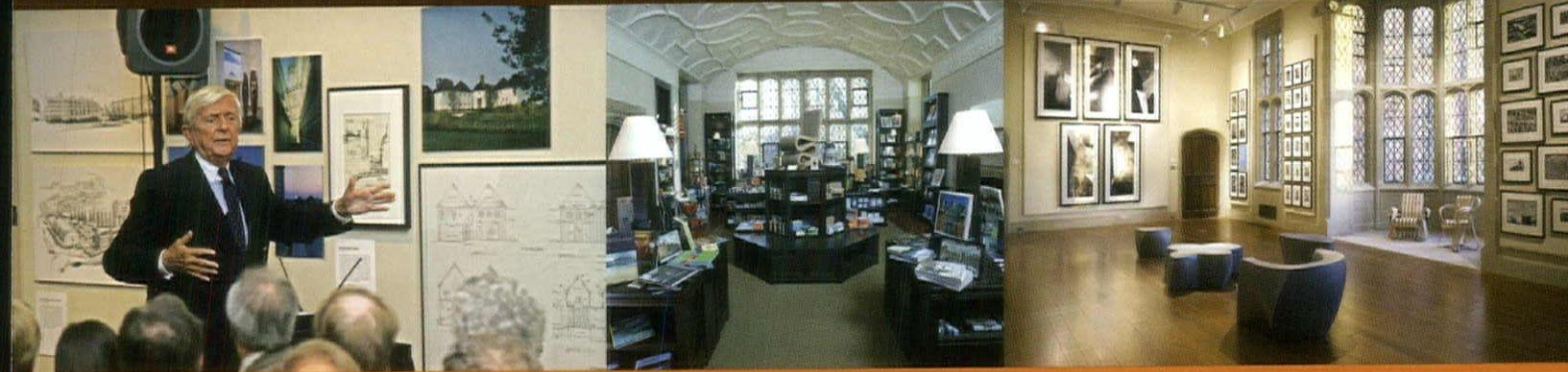
This new 20,000 s.f. flagship medical office building will be a prototype for future community health centers on Virginia's Eastern Shore for Eastern Shore Rural Health System, Inc. Tel: 410-742-3115 / www.gmbnet.com

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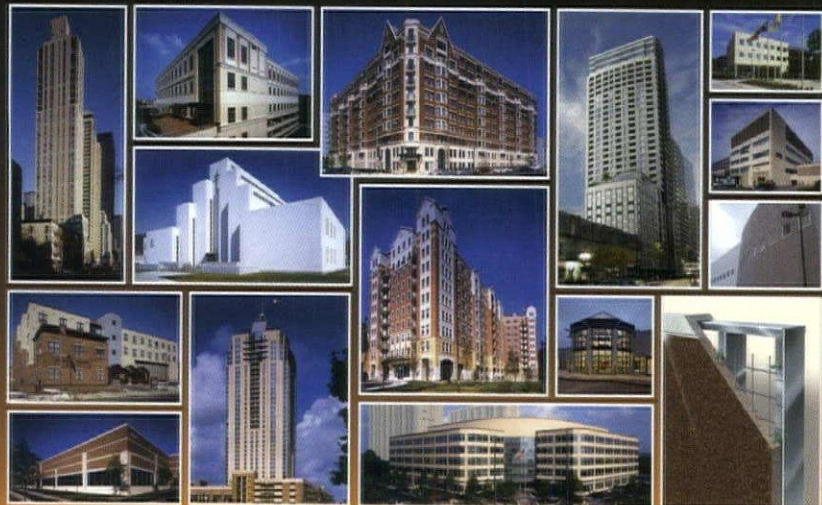
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! Taking Note

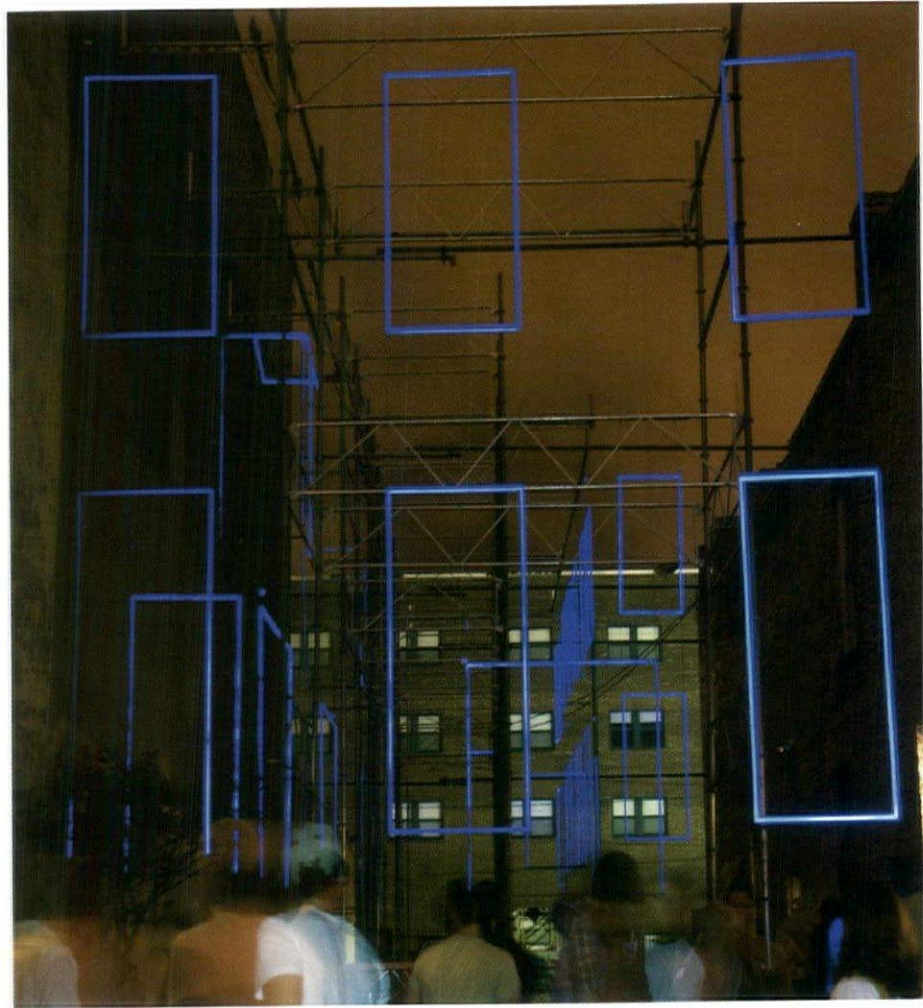
Richmond's first ghost building left us longing for more. Although it was delayed by tropical storm Hannah on September 5, the installation "Light House_1: Jackson Ward, Richmond," designed by London-based architect Peter Culley, flickered into view before a small but eager crowd. Part of InLight Richmond, a juried outdoor art show along West Broad Street, the project illustrated a prototypical Jackson Ward neighborhood house at full scale by reducing it to window and door openings that were illuminated in groups. Working with Cully, the lighting designer Eleni Savvidou, British technology pro Adam Frantzis, and Virginia Tech architecture student Andrew Montgomery assembled 43 steel frames that were hung from scaffolding with cables on a vacant lot between two three-story commercial buildings. Three pairs of strategically placed black lights, whose lenses opened and closed in a specified sequence, cast a pale purplish glow on the window and door frames, which had been coated with ultraviolet paint in order to suggest the building's interior and exterior volumes.

Elegant and rich with promise, even in daylight as its principal elements were camouflaged by the uniform silver gray of scaffolding and rectangular frames, Light House_1 was mounted and disassembled within a few short days. But for one evening, when the rain finally let up, the black lights were plugged-in, the rectangular frames were lit, and it pulsed into existence. The crowd was instantly engaged, drawn from Broad Street into what was in effect a three-dimensional drawing of interior and exterior space. Kids waving light sticks and wearing handmade phosphorescent crowns raced around the scaffolding. Within the installation white clothing glowed, making ghostlike figures of those who paused in front of the black lights that brought the re-imagined building to life.

Culley's earliest vision for the piece was that it would be based on a work of Richmond's local architecture. The Jackson Ward house was a natural subject because it had the correct scale for the available West Broad Street site and was an appropriate neighborhood

(Black)light Is Sculpture

"Light House_1: Jackson Ward" electrifies Richmond's one-night InLight event.



Taking the typical Jackson Ward row house, a team of designers led by architect Peter Culley reduced the building to a few essential elements.

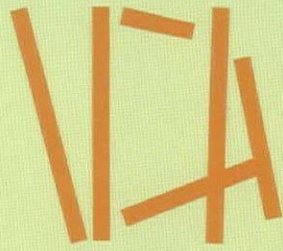
prototype: hundreds of houses with the same typology a short distance from the installation site. The team of artists was fascinated by the unexpected depth of the typical Jackson Ward house and by its number of side windows, as only shallow views are afforded by a dense urban setting. The house was rendered with the ground level seven feet higher than its actual relationship to grade, so that people could walk through the installation with less hazard and reduced opportunity for mischief.

Downtown Richmond was deliberately chosen as a backdrop for the InLight Richmond event, which, according to 1708 Gallery's executive director Tatjana Beylotte, highlighted the contrast between the city's traditional architecture and the wide range of contemporary art assembled for the exhibit. InLight Richmond's co-chair, Suzanne Hall noted that the Virginia Museum of

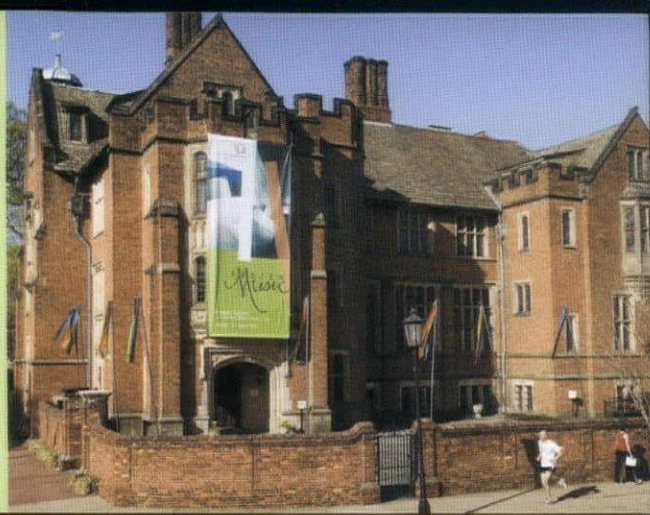
Fine Arts was especially pleased to showcase international talent that the museum has brought to the region.

Ultimately the goal of InLight Richmond, and of the Light House_1 piece was, in Hall's words, "to stimulate dialog and encourage citizens to be aware of the need for public art." Views of the Light House_1 installation were tested using a computer model that was widely published in the local press. Although this rendering did a reasonable job of suggesting the visual impact of the installation, it could not capture the mystery of the windows and door openings glowing, then dark, then glowing, again. From his perch on Broad Street's center median sculptor Carlton Newton paused and observed, "You know, a drawing on this scale is kind of thrilling." For all that, one wonders why Light House_1 is not a permanent fixture in Jackson Ward?

— Mary Harding Sadler



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