

Fall 2014

# Oculus

A Publication of the American Institute of Architects New York Chapter Volume 76, Issue 3 | \$10

## Culture and the City

Exemplary Expansion / A Showcase for History and Heritage /  
Hanging Out with Art / Musicians' Magnet / The Play's the Thing /  
More Than Meets the Eye in a New Brooklyn Park /  
Power to the People / Let's Get Visible / Branching Out /  
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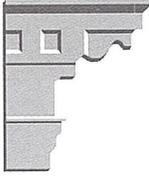
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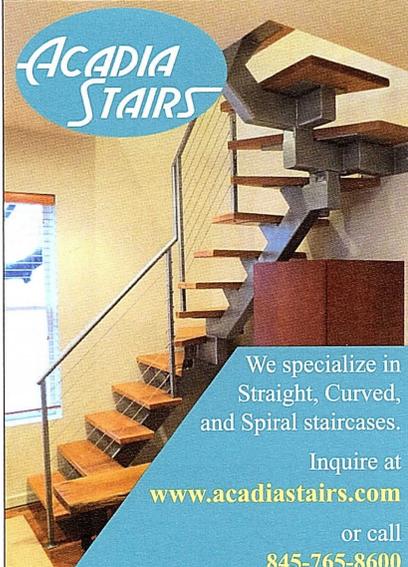
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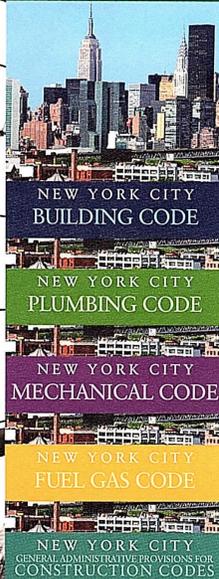
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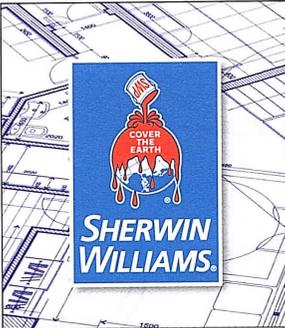
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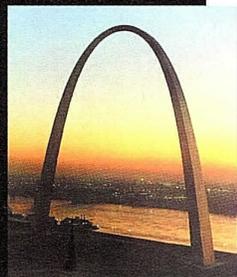
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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

# Times Are a-Changin'

Some people think the digital world is keeping us apart. I doubt we'd have lost old Penn Station if we'd had crowdsourcing back in the '60s; it was so much more than a train station. How do we spread the word enough to spark a groundswell to stop the wrecking ball? Now we rely upon e-mail, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc. to send and receive messages.

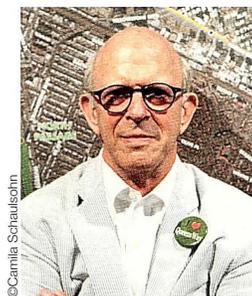
"Like" and "Share" are as prevalent as "Can you hear me now?" And if we cannot hear each other, we can easily read and see each other – and view each other's works. Political, economic, social, and cultural actions are informed and often prompted by our rapid-fire and sophisticated digital communications. Some big messages are emerging. Much of what we in the design world are sharing has to do with the policy, economy, and technology of a world responding to the critical issues of equity, resources, climate change, and a multiplicity of cultures. "Smart cities" is the phrase of the day, and smart buildings aren't far behind. And as Steve Mann, the "father of wearable computing," predicted years ago, we are now on the verge of becoming smart people.

All of this, of course, is about change. New York has always been about change, but now we are entering a new and exciting era and a new generation of change. We have a brand new mayor and a cohort of commissioners ready to tackle the mayor's policies. We can look forward to a robust housing program (120,000 units preserved and 80,000 new units promoted by the public sector alone), universal Pre-K and the facilities needed to achieve it, and "Vision Zero," an ambitious initiative that will make our public realm dramatically safer. Housing, education, health – all good! But what of our physical design culture? What of sea-level rise and waterfront public space and housing on the Lower East Side? What of our aesthetic reality? In mid-July the AIANY and its Design for Risk and Reconstruction Committee, along with four other AIA state chapters, sponsored the third Regional Working Group event. We are reaching beyond legislated borders to meet the challenges of climate change regionally.

What can we hope for? We must ensure that the digital does not eclipse the physical. In the words of the great American bard, Bob Dylan:

*Come gather 'round people  
Wherever you roam  
And admit that the waters  
Around you have grown  
And accept it that soon  
You'll be drenched to the bone  
If your time to you is worth savin'  
Then you better start swimmin' or you'll sink like a stone  
For the times they are a-changin'.*

We must lobby for the role of design excellence. We must challenge ourselves, as we have in the past, with the role of design ideas like those that altered the direction of Times Square 30 years ago, that brought about the new housing paradigm Via Verde in the Bronx, that were generated through



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HUD's Rebuild By Design competition, and that informed the NYC Office of Emergency Management's Urban Post-Disaster Housing Prototype unveiled in Brooklyn in June. Managing change with design and ideas for all boroughs: this is the role of our profession.

At one point this summer, the Center for Architecture had four exhibits running simultaneously related to the presidential theme, Civic Spirit : Civic Vision. The largest, "Open to the Public: Civic Space Now," was accompanied by "The Swiss Touch in Landscape Architecture," "Polis: 7 Lessons from the European Prize for Urban Public Space [2000-2012]," and "Barcelona Glòries: Dialogues & Transformation" (part of the BCN-NYC Bridge collaboration with the Museum of the City of New York and the Spitzer School of Architecture at CCNY). The exhibitions were accompanied by related programming, with the Open to the Public symposium being the pivotal event. One highlight of the symposium came when Carl Weisbrod, director of the NYC Department of City Planning, and Mitchell Silver, commissioner of the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, talked about how the new administration would be more process- than project-oriented – and more collaborative in nature. These leaders declared that City Planning and Parks and Recreation will work hand-in-hand with the Department of Transportation to address and enrich our shared civic realm!

Imagine the NYC Department of Design + Construction and all other departments and commissioners working together, involved with the future of the physical city. Imagine the housing of the New York City Housing Authority being knitted successfully, healthily, and beautifully into the fabric of our city: civic spirit and civic vision supporting a truly civic culture.

Lance Jay Brown, FAIA, DPACSA  
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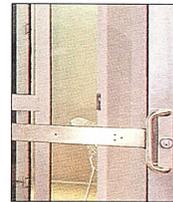
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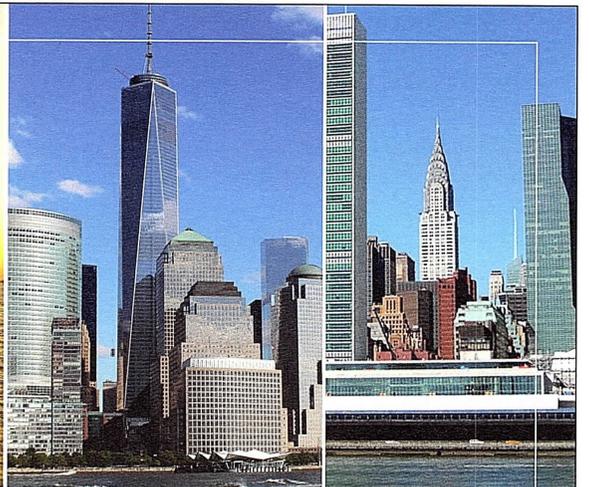


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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

# Bilbao Wow – or Not

Ever since Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum Bilbao opened in 1997, politicians, planners, and pundits have lauded its impact in turning the haggard, post-industrial city into one of the world's top tourist destinations. And ever since, cities across the globe have clamored for a "Bilbao effect" of their own – some have even achieved it to one degree or another.

Culture of every stripe and scale – and where it resides – has always been a cornerstone of urban vitality. It can be a stabilizing force in a changing neighborhood, or the catalyst for change itself. It is undeniable that cultural projects tend to drive gentrification – a mixed blessing that brings cheers to some and angst to others. Nowhere is that more apparent than in New York City.

Putting the politics aside, and despite a lagging economy, the city offers an embarrassment of riches when it comes to recently completed and in-the-works cultural projects, large and small, in shiny, new spaces and old buildings recycled for new uses that keep our creative juices flowing.

The Queens Museum has a new, expanded, and light-filled presence in its old home. Some would argue too many years in the making, the National 9/11 Memorial Museum and Pavilion at Ground Zero have (finally) opened their doors to reveal "a setting conducive to contemplation and healing." Also years in the making, the Weeksville Heritage Center, where "African echoes permeate everything," is ready to share its African-American past, present, and future with its Crown Heights community and beyond.

Adding horsepower to the cultural engines revving in the Downtown Brooklyn-BAM Cultural District is a new theater dedicated to – and deserving of – The Bard. Not far away, the 1918 Strand Theater is now home to BRIC Arts|Media House and UrbanGlass, a hub for artists of every ilk and an artful place to just hang out. Not to be outdone, an old sawdust factory in Williamsburg will soon be buzzing with new music as the Original Music

Workshop gets ready to turn up the volume. After years of being squirreled away in a tiny basement space, non-profit Staten Island Arts is now in full view of thousands with its new gallery/shop/office in the St. George Ferry Terminal.

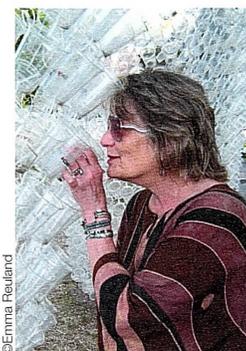
Bushwick Inlet Park tucks a new community center beneath an oh-so-green "hill" overlooking a much-used soccer field and socko views of Manhattan. An off-the-grid garden pavilion sprouts in the South Bronx, with plans to branch out in many configurations in other New York Restoration Project community gardens. Speaking of branches, the three New York City library systems, working with the NYC Department of Design + Construction's Design Excellence Program, are writing the book on both the enduring and changing roles branch libraries play in their communities.

In our regular departments, "One Block Over" roams the grounds of the sadly derelict Tent of Tomorrow and Astro-View observation towers of the New York State Pavilion in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, made all the more sad by the freshly renewed buildings around it – but with hope for a brighter future. "8-Year Watch" revisits the Bronx Museum of the Arts' "bold architectural presence" on the Grand Concourse, and gives us a hint of what might be next. And "In Print" recommends masterful tomes about Mies and Rudolph, two masters of Modernism, and a Szenasy anthology that offers "a viewpoint worth considering."

In an August post on ArchitectMagazine.com, Aaron Betsky wrote a bemused riff on the Museum of Arts and Design's "NYC Makers: The MAD Biennial" exhibition titled "The Brooklynization of Manhattan": "A temple of good taste in the heart of the canyons of capitalism has been taken over by an unruly mob of makers and their stuff." One man's "stuff" is another man's "culture."

"We are such stuff as dreams are made on..."

Kristen Richards, Hon. AIA, Hon. ASLA  
kristen@ArchNewsNow.com



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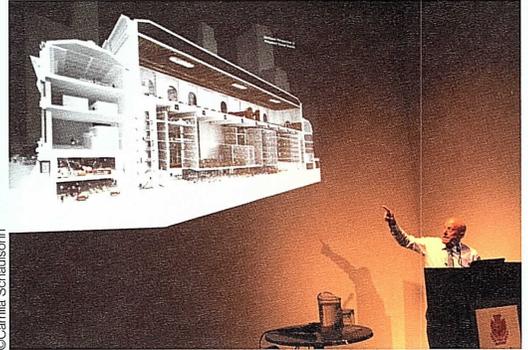
Editor sipping from CDR Studio's "Governor's Cup" of culture at the FIGMENT/ENYA/SEAoNY City of Dreams Pavilion on Governors Island.

# Center Highlights



©Kristen Richards

(right) At the "Open to the Public" symposium, (l-r): NYC Planning Commission Chair **Carl Weisbrod** and NYC Department of Parks and Recreation Commissioner **Mitchell Silver** discussed how public space fits into the de Blasio Administration's priorities, moderated by AIANY 2014 President **Lance Jay Brown, FAIA**.



©Camilla Schaulsohn

(left) Curator **Thomas Mellins** (left) and AIANY 2014 President **Lance Jay Brown, FAIA**, introduced the Presidential Theme exhibition "Open to the Public" in June.

(above) At "Innovators with Norman Foster: From Guastavino to the Moon," a program co-sponsored by the Museum of the City of New York and presented with its exhibition "Palaces for the People: Guastavino and the Art of Sculptural Tile," **Norman Foster, FRIBA, Hon. FAIA**, showed his revised design for the New York Public Library.



©Zoe Seibtel



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(above) Speakers at "SMART CITIES: How to Promote a Sustainable Urbanization," a program organized in association with the Integration Segment of the UN Economic and Social Council on Sustainable Urbanization, included (l-r): **Tom Wright**, Executive Director, Regional Plan Association; **Margaret O'Donoghue Castillo, AIA**,

**LEED AP**, Principal, Helperr Architects, and Board Member, CSU; **Urs Gauchat**, Dean, College of Architecture & Design, New Jersey Institute of Technology, and Board Member, CSU; **Dr. Joan Clos**, Executive Director, UN-Habitat; and **H.E. Vladimir Drobnyak**, Vice President, UN Economic and Social Council.

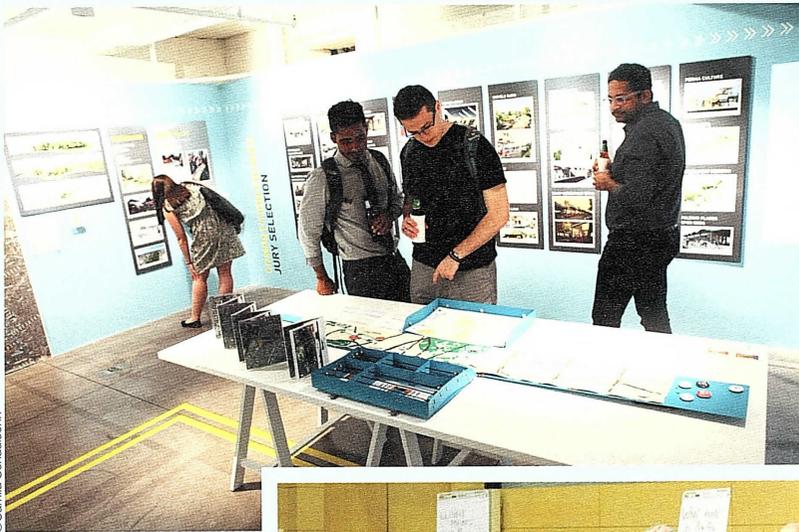


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(above) At the 2014 AIA Convention in Chicago, AIA President **Helene Combs Dreiling, FAIA**, presented the AIANY Post-Sandy Initiative with the 2014 Institute Honors for Collaborative Achievement.

(l-r): **Dreiling**; AIANY Design for Risk and Reconstruction Committee Co-chairs **Lance Jay Brown, FAIA**, AIANY 2014 President; and **Ilyya Azaroff, AIA**; **Ernest Hutton, AICP, Assoc. AIA**, AIANY Planning

and Urban Design Co-chair; **Bonnie Harken, AIA, APA**, Post-Sandy Waterfront Working Group; AIANY Executive Director **Rick Bell, FAIA**; and AIA CEO **Robert Ivy, FAIA**.



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(above) The "QueensWay Connection: Elevating the Public Realm" exhibition, organized by the AIANY Emerging New York Architects Committee (ENYA), includes submissions to ENYA's sixth biennial ideas competition, and information on the Queensway's community development process, courtesy of The Trust for Public Land and Friends of the QueensWay. First Prize winners are **Carrie Wilbert** and **Eleonore Levieux** of Paris, France.



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(above) At the opening of "Affording Resilience: Housing Retrofits for Climate Threats," an exhibition curated by the NYU Furman Center (*l-r*): AIANY 2014 President **Lance Jay Brown, FAIA**; **Jessica**

**Yager**, Policy Director, NYU Furman Center; NYC Department of Housing and Preservation Commissioner **Vicki Been**; and **Gary Hattem**, President, Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation.



©Emma Pattiz

(above) At FitCity 9, a panel discussion about active design in a progressive city included NYC officials (*l-r*): Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Commissioner **Mary Bassett**; Department for the Aging Commissioner **Donna**

**Corrado**; Department of Design + Construction Commissioner **Feniosky A. Peña-Mora**; Department of Parks and Recreation Deputy Commissioner for Budget and Public Programs **Robert Garafola**; Department

of Transportation Policy Director **Jon Orcutt**; and Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities Commissioner **Victor Calise**; and moderator AIANY Executive Director **Rick Bell, FAIA**.



©Eve Rosen

(above) The AIANY Design for Risk and Reconstruction Committee celebrated its third anniversary with (*l-r*): Co-chairs **Illya Azaroff, AIA**, **Lance Jay Brown, FAIA**, and **Joan Capelin, Hon. AIA**, during the program "Road to Resiliency: The State of Recovery, Now and in the Future, with Daniel Zarrilli."

## Center for Architecture Foundation



©Center for Architecture Foundation

(left) Elementary-school students created an 18-hole mini-golf course featuring New York landmarks at the Center for Architecture Foundation's Summer@theCenter Governors Island mini-golf camp. The Citicorp Center was part of the green.

(right) The Center for Architecture Foundation conducted a two-week architecture studio for high-school students. Design Educator **Andrea Merrett** led the students through exercises culminating in the design and building of scale models of a building on a vacant lot in the West Village.



©Center for Architecture Foundation

# Fair Shake

New life for crumbling structures from the 1964 World's Fair, with hopes of a brighter future for the New York State Pavilion in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park

BY CLAIRE WILSON

To paraphrase an old chestnut: the proof of the pudding is in the public's opinion.

When the issue was raised whether or not to restore the Philip Johnson-designed New York State Pavilion, a rusting memorial to the 1964 World's Fair, administrators of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park in Queens asked the people who use the 897-acre park on a regular basis. They got about 900 responses to a questionnaire, according to Janice Melnick, the park administrator, all but a handful overwhelmingly in favor of bringing the three observation towers and once-colorful Tent of Tomorrow back to life. "Only eight people wanted to see it demolished," she says. "What they couldn't agree on was what should happen next."

The independent advocacy group People for the Pavilion was formed to lobby for the future of the site, and so far has garnered \$5.8 million from the city to stabilize the structures. Salmaan Khan, an urban planner who co-founded the volunteer group with Matthew Silva, a teacher, says the next logical step might be some creative lighting to generate excitement for the project, which may take up to 10 years and tens of millions of dollars to complete, depending on what it will be used for. "I would like to see it as a public space, programmed as needed by community organizations," says Khan. "Robert Moses's intention was to have it kept by the city and continue to function for concerts, fashion shows, and events."

Designed by Johnson with Richard Foster and engineer Lev Zetlin, the structures involved are the 100-foot-high Tent, whose carnival-like and rather gaudy canopy was removed in 1976, and whose 22,000-square-foot terrazzo map of New York State has deteriorated. A beloved architectural star of the fair, it also showcased modern technology of the day, with 16 slip-formed tubular concrete perimeter columns to support the first-of-its-kind, bicycle-wheel configuration of the roof.

The same slip-form technology was used to construct the three spaceship-like Astro-View observation towers, which have been closed since the end of the fair, their Sky Streak elevators frozen in place on the exteriors and their staircases unus-



©Claire Wilson

(clockwise from top) The dilapidated Tent of Tomorrow today; the Tent in all its 1964 glory; the Queens Theatre aglow after its 2011 reconstruction and expansion by Caples Jefferson Architects.



©Bill Cotter/worldsairphotos.com



©Nic Lehoucq

able. The towers are so inaccessible that a rappelling company is summoned periodically to change the bulbs in the red warning lights on the highest tower, which is 226 feet tall, to keep low-flying planes from hitting it.

The Theaterama, now Queens Theatre in the Park, was the pavilion's third original component, and has operated continuously as a theater since the fair. It was reconstructed in 1993 by Alfredo De Vido Architects, then reconstructed again and expanded by Caples Jefferson Architects in 2011.

The crumbling and derelict towers and the Tent of Tomorrow look that much worse in the context of all the new or freshly renovated buildings that surround them, not to mention the glistening Unisphere. Directly next to it, the Queens Theatre is extraordinary, and the renewed Queens Museum, by Grimshaw Architects with Amman & Whitney (see pg. 20), and the refurbished Meadow Lake boathouse are engaging destinations. The stadia are new, but no one goes to them for the architecture. Among them all, the New York State Pavilion is unique in all the five boroughs. Says Khan, "It is part of New York City's pop culture lexicon."

Claire Wilson writes for the *New York Times*.

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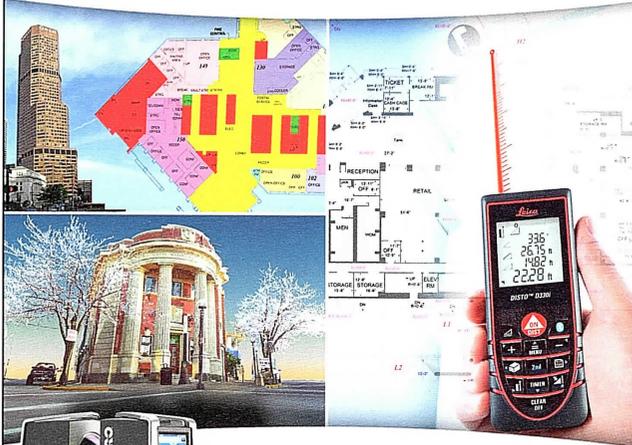
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# Making Culture, Making Place

BY SUSAN STRAUSS FOR ENNEAD ARCHITECTS

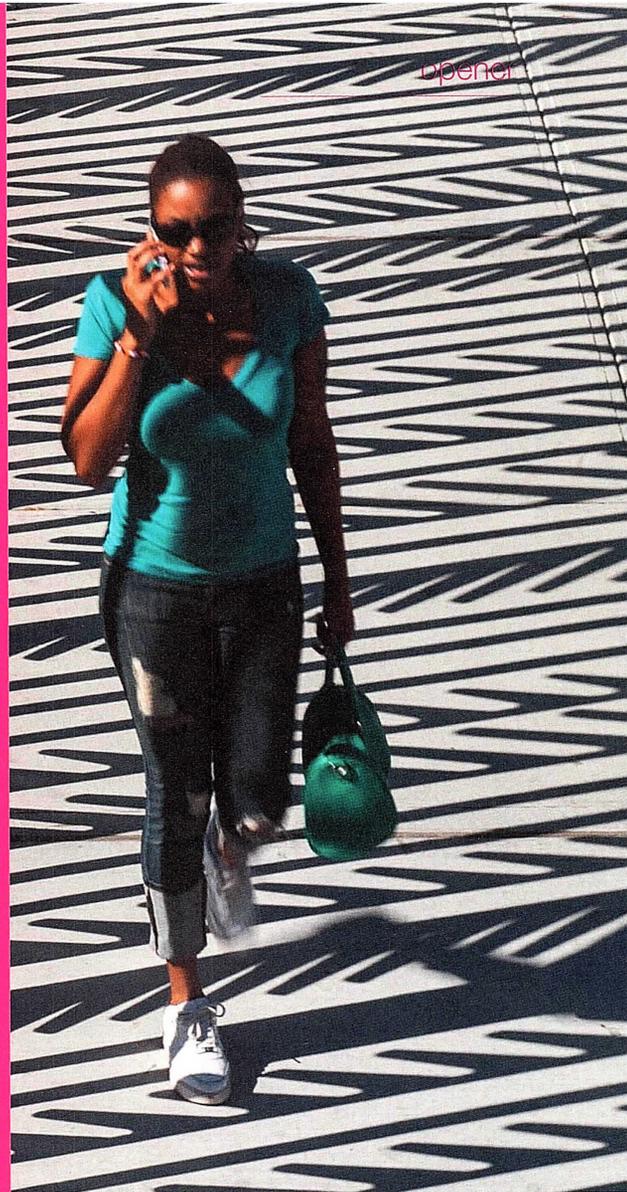
Invited to write a piece about cultural and civic projects for this issue of *Oculus*, we can reflect on this topic only through the lens of our own work and experience. Cultural and civic projects might be considered in terms of their utility and for their symbolic place in their communities. Museums, churches, libraries, schools, theaters, parks, and even grand public works have served their intended purposes, yet have also been great stabilizers, anchors, and catalysts for institutional and urban rebirth. But are we trying to illuminate the project's programmatic value to the community, or the impact of its architecture? Perhaps the real question is: What is the value of architecture in the civic and cultural life of neighborhoods and cities?

As architects, we do not pretend to be social scientists, urban historians, or social critics; our focus is design. As such, architecture cannot be other than a statement of culture. It exists in the realm of culture. It gives form to social, economic, historical, and artistic forces and ideologies, a representation of cultural values – whether deliberately or not. What we make is a statement of who we, as a culture, are. As we build places for ourselves, we order our lives and consequently affirm our being. Culture is who we are, a higher form of understanding ourselves. For architecture to have any relevance to society, any meaning beyond the myth of the lone creative genius, it must assume a dual responsibility, both practical and symbolic: to create space that serves a program and a client in a particular context, and to cultivate experience and memory in society and people.

While this may be true across building types, this aspiration can be realized most profoundly in buildings for cultural institutions. Despite the proliferation of social media and technologies that support connectedness in virtual space, recent studies confirm that audience interest in cultural activities, broadly defined, has increased. (Among them is Culture Track, the largest national study focused exclusively on the attitudes and behaviors of U.S. consumers of culture.) What are people seeking in these public places and actual events if not real-time interaction, the immediacy of experience shared with others, and ultimately an affirmation of one's being? And what does this mean for architecture?

As we move through public places within our cities, habituated to them and distracted, we often pass by the architecture. Sometimes, though, we feel the power of architecture with all our senses, even if mediated by our individual preconceptions and distractions. While there may be no practical or measurable correlation between design, intensity of experience, and memory of the event, the design of our cultural and civic projects presents a most compelling opportunity to heighten consciousness of our common culture, link past and future, and reinforce our humanity and our memory. The projects featured in these pages tell many stories in many different ways and at many different scales. But all engage the human condition, which recognizes public places that inspire, educate, and allow us to see ourselves and be together within a larger community – a place of our making.

Susan Strauss is an associate partner at Ennead Architects.



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## What's Inside

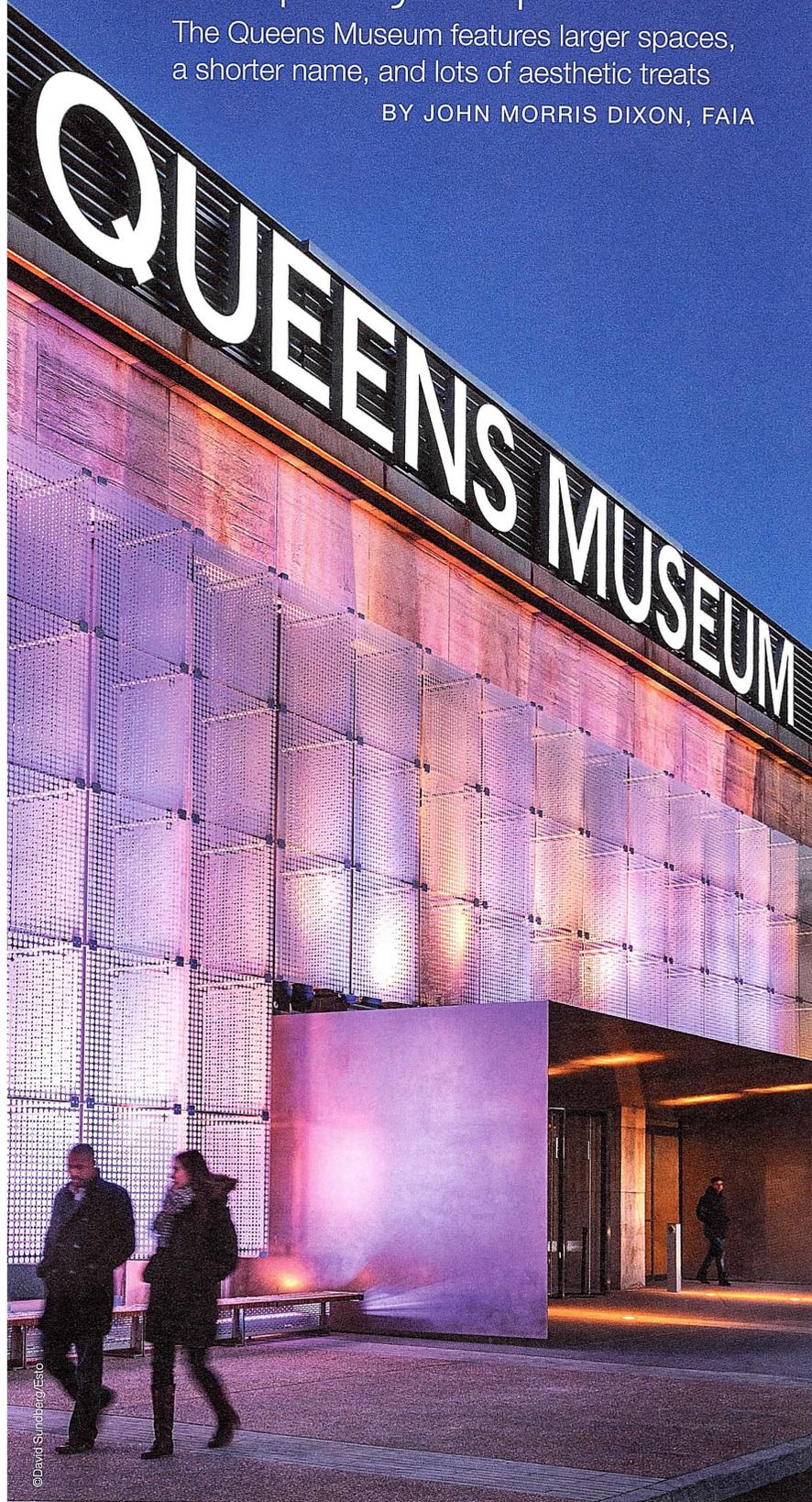
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(photo) Caples Jefferson Architects, Weeksville Heritage Center, pg. 22

# Exemplary Expansion

The Queens Museum features larger spaces, a shorter name, and lots of aesthetic treats

BY JOHN MORRIS DIXON, FAIA



How much architectural bravado does it take to transform a museum? The renovation and expansion of the Queens Museum by Grimshaw Architects, carried out after a more radical scheme was abandoned, offers some insights.

Previously known as the Queens Museum of Art, this institution has been housed since 1972 inside an imposing structure that originated as the New York City Pavilion for the 1939 World's Fair. Built to outlast the fair, the building had served a variety of purposes: from 1946 to 1950 it housed the United Nations General Assembly; in 1964 and 1965 it again served as a fair pavilion.

The museum's setting is Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, with tree-lined allées inherited from those fairs. Until its recent expansion, the museum shared its building with a public indoor ice rink. Construction of a new rink in the park enabled the museum to occupy the entire 105,000-square-foot structure, with entry fronts facing both the park and Grand Central Parkway.

The path to the expanded museum was by no means direct. The Grimshaw redesign was preceded by a more radical proposal by Eric Owen Moss Architects. Chosen through a 2001 design competition, Moss's scheme would have burst through the building's envelope with a billowing, glass-clad "drape." In 2002, Tom Finkelpearl became the museum's executive director, and the Moss plan underwent revisions as costs and priorities were reexamined. Then in 2005 the museum announced a return to the drawing board. The choice of a new architect was now governed by

the NYC Department of Design + Construction's Design and Construction Excellence program, which selected Grimshaw Architects, with Amman & Whitney as executive architect.

Grimshaw Managing Partner Mark Husser, AIA, RA, LEED AP, praised the old building's "structural logic and robustness" and its demonstrated adaptability, characterizing their task as a series of "interventions devised to take advantage" of these virtues. The client's overriding design goals were openness and accessibility, with views outward to the park and inward from it, as much daylight as its exhibition function would allow, and an inviting presence along the busy parkway.

Openness has been achieved by replacing the central expanse of glass-block curtain wall on the park-facing front with fully transparent glazing recessed several feet back, presenting a welcoming loggia to park-goers. From inside the lobby, there is an axial view of the Unisphere, the steel globe erected as a central feature of the 1964 fair. Inside this park entrance, the second-floor slab has been replaced by a glass-floored span so delicately detailed that it doesn't register as a bridge unless someone is seen crossing it.

To a large extent Grimshaw's interior layout follows existing cues, wrapping two floors of gallery-appropriate spaces around a column-free central volume, which reaches up 48 feet to subtly curved roof trusses. A sculptural stair leading to mezzanine galleries features a landing that serves as a speaker's platform for museum events. And the stairway's angular pedestal alludes slyly to the base of the Unisphere outside.

Necessarily remaining in place was the museum's largest exhibit: the 1:1200 scale model of the entire city created for the 1964 fair. Covering more than 9,000 square feet, the perennially popular "Panorama" is viewed from a balcony designed by Rafael Viñoly Architects as part of a 1994 museum upgrading. As before, the Panorama is enclosed by

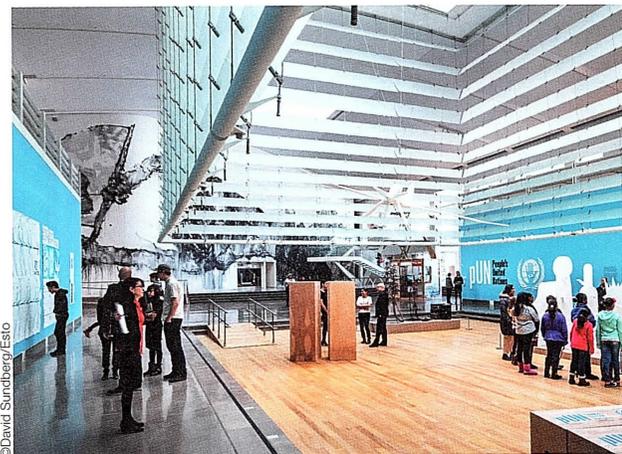
(opposite page, left) A 200-foot-long expanse of fritted-glass panels applied to the old façade is backlit with programmable LED lighting for artist-created installations.

(opposite page, right) The park-side entry offers views of the World's Fair Unisphere.

(right) Hovering over the large works gallery is a "lantern" of translucent glass louvers suspended at the perimeter of an extensive skylight.

(below) broad steps from the main lobby to the large works gallery can also serve as seating; a sculptural stairway leading to mezzanine galleries includes a landing used as a speaker's platform for museum events.

CLIENT: Queens Museum; New York City Department of Design + Construction  
 ARCHITECT: Grimshaw  
 DESIGN TEAM: Mark Husser, AIA, RA, LEED AP, NCARB, Juan Porral, RA, BA Dipl Arch, RIBA, GSAS/QSAS CGP, Nicolas Ryan, AIA, RA, LEED AP, Richard Yoo, George Hauner, Casimir Zdanius, Ceren Bingol, RA, Greg Hildebrand, RA, Hoang Nguyen, RA, Robert Garneau, RA, Rosario D'Urso, RA, Kyuseon Hong, RA, Sarah Jazmine Fugate, RA, Corey McCormack, RA, Mariam Mojdehi, RA, Courtney Hunt, Kendall Baldwin, Scott Segal, Nick Paradowski, Brooke Gasaway, Shane Burger  
 ARCHITECT-OF-RECORD/ LEAD STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Ammann & Whitney  
 SPECIALTY STRUCTURES: M. Ludvik Engineering  
 MEP/FIRE PROTECTION: Buro Happold  
 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architects  
 LIGHTING: George Sexton Associates  
 AUDIO/VISUAL/IT: Shen Milsom & Wilke  
 COST CONSULTANT: Donnell Consultants  
 MUSEUM PROGRAMMING: Lord Cultural Resources  
 FOOD SERVICE: Post & Grossbard  
 VERTICAL TRANSPORTATION: Van Deusen Associates  
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a partition tracing an amoeba-like curve, now extended up to the roof for sound and light control.

The central lobby is wide open to the "large-works gallery" in space once occupied by the rink. A three-foot drop in elevation from entrance level to roughly the old rink level is managed with a series of broad steps and terraces (integrated with accessibility ramps). Above this space is a "lantern" of translucent glass louvers suspended at the perimeter of an extensive skylight. Along with baffles in the skylight opening itself, the lantern diffuses carefully modulated light throughout the area. Main-floor galleries surrounding it are topped with yet more louvers calibrated to disperse baffled daylight uniformly within them.

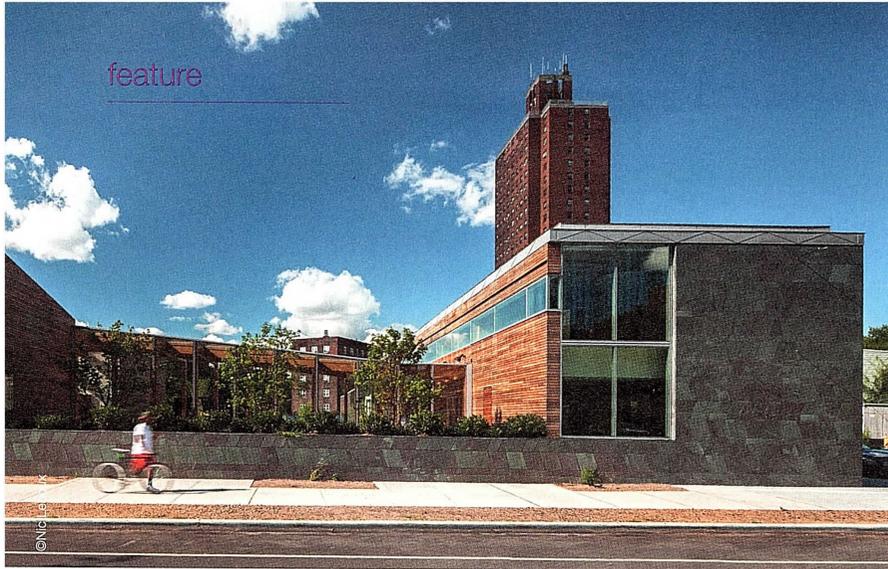
On the parkway entrance front, a 27- by 200-foot expanse of glass panels has been applied to the old façade. Lighting from behind and below this glass screen strikes a frit pattern of circles that is denser as it rises, so that the intensity appears uniform from bottom to top. The lighting is programmable to serve as a huge illuminated sign or to accommodate artist-created installations.

Completed to date is Phase 1 of the museum's full transformation. A smaller Phase 2, to be executed as the budget permits, will bring into a park-front space a Queens Borough Public Library branch and improved back-of-house facilities. Offices on the mezzanine, now concealed from the lobby by panels of white fabric, will overlook it through clear glazing. The redesigned museum will continue to display the cumulative effect of Grimshaw's sensitive interventions and fine-tuned details. ■

John Morris Dixon, FAIA, left the drafting board for journalism in 1960 and was editor of *Progressive Architecture* from 1972 to 1996. He continues to write for a number of publications, and he received AIANY's 2011 Stephen A. Kliment Oculus Award for Excellence in Journalism.



©David Sundberg/Esto



(left) The performance wing, glass link lobby, and office wing viewed from street.

(below) Site plan illustrates the Heritage Center (lower left) in relation to the 19th-century Weeksville houses (top).

## A Showcase for History and Heritage

Brooklyn's long-awaited Weeksville Heritage Center preserves a once-forgotten piece of African-American culture while celebrating its present and future

BY JONATHAN LERNER

The Weeksville Heritage Center, in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, is a hybrid institution. It was built to preserve and interpret a small collection of 19th-century vernacular houses, the only standing traces of Weeksville, an African-American farming settlement founded in 1838 after slavery was outlawed in New York State. But this is not just another historic village-museum. It also functions as a cultural venue, hosting exhibitions and performances. It maintains archival collections and a research center, and offers educational programs and a community vegetable garden. The challenge to Caples Jefferson Architects and Elizabeth Kennedy Landscape Architect was to engage and showcase layers of history while accommodating these multiple functions.

The four surviving Weeksville houses sit along the route of now erased Hunterfly Road. Long hidden behind buildings aligned to the later street grid, the houses were rediscovered in the 1960s. More than a century earlier, life for the newly emancipated Weeksville residents was precarious; threats included the possibility of being kidnapped and sold back into slavery. "They did everything they could to keep their community from being visible," explains Sara Caples, AIA. "Their houses were indistinguishable from what anyone of modest resources might have built." The community came to number probably several thousand inhabitants before being engulfed by 20th-century Brooklyn.

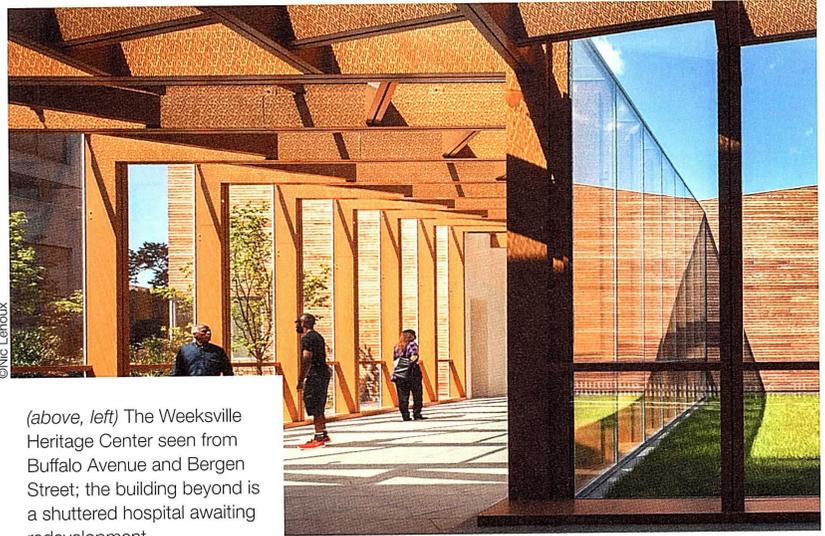
This remnant was found just when African-Americans were rediscovering their history and "making manifest that narrative," Caples says. "Our clients wanted to bring that out on the street and claim it." The design challenge for the Heritage Center was "to do that without trying to freeze the '60s moment" by incorporating motifs then current, but rather to "lead the dialogue – the idea that it is a living legacy. We wanted our building to be something that continues to unfold." The Heritage Center building would have to display and protect the fragile, irreplaceable houses, but also invite habitation and change.

The site takes up one end of a city block, with frontage along three streets. The new building hugs the corner of the property farthest from the historic houses. It consists of two boxes – a big square containing an exhibition hall, performance hall, and research library, and a long rectangle of offices and classrooms. The two pieces are connected at a right angle by a lobby walled and roofed in glass.

Research by Elizabeth J. Kennedy, ASLA, determined that Hunterfly Road took a curving path across the site. That route intersects the new building through the lobby. Through the lobby's glass you see the old houses at a distance that seems magnified by the intervening lawn, wetland strip, and meadow. The long vista is punctuated by two cuts in the gently mounded topography, sided in Corten steel, to indicate the missing road. The building's glassy transparency suggests a vitrine: you feel yourself looking back in time.

The remainder of the site's street frontage is delineated by cast-iron fencing in five-foot modules. The modules are assembled from a suite of abstract-cornstalk elements designed by Everardo Jefferson, AIA, but in varying sequences "so when you pass by, it all comes alive," he says. Here, too, through the fence, the old houses and the meadow, which resembles a fallow farm field, are fully revealed. "We wanted to have the sense of overgrowth and abandonment," says Kennedy, as a





reference to the recent period when the Weeksville houses were glimpsed across derelict lots.

Two periods in African-American history are represented there: the 19th-century houses, three of which are neatly restored (the fourth, which burned, has been recreated); and the late 20th-century context, when the legacy of Weeksville was uncovered. The new Heritage Center building adds historical dimension with motifs that reference both earlier African culture and contemporary African-American sensibilities. Its exterior is partly clad in tiles of mottled Vermont slate set in a pattern derived from traditional Kikuyu and Yaure sculpture. In the performance hall, walls and ceiling are fitted with custom acoustic panels laser-cut with a design Caples drew that is “a riff on hair-braiding patterns.” The fritted glass ceiling of the lobby has a pattern she describes as “an abstraction of a Congolese fabric once owned by Matisse.” The exposed steel structure in that part of the building has a basketweave arrangement; the shadows of the bold, angled steel and the fine criss-cross frit slowly dance across the floor as daylight changes. In the ceiling of the office areas, angular translucent, irregularly placed panels diffuse illumination from skylights – “a jazz thing,” Jefferson says. “African echoes permeate everything – the way we speak, the music we listen to,” Caples says, “so these whippers become a little stronger for visitors here.”

Typical of community-oriented, publicly-funded undertakings, the project has been a very long time coming. Caples Jefferson Architects won the commission in 2003, but final touches were made this year. (A second phase, a parking area

(above, left) The Weeksville Heritage Center seen from Buffalo Avenue and Bergen Street; the building beyond is a shuttered hospital awaiting redevelopment.

(above, right) Glass link lobby from interior.

(below) View of historic houses from second-floor porch of the office wing.

CLIENTS: NYC Department of Design + Construction; NYC Department of Cultural Affairs; Weeksville Heritage Center  
ARCHITECT: Caples Jefferson Architects

DESIGN TEAM: Everardo Jefferson, AIA, Sara Caples, AIA, Michael Behrman, AIA, Beau Rhee

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Elizabeth Kennedy Landscape Architects

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Severud Associates

MEP ENGINEER: Loring Consulting Engineers  
CIVIL & GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER:

Langan Engineering & Environmental Services

GEOTHERMAL ENGINEER: P.W. Grosser Consulting

LIGHTING DESIGN: Berg-Howland Associates

COST ESTIMATING: Faithful + Gould

ACOUSTICS & AUDIO/VISUAL: Shen Milsom & Wilke

THEATRICAL LIGHTING: Cline Bettridge Bernstein Lighting Design

BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT: Metropolis Group

SPECIFICATIONS: Heller + Metzger

CURTAINWALL: Gordon Smith Corporation

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN & COMMISSIONING: Viridian Energy & Environmental

SECURITY: Ducibella Venter & Santore

MUSEUM PROGRAMMING: Dial Associates

CONSTRUCTION MANAGER: Hill International

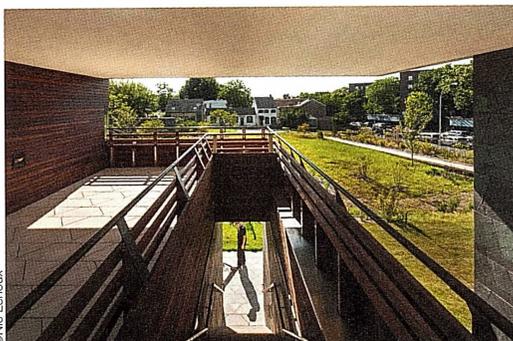
GENERAL CONTRACTOR: Brickens Construction

with additional tracing of the vanished road, still awaits the shovels.) The project also involved a lot of dialogue. “The center wanted very heavily Afro-specific forms and evocations. The Design Commission wanted a very Eurocentric, 20th-century building with a clear Modernist language,” Caples says. “They thought the African language would overwhelm the houses because it would be so monumental.” The final design “bridged those demands and embodied everybody’s desires. In the end, the Design Commission’s approval was very important because it committed the city to the integrity of the design,” protecting it from aesthetic compromise by contractors and budget-cutting managers.

Even so, things don’t always materialize as planned. The chunkiness of the glass lobby’s steel structure is what Jefferson calls “a fortunate accident.” Originally, the mullions were much thinner, but the steel was erected off by more than an inch, so the framing had to be enlarged. The unexpected result is that when you stand in the center of the space and look down its length, you don’t see the glass at all, but only the framing members stacking up against each other in perspective. That worked out well, to the architects’ relief. “You can design all this, but if it’s not built right, it could be a disaster,” says Jefferson. “You have to think in terms of what people can build and how far you can push it. In this case we pushed it pretty far, and we were lucky.”

Lucky, indeed. The project has garnered nine awards in the last few years, most recently an AIA New York State 2014 Award of Excellence and Best in New York State, and the Municipal Art Society’s 2014 MASTerworks Award for Best New Building. ■

Jonathan Lerner’s articles have appeared in *Landscape Architecture*, *Metropolis*, *Pacific Standard*, *Modern*, and many other design and mainstream magazines. He also heads the consultancy [UrbanistCommunications.com](http://UrbanistCommunications.com).



# Hanging Out with Art

The newly renovated BRIC Arts|Media House and UrbanGlass in Brooklyn is a hub for artists – and visitors who just want to linger with friends or pass the time of day

BY SARAH GOODYEAR

**H**anging out on the stoop is one of the best things about living in Brooklyn. These humble flights of stairs leading up to brownstones and row houses are the borough's outdoor living rooms: places to read, gossip, eat, drink, and simply watch the world pass by.

So it's fitting that Thomas Leeser, RA, of LEESER Architecture, incorporated the idea of the stoop into the \$41-million renovation of the BRIC House, home to the organization that is perhaps best known for organizing the Celebrate Brooklyn concerts in Prospect Park each summer.

This stoop is indoors and supersized, a wide flight of concrete steps leading from the café on the ground floor of BRIC's Fulton Street headquarters down to the gallery below. The whole space is wide open, and light streams in from floor-to-ceiling windows at the street level. The renovation's success recently earned it the 2014 MASTerworks Neighborhood Catalyst Award from the Municipal Art Society.

"Architecturally, the challenge was to open this building as much as possible," says Leeser. "There were technical challenges we had to balance and deal with. It's an old building. We had a limited budget. There's a subway that passes underneath." The building was once the Strand Theater, constructed in 1918 in the heart of what is now the Downtown Brooklyn-BAM Cultural District. The 40,000-square-foot renovation includes a theater, a studio for BRIC's television production program, administrative offices, the 3,000-square-foot gallery, and a studio where artists can create site-specific installations. The building's other tenant is UrbanGlass, where some 200 artists working in glass share the facilities. After the renovation they have a 17,000-square-foot fully outfitted glass studio on the third floor, and a gallery and retail outlet at street level.

The building's Neoclassical façade remains basically unchanged, except for a fresh coat of paint and a playful, gigantic sign reading "BRIC" that wraps around the building, hinting at the spontaneous, spirited energy within.

The real signature of the project, however, is that oversized stoop. It is now a hub where people from the neighborhood come to use the Wi-Fi, hang out and read, have coffee, and run into friends. In front of them is whatever exhibition currently occupies the gallery space. Behind them is the café, with murals that change to complement the different theatrical productions.

"You're invited to sit there; you don't have to pay an entrance fee," says Leeser. "We didn't want it to be, 'I'm going to visit a gallery.' It's more, 'I go to get coffee and I see art.' It's like a public square within the building, where things happen." ■

**Sarah Goodyear** writes frequently about cities and the people who live in them. She is a regular contributor to *The Atlantic's* CityLab.com, and author of a novel, *View from a Burning Bridge*. She lives in Brooklyn.



CLIENT: New York City Economic Development Corporation  
 ARCHITECT: LEESER Architecture  
 DESIGN TEAM: Thomas Leeser, RA, Joseph Haberl, RA, Sofia Castricone, RA, Christopher Anderson  
 STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Ysrael A. Seinuk  
 MEP ENGINEER: ADS Engineers  
 CIVIL ENGINEER: Stantec Consulting  
 ACOUSTIC, A/V, IT CONSULTANT: Jaffe Holden  
 LIGHTING: Tillett Lighting Design  
 HAZARDOUS MATERIALS: TRC Environmental  
 FAÇADE CONSULTANT: Superstructures  
 COST ESTIMATING: Stuart-Lynn Company  
 CODE & EXPEDITING: JAM Consultants  
 SUSTAINABLE DESIGN: ADS Engineers; LEESER Architecture  
 GLASS STUDIO DESIGN: Wet Dog Glass  
 ELEVATOR: United Elevator Consultants  
 LEED COMMISSIONING: WSP Flack + Kurtz  
 GRAPHICS: FDT Design  
 CONSTRUCTION MANAGER: Turner Construction Company

(above, top) The freshly-painted 1918 Neoclassical façade sparkles with neon signage that playfully announces BRIC House and the UrbanGlass retail gallery.

(above, bottom) A flight of concrete steps between the ground-floor café and the lower-level gallery serves as an oversized "stoop" to meet friends, hang out, and have a coffee.

# Let's Get Visible

A Staten Island arts organization is getting noticed with a new gallery/shop/office prominently showcased in the busy St. George Ferry Terminal

BY LISA DELGADO

Though arts councils are vital parts of civic life, their offices are often hidden away from public view, says Vincent Appel, principal of Brooklyn-based Of Possible Architectures (OPA). “Other civic institutions are very visible,” he remarks. By contrast, arts councils are “invisible organizations.”

OPA intends to turn that situation around. Its design for the Culture Lounge – a Staten Island Arts council office, gallery, and shop in a prominent spot in the St. George Ferry Terminal – places the organization very much in the public eye. The project aims to serve as a model for other arts councils looking to boost their civic presence.

The council used to be housed in a hard-to-find, tiny basement room in a Snug Harbor building. For its new space, the council chose the bustling ferry terminal on the island’s North Shore because of the high visibility and foot traffic. The free ferry between Manhattan and Staten Island carries more than 22 million passengers a year, mostly tourists enjoying views of the Statue of Liberty. The new 2,500-square-foot Culture Lounge is in a prime location near one of the ferry’s two exits. The preexisting architecture also offers a high degree of transparency: a long row of windows facing the disembarkation area, and a wide-open entrance along the ferry-terminal concourse.

To spotlight the arts council’s work, OPA placed the staff office area along the windows near the ferry exit. “We see our role to be visible to the community,” says the council’s executive director, Melanie Cohn, “so to be physically visible was an exciting idea.” Around the corner is the entrance to the rectangular main space housing the Artist Market – selling goods by local



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artists and designers – and gallery beyond. All the partial-height interior walls are new; choosing AC plywood as the material was a sustainable, inexpensive, time-saving alternative. “We used four-by-ten-foot sheets, so there was almost zero waste and the minimum amount of cuts at installation,” Appel says. The design needed to be thrifty because the budget was tight: around \$434,400, funded by the local government, philanthropic organizations, and Kickstarter donations.

In the office, OPA left the plywood exposed; the unpretentious but attractive material signals to passersby that “there’s something resourceful and beautiful happening here,” Appel explains. But in the main space the walls are coated with gypsum board, creating a typical white-box gallery. The gallery needs to be subdivided for different types of activities, so a storage space houses acoustic curtains and other items that can be pulled out as needed – like a “Swiss army knife,” Appel says.

The gallery has had a steady stream of visitors, typically around 1,400 per week since opening in June. No doubt the number will swell dramatically. Fortunately, the Culture Lounge is located near a couple of large-scale, big-budget developments in the works: SHoP Architects’ Empire Outlets, a 1.1-million-square-foot retail-and-hotel complex slated for completion in 2016; and the New York Wheel project, which includes a park-roofed terminal building and a roughly 60-story-tall Ferris wheel, designed by a team from Perkins Eastman Architects, Starneth, and landscape architect M. Paul Friedberg & Partners, set to open in 2017.

The Culture Lounge’s new, high-profile location is “in front of a tidal wave of development,” Appel remarks. “It’s a cultural project wedging itself in at the beginning of this urban transformation.” ■

Lisa Delgado is a freelance journalist who has written for *e-Oculus*, *The Architect’s Newspaper*, *Architectural Record*, *Blueprint*, and *Wired*, among other publications.



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(above) Staten Island Arts’ gallery and shop occupies a prominent corner along the St. George Ferry Terminal concourse.

(left) The glass-fronted office looks out on the ferry exit.

CLIENT: Staten Island Arts Council; NYC Economic Development Corporation

LEAD DESIGNER: Of Possible Architectures

DESIGN TEAM: Vincent Appel, Brygida Michon, Frankline Romero, Jr., Tomonori Tsujita, Jim Wene, Anette Franek

ARCHITECT-OF-RECORD: Allen Killcoyne Architects

MEP ENGINEER: Irwin Associates

CONSTRUCTION MANAGER: Hunter Roberts Construction Group

# The Play's the Thing

Measure for measure, the Theatre for a New Audience's new Polonsky Shakespeare Center is perfect for classic drama

BY CLAIRE WILSON

To be, or not to be – in Downtown Brooklyn? That was the question Jeffrey Horowitz, founding director of Theatre for a New Audience (TFANA), asked himself when Harvey Lichtenstein, revered visionary of the Brooklyn Academy of Music, suggested he move the company to the BAM Cultural District, which was only just germinating. Horowitz knew there were few Brooklyn subscribers on the rolls at TFANA, whose specialty is Shakespeare and classical theater, and, well, it was 1996.

Moreover, the borough was nowhere near the hipster mecca and cultural beacon it is now.

Fast forward to October 2013, when TFANA finally settled into the gleaming new Polonsky Shakespeare Center (PSC), designed by H3 Hardy Collaboration Architecture. After more than three decades as an itinerant company with no permanent home and no affordable possibilities in Manhattan, the TFANA found the trajectory less than smooth, with multiple false starts,



© Francis D'Amico/ONYX

site changes, 9/11, and the financial meltdown. But Horowitz got exactly the extraordinary theater he wanted. “I wanted a theater for a particular kind of art, one that was right for what we were producing,” he says. “Waiting so long, we got to refine the space and, in the meantime, Brooklyn changed.”

Every production starts at the front door of the 27,500-square-foot complex that is a theatrical experience of its own, beginning with the TFANA Arts Plaza designed by Workshop: Ken Smith Landscape Architect. Curvilinear ribbons of brushed stainless steel set into the paving continue in the terrazzo floor of the glass-fronted, street-level lobby, which features bold banners and wall graphics by Milton Glaser. Located here are the box office and a café by Danny Meyer’s Union Square Events, making the theater inviting to passersby as well as theater-goers.

The theater is accessed from a two-tiered lobby that cantilevers over the ground-floor lobby and is visible through a soaring steel-mullioned glass façade. “It provides a framed view of people inside moving along different levels,” says H3 Partner-in-Charge Geoff Lynch, AIA, LEED AP. “Inside, you feel connected to the outside, making it as accessible as possible.”

The 299-seat theater is modeled on the former Cottesloe Theatre, now the Dorfman Theatre, at London’s National Theatre. Horowitz describes it as a mix of an Elizabethan courtyard theater, which allows for a direct relationship to the audience, and a black box. There are nine stage and seating configurations – including proscenium, runway, thrust, and in-the-round – to accommodate Shakespeare or any of the company’s classical repertoire. The main stage is a soaring 35 feet high, almost double the height of a standard Off-Broadway theater, and a 20-foot trap room supports a series of stage-floor trap doors. “There is no one way to do Shakespeare,” Horowitz says. “The forms keep changing, and you need a space in which the form is open to change.”

Horowitz wished to replicate the intimacy of the Cottesloe so spectators could hear the great language of Shakespeare, whose writing, in his view, is very intimate. “When a dying Lear says, ‘Pray you, undo this button,’ spectators should hear the exhortations of a dying man and see the button,” Horowitz explains. In a room measuring about 72 by 56 feet, intimacy is heightened by two low-hanging balconies that wrap around two-thirds of space. The second balcony is only about 17 feet from the orchestra level, and the seats in both balconies are freestanding so they can be moved close to the rails. “You can see all the faces



(above) The versatile 299-seat theater is a mix of an Elizabethan courtyard theater and a black box.

(opposite page) The two-tiered lobby cantilevers over the ground-floor lobby, and looks out over the TFANA Arts Plaza designed by Workshop: Ken Smith Landscape Architect.

CLIENT: Theatre for a New Audience  
 OWNER: City of New York  
 ARCHITECT: H3 Hardy Collaboration Architecture  
 DESIGN TEAM: Geoff Lynch, AIA, LEED AP, Hugh Hardy, FAIA, David Haakenson, AIA, LEED AP BD+C, Margaret Sullivan, LEED AP, Mercedes Armillas, AIA, LEED AP BD+C, Angela Chi, Kate Ives, Frank Lindemann, Chelsey Morar, Lissa Evans, Lauren Davino  
 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Workshop: Ken Smith Landscape Architect  
 MEP/FP ENGINEER, IT: SECURITY: WSP Flack+Kurtz  
 STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Robert Silman Associates  
 CIVIL ENGINEER: Langan Engineering & Environmental Services  
 LIGHTING: Fisher Marantz Stone  
 ACOUSTICS, A/V: Akustiks  
 FAÇADE: Front, Inc.  
 THEATER CONSULTANT: Theatre Projects Consultants  
 VIBRATION ISOLATION: Wilson Ihring & Associates  
 SUSTAINABILITY: Atelier Ten  
 COMMISSIONING: ADS Engineers  
 GRAPHICS AND SIGNAGE: Milton Glaser Inc.  
 COST ESTIMATOR: Davis Langdon  
 CONSTRUCTION MANAGER: F.J. Sciamè Construction Company

around the room,” he says. “It is epic and intimate. You believe it when characters are talking to each other, and when they are talking to the gods.”

Special structural measures ensure the gods can hear. To mitigate vibrations and noise from subways passing underneath the building, two-thirds of the structure was placed on a 12-inch concrete slab supported by an 8-inch-thick layer of steel-reinforced rubber. Doors at the rear of the stage conceal the backstage area and rehearsal rooms, but can be opened as needed for staging purposes as well.

The interior walls are lined with wood panels and painted a dark gray/black. According to Lynch, the intent was for the walls to record the history of the room in nails and screw holes left by former productions and things long removed. “Most clients want a brand new finish,” he says, “but Jeffrey wanted the room to have a soul.”

The PSC is the first New York City theater dedicated to classical drama since the Vivian Beaumont opened at Lincoln Center in 1965. It is also among the newest institutions to rise from a collection of crummy parking lots within the Downtown Brooklyn Cultural District. Anchored by the Brooklyn Academy of Music and its new Fisher Theater, also designed by H3, neighbors include the Mark Morris Dance Center, the Harvey Theater, and several multidisciplinary arts centers and art non-profits. The Barclay Center is nearby, and residential development is hurtling along.

Frank Gehry, FAIA, was on board early on to collaborate with Hugh Hardy, FAIA, but stepped aside after the city changed the theater location for a third time, costing a five-year delay and significant redesign costs. It was an amicable parting of the ways, says Lynch. “The economy wasn’t doing well,” he notes, “and with two architects on a tight budget, there wasn’t enough money for him to have fun.”

But, all’s well that ends well. ■

Claire Wilson writes for the *New York Times*.

# More Than Meets the Eye in a New Brooklyn Park

Bushwick Inlet Park has a soccer field and high-tech recreational building that have amazing environmental features – and visitors are getting a kick out of it

BY JANET ADAMS STRONG

**B**ushwick Inlet Park had its beginnings in 2005, when northwest Brooklyn was rezoned for higher density residential. Discussions with local residents at the only available meeting space, Metropolitan Pool, where the smell of chlorine wafted in the air, reinforced the need for a community center. Since the area historically lacked open space and riverfront access, and because the recently rehabilitated McCarren Pool proved an overwhelming success, the 6.2-acre parcel was designated a soccer field with further provisions for a community center and passive recreation.

Today, the once-contaminated riverfront parking lot is the most heavily used park in Brooklyn, with an estimated 1,000 visitors daily. Moreover, this significant green space roofs a significant dual-purpose building designed by Kiss + Cathcart, Architects: a 15,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art, sustainable facility that is the showpiece of the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation.

The project was divided into two phases, so that while the building was being developed, the soccer field could be enjoyed by the neighborhood. (Indeed, it was used even during construction, when

soccer balls were routinely kicked, and returned, over the fence.) Beneath the durable synthetic turf is a giant cistern that collects rainwater, slowly draining into the ground rather than burdening the city sewer system. Water management is a key feature of the project throughout.

In Phase II a small riverfront esplanade and the building inland along Kent Avenue sandwich the soccer field. Along the water, Starr Whitehouse Landscape Architects and Planners designed a grassy knoll and garden with low-maintenance native plants, all irrigated by the cistern. The park is the first step in an ambitious 40-acre public greenway that will, in time, stretch continuously from North 3rd Street two miles north to Queens.

Bushwick Inlet Park has “a pretty tight program with multiple uses by different people, and a very complex, high-performance building,” explains Kevin Quinn, director of architecture at the Parks Department. “But when you look at it, there’s no



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(above) A gently-sloping “hill” conceals the park-side of the community center; half-way up, an outdoor plaza leads to two multipurpose community rooms.

(opposite page, right) View of the soccer field, waterfront park, and the Manhattan skyline from the top of the hill.

(below) The building fits with the neighborhood in scale and materials; photovoltaics atop the pergola provide nearly half of the building’s power.



©Paul Warchol



sense of everything being crunched together.” In fact, from the field, there’s no sense of a building at all – just a hill.

The architects did not want to relinquish a third of the site for the building, so they continued the park over its roof. The solution was “completely obvious,” notes Gregory Kiss. Stairs and ADA-accessible ramps zigzag up the slope through a variety of spaces, including a playground with spray fountains, an outdoor plaza opening off interior community rooms, and, at the top, a shade pergola with benches, cooling breezes, and sweeping river and skyline views. What a wonderful public amenity in an otherwise flat part of town!

A railing of abstracted stainless-steel “grass” protects the roof. Almost everything here is multifunctional, with recreational features serving doubly for environmental performance. Ground source heat pumps with 400-foot-deep closed loops do the heating and cooling efficiently, silently, and invisibly, leaving the roof uncluttered by HVAC equipment. Photovoltaics atop the pergola provide nearly half of the building’s power. And because everything is electric, there are no gas boilers for hot water; nothing is burned on site.

Hard surface water runoff is captured in a 15,000-gallon tank for roof-lawn irrigation (a Phase II supplement to the cistern beneath the field), so that high summer use of the spray fountains replenishes supply when the grass needs it most. Site maintenance requires no potable water. The green roof insulates the building against western sun exposure and prevailing winds while, beneath its overhang, service vehicles and equipment are garaged out of view. Everything fits neatly together in this self-supporting living organism of a building.

Just as the park disguises the building, the building hides the park along the street, integrating with the neighborhood in scale and materials. To the north stands a much-needed maintenance and operations facility for north Brooklyn’s parks; it is the nerve center for the developing riverfront park system.

The building’s southern public half is distinctly public, with large windows and vertical fins oriented north-south to shade the sunny corner. Housed inside are offices for the Open Space Alliance (OSA) for North Brooklyn and two multipurpose community rooms that can be subdivided and opened to the outdoor plaza. A full-service kitchen maximizes potential use. “We’re gauging demand and community interests,” explains OSA Executive Director Ed Janoff, “so we can slowly layer in program over time.”

The abundance of natural light in this lawned-over building is remarkable. Virtually all occupied spaces open to outdoor views; the lobby glows unexpectedly from a glass-block clerestory set into the base of the outdoor plaza halfway up the hill. “Tree root” chandeliers designed by Kiss from recycled aluminum tubing allude to the green roof above and offer supplemental illumination. But 90% of the time there is no need for artificial lighting. A screen

in the lobby displays the metrics of water and energy harvesting, recording give-and-take with the city grid.

“We always want to understand the best solution technically,” says Kiss. “We don’t include sustainable features for their own sake, but because we believe they play a significant role in any design process. It’s better to try for the best and then scale back, than start with business as usual and try to make it less bad.”

This architectural achievement is a product of an enlightened attitude in city government that procures architects not just by lowest fee, but for their ability to elegantly and efficiently solve problems. The outcome demonstrates how great a contribution architecture can make, as Bushwick Inlet Park will benefit the community and environment for generations to come. ■

**Janet Adams Strong, Ph.D.**, is an architectural historian and author, and a principal of Strong and Partners communications.

**OWNER:** New York City Department of Parks and Recreation; Rande Stewart, Project Manager

**ARCHITECT:** Kiss + Cathcart, Architects

**DESIGN TEAM:** Gregory Kiss, RA, Clare Mifflin, RA, LEED AP, Jeff Miles, AIA, LEED AP, Heather McKinstry, RA, LEED AP

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Starr Whitehouse Landscape Architects and Planners

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:** Robert Silman Associates  
**CIVIL, ENVIRONMENTAL, MARINE ENGINEER:**

Langan Engineering & Environmental Services

**MEP ENGINEER:** A.G. Consulting Engineering

**LIGHTING DESIGN:** AWA Lighting Designers

**GREEN ROOF CONSULTANT:** Roofmeadow

**SITE ENGINEERING:** Wesler-Cohen Associates

**LEED (DESIGN):** Community Environmental Center/CEC

**LEED (CONSTRUCTION), ENERGY MODELING, COMMISSIONING AGENT:** Taitem Engineering

**RAINWATER HARVEST:** Geosyntec Consultants

**COST ESTIMATOR:** Accu-Cost Construction Consultants

**SPECIFICATIONS:** Construction Specifications, Inc.

**CODE EXPEDITER:** Design 2147, Limited

**GENERAL CONSTRUCTION:** Perfetto Contracting Co.

**ELECTRICAL:** Dynamic Electric Systems

**PLUMBING:** Lafata-Corallo

**PLUMBING/HEATING/HVAC:** CDE Air Conditioning Co.

**PHASE 1: CONTRACTOR:** William A. Gross Construction Associates

**PHASE 2: CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT:** URS Corporation



## Musicians' Magnet

Stay tuned for a unique recording and performance center to be headquartered in a century-old former sawdust factory in Brooklyn

BY SARAH GOODYEAR

They used to make sawdust in the building that stands at the corner of North 6th and Wythe Streets in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Soon, only-in-Brooklyn-style music will be made inside the brick shell that has been standing for a century. Scheduled to open in 2015, the home of the Original Music Workshop (OMW) will be a performance and recording space for new music ranging from contemporary classical to jazz, unlike any other in the city.

“The development model for Williamsburg is tabula rasa,” says Peter Zuspan of Bureau V, the fledgling Brooklyn-based design firm that won the commission to create the space, along with architect-of-record SLAB Architecture. He’s right: The streets around OMW’s new home are filled with glassy new condos that have replaced the sturdy, straightforward industrial buildings of the neighborhood’s past. This one is being reinvented instead. “We thought it might be nice to keep it,” says Zuspan.

OMW is the brainchild of Kevin Dolan, a former attorney who has long been involved with musical endeavors as an amateur performer and composer. He founded the non-profit organization to create something unique in New York City’s arts scene. The building being refitted to house it is integral to the organization’s quest to nurture contemporary musical artists, who have to hustle to survive and thrive in today’s highly competitive performance world.

(above, left) The old factory’s brick walls will be festooned with new art along with faded signage of the original tenant.

(above, right) Rendering of the lobby.

CLIENT: Original Music Workshop  
 DESIGN ARCHITECT: Bureau V  
 DESIGN TEAM: Peter Zuspan, Alex Pincus, Stella Lee, Alexis Burson, Brandt Graves, Clio Maudlin, Jaron Popko  
 ARCHITECT-OF-RECORD: SLAB Architecture  
 ACOUSTIC, AUDIO/VISUAL, THEATRICAL, LIGHTING, FIRE CONSULTANT: Arup  
 CLIENT REPRESENTATIVE: Eduardo Finkielstzejn  
 STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: RSE Associates  
 MEP ENGINEER: PLUS GROUP Consulting Engineering  
 GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER: Carlin-Simpson & Associates  
 KITCHEN CONSULTANT: KDS Consulting & Design  
 CODE CONSULTANT/ EXPEDITOR: Code LLC  
 COST ESTIMATOR: Davis Langdon  
 GENERAL CONTRACTOR: Alcon Builders Group



Outside, the brick walls are emblazoned with new art as well as the faded signage of the original tenant. Inside, the designers – in partnership with engineering firm Arup – are creating a space with acoustic integrity, protected from the rumbling of the street by a “box in box” construction.

This double-height room, framed by geometric perforated-steel panels, will be a versatile if simple theater that can seat 170 in an intimate, chamber-hall setting without fly spaces, wings, or curtains. (About 350 will fit standing.) It will also serve as a rehearsal venue and recording studio that can accommodate a 70-piece orchestra. All the audio systems will be state of the art.

Under its creative director, Paola Prestini, OMW has been forming an identity even before the building’s completion, with multiple performances taking place at the construction site and elsewhere. They are available for viewing online (<http://o-m-w.org>), in a preview of OMW’s commitment to stream shows live once the space is open.

The building will also be home to a two-story restaurant that will draw in people from outside and encourage music lovers to linger. “We’re not going to kick you out after the concert,” says Zuspan, adding that the music offered on a single night might range from heady, post-conservatory fare to more pop-influenced acts. “We want this to be an instrument that gets used and abused.” ■

Sarah Goodyear writes frequently about cities and the people who live in them. She is a regular contributor to *The Atlantic*’s CityLab.com, and author of a novel, *View from a Burning Bridge*. She lives in Brooklyn.

# Power to the People

In the South Bronx, an off-the-grid community-garden-pavilion prototype is designed with Hurricane Sandy's lessons in mind

BY LISA DELGADO

Enjoying a cultural event or relaxing with neighbors in an urban garden can be a welcome way of recharging one's batteries. A new prototype for a community-garden pavilion by TEN Arquitectos, with Buro Happold, takes the idea literally. In case of a neighborhood power outage, the structure will offer solar electricity and Wi-Fi so people can charge their phones and access the Internet.

Design work began in 2013, not long after Hurricane Sandy left large swaths of the city without power. Emergency preparedness was on everyone's mind. The New York Restoration Project (NYRP), a nonprofit organization that owns and maintains 52 community gardens in high-need neighborhoods throughout the city, and the eco-conscious Urban Air Foundation recruited TEN Arquitectos to design a new garden-shelter prototype. The first built was a "casita" (meaning "little house" in Spanish), a type of garden structure popular in Puerto Rico, the motherland of many residents in the Willis Avenue Community Garden's Mott Haven neighborhood in the South Bronx.

The architects set out to create a sustainable and resilient design. It would need to be easily reconfigured to meet a community's changing needs, because for a garden to be "a relevant civic space for the community, it has to be able to adapt," remarks Andrea Steele, AIA, managing partner in TEN Arquitectos' NYC office. And including an off-the-grid power source would mean the structure could offer battery-stored electricity on a daily basis and, most importantly, during blackouts.

Her firm created a kit of parts composed of low-cost, off-the-shelf construction elements that offers a community its own choice of design from an array of possibilities. The Willis Avenue garden needed a casita, but other NYRP gardens might want a gazebo, garden shed, or trellis. The organization hopes to use the kit to create structures in all its community gardens, according to NYRP Executive Director Deborah Marton.

The design is a study in simplicity. The main components are wooden posts, beams, and battens, joined with metal connectors and fasteners – items found in hardware stores. (In fact, Home Depot donated construction materials for the Willis Avenue pavilion.) The components assemble to make 12-foot cubes that can be combined in a variety of configurations. Timber-slatted infill panels can form walls and roofs, and a translucent roof can be added above a panel for additional weather protection.

The casita in the Bronx was constructed in just three weeks, with contractor FGI Corporation building the superstructure, and community volunteers and others assembling the infill panels. It consists of three cube modules in a row, a configuration that lets it serve well as an outdoor classroom or simply a shady spot for local residents to relax. The space doubles as a stage, too, as it did during last summer's Arts in the Gardens, a free series of cultural



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CLIENT: New York Restoration Project  
 ARCHITECT: TEN Arquitectos  
 DESIGN TEAM: Enrique Norten, FAIA, Andrea Steele, AIA, Joe Murray, James Carse, AICP, LEED AP, Harry Byron  
 ENGINEER: Buro Happold  
 SUSTAINABILITY CONSULTANT: Urban Air Foundation/Code Green  
 CONTRACTOR: FGI Corporation

(above) The prototype "casita" was put to good use this summer at the New York Restoration Project's Willis Avenue Community Garden.

events presented by the NYRP and the Bronx Museum. (The museum is also hosting an exhibition on the pavilion's design, "Rethinking the Garden Casita," running through January 11, 2015.)

Photovoltaic panels and Wi-Fi will be added once funding is secured. A community source of power and Web access is especially important here, because low-income neighborhoods are usually hit hardest in emergencies. "I love how this design turns the tables," Steele remarks. "It empowers this garden. It gives the community a touchstone or a beacon when the buildings are dark." ■

Lisa Delgado is a freelance journalist who has written for *e-Oculus*, *The Architect's Newspaper*, *Architectural Record*, *Blueprint*, and *Wired*, among other publications.



(left) Stapleton Library: Passersby get an expansive view of the new extension's long, high-ceilinged great room.

## Branching Out

There's much more to today's public libraries than books, and architects are adding to their shelf life

BY RICHARD STAUB

It goes against libraries' traditional image to become news stories. But for the last several years, two unfolding public dramas have concerned libraries. Consider the controversial and finally doomed plan to turn the book stacks of the New York Public Library's (NYPL) landmarked main branch, the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, into a Foster + Partners-designed circulating library. To help pay for it, two nearby facilities, the Mid-Manhattan Library, the main circulating branch and the busiest in the system, and the Science, Industry and Business Library (SIBL), were to be closed and sold.

Under a new plan, SIBL will move into the Schwarzman Building, which will get renovated, up-to-code book stacks under Bryant Park. But the Mid-Manhattan Library, which NYPL President Anthony M. Marx has said was never an inspiring place, will be completely renovated to include a media and computer lab and a large adult education center.

Libraries were also in the news in 2012 when, acting as community gathering places and information centers, they were a stabilizing force in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. That crisis highlighted a shift noted in "Branches of Opportunity," a 2013 study by the Center for an Urban Future, which considered the evolving role of branch libraries. Their use has increased 59% over the last decade. "During that time, 48 different branches citywide have at least doubled annual attendance at programs, ranging from computer literacy classes to workshops on entrepreneurship, while 18 have more than doubled their circulation." It continues: "Although they are often thought of as cultural institutions, the reality is that the public libraries are a key component of the city's human capital system." They are part of the city's social infrastructure and should be valued as such. Note, however, that between 2002 and 2011, city funding for libraries decreased by 8%.

### Stapleton Library, Staten Island, NY

CLIENT: New York Public Library; NYC Department of Design + Construction

ARCHITECT: Andrew Berman Architect

DESIGN TEAM: Andrew D. Berman, FAIA, Dan Misri, RA, Vinci So

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: WRT New York

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Gilsanz Murray Steficek

M/E/P ENGINEER: IP Group Engineers

CIVIL ENGINEER: Langan Engineering

LIGHTING DESIGN: Cline Bettridge Bernstein

CONSTRUCTION MANAGER: NYC Department of Design + Construction

GENERAL CONTRACTOR: Plaza Construction

Indeed, it is the library's role in the community that keeps coming into play as new branch facilities and additions are being built by the city's three library systems: NYPL, which serves Manhattan, the Bronx, and Staten Island, and the separate systems in Brooklyn and Queens.

All of them were created by architects chosen through the NYC Department of Design + Construction's (DDC) Design Excellence Program. What is noticeable is how different they are from the 67 Carnegie libraries built between 1901 and 1923, which are the foundations of the three systems. With the majority created by McKim, Meade & White and Carrère and Hastings, these sober masonry buildings were designed in a variety of historic revival styles as civic monuments to learning and uplift.

"Libraries are now an active presence in communities, and instead of just being about solitary pursuits are also places where people connect," says DDC Commissioner Feniosky Peña-Mora. "Each new library project has to take on the specific needs of its community, whether it's in Queens, where many immigrants need to be introduced to how libraries can help them succeed, or Staten Island, where they are beacons for underserved communities."

### A well-used civic presence expands

Three award-winning buildings in middle- or low-income neighborhoods are illustrative. With generous glass walls and straightforward entrances, they are meant to be as welcoming as possible. Their programs are similar: separate spaces devoted to children, teens, and adults; a community room for meetings, cultural events, and training



(above) Stapleton Library: The 1907 Carrère and Hastings-designed building now houses the children's area.

programs; and information areas and separate offices for staff. For active teenagers there are open, ground-floor spaces where they can do homework and “hang” until their parents return home from work. These are near the entrance and windows so young patrons can come and go, see and be seen, without disturbing others. Yes, patrons will find plenty of books, too.

“The Stapleton Library had needed to grow for a long time,” says Andrew Berman, FAIA, about the Carnegie-funded, Carrère and Hastings-designed building on Staten Island. His firm, Andrew Berman Architects, restored, renovated the single-story 1907 building, and expanded it with a 7,000-square-foot addition. “Decades ago it had been part of a bustling town center. But as the area went into decline, only the library remained as a well-used civic presence.”

The original 5,700-square-foot building has a corner site, and the addition extends a long glass wall on the side street, angled inward on two sides towards the new main entrance. Passersby get an extended look at what they will find inside – a long, high-ceilinged great room that continues the Carnegie building’s grand scale. Lined with seven-foot-high bookshelves, it is divided in the center by a rectangular volume that rises the full height of the space and contains a community room, staff offices, and bathrooms. The community room has seven-foot-high glass walls on either side, with translucent panels above that ring the volume’s perimeter. A timber frame and ceiling contrast with the room’s cool glass expanses and concrete floor.

“We wanted to extend the image of the library as a contemporary form,” says Berman, “so we put all the books within reach and introduced long reading tables.” The children’s area is in the historic section, which is now painted white except for the restored wood molding and paneling. The section for teens is on the street side of new building with the adult section on the far side. Daylight comes in through generous rectangular skylights, the vertical ribbons of windows on the adult side, the window wall, and the original large arched windows.

### The library is your oyster

Not too far away is the Mariners Harbor Branch Library, a new, 10,000-square-foot facility that borders a residential neighborhood on one side and an industrial zone on the other. “This is a low-income neighborhood that desperately needed a library,” says Anna Torriani, AIA, a principal with A\*PT Architecture (formerly Atelier Pagnamenta Torriani), which designed the project. “Our research



(above) Mariners Harbor Branch Library: An open oyster shell inspired the design, hearkening back to the community’s oystering history.

(right) Mariners Harbor Branch Library: A skylight runs the length of the building, creating a light-filled central circulation spine.

**Mariners Harbor Branch Library, Staten Island, NY**  
 CLIENT: New York Public Library; NYC Department of Design + Construction

ARCHITECT:  
 A\*PT Architecture (formerly Atelier Pagnamenta Torriani)

DESIGN TEAM: Lorenzo Pagnamenta, AIA, Anna Torriani, AIA, Wasmiya Tan, Raffaele Stefani, Damien Romanens, Nam Suk Oh, Juan Carlos Salas Ballestin, Caterina Inderbitzin, Petya Ivanova, Felix Lederberger, Roxane Bervini, Anais Iglesias, Nuria Forques

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:  
 Weidlinger and Associates

CIVIL ENGINEER:  
 Michael Wein, PE

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:  
 SCAPE/Landscape Architecture

MEP, LEED: Plus Group

LIGHTING DESIGN:  
 Fernando Soler

CODE: Berzak-Schoen

COST: Faithful + Gould

SPECIFICATIONS:  
 Construction Specifications

CONTRACTORS: Plaza Construction Corporation; Ace Contracting; EF Pro Contracting; Adco Electric Corp.



revealed that the area had once been a thriving oystering community, and the image of the open oyster shell inspired the building’s form.” The side walls bend inward slightly in front and back, and the roof slopes upward from both sides, meeting at a skylight that runs the length of the building. The building height slopes lower on the residential side to match the scale of adjacent homes.

The straightforward circulation spine runs beneath the skylight with the glass-walled community room and support spaces on the residential side, and the information desk and book-lined areas for adults, teens, and children on the other. The spine is separated from the reading areas by a low, bright red counter with a row of computer monitors on top, and it concludes with an entrance to a



©Eduard Hueber/Arch Photo

landscaped back patio. “The librarians asked for a one-story building that was as open as possible, so patrons could easily find their way and staff could have quick oversight,” says Torriani. “We used glass to demystify what happens inside and enrich the space with subtle daylong shifts in natural light and change of seasons. There are three smaller skylights in the reading areas, and we embedded seashell fragments in the concrete floor as quiet hints about its history.” Animating the interior are large-scale graphics and vibrantly colored stools, chairs, and sofas. The building has a LEED Silver designation pending.

**Begin search here**

The 18,000-square-foot Glen Oaks Library in Queens, designed by Marble Fairbanks, replaces an undistinguished, one-story brick building with a light-filled, two-story facility that meets LEED Gold standards. Its much-expanded program serves a very diverse immigrant community. “The site is between an industrial and residential area, but we wanted the building to have a civic presence while deferring to the scale of its residential neighbors,” says firm principal Karen Fairbanks, AIA, LEED AP. “We set it apart on a small plaza and put a large of portion of the building below ground – it fills the lot – which includes the adult reading area, meeting room, and staff offices. High ceilings, three skylights set into the plaza, and a



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(above) Glen Oaks Library: The second-floor Children’s Reading Room sports a ceiling-mounted art installation by Janet Zweig as a part of the Percent for Art program, which cycles through a series of “unanswerable questions.”

(left) Glen Oaks Library: On the façade, the word “SEARCH” is projected onto the glass curtain wall by sunlight filtered through a film with cut-out lettering set in the parapet.

**Glen Oaks Library, Queens, NY**

- CLIENT: Queens Borough Public Libraries; NYC Department of Design + Construction
- ARCHITECT: Marble Fairbanks
- DESIGN TEAM: Scott Marble, AIA, Karen Fairbanks, AIA, LEED AP, Robert Booth, RA, LEED AP, Mallory Shure, RA, LEED AP, Jake Nishimura, Eric Ng, AIA, Adam Marcus, RA, LEED AP, Stacey Murphy, Katie Shima, Christopher Kroner, Andrew Colopy, RA, Jane Lea, AIA, Darren Zhou, Jennifer Downey, LEED AP, Alexis Coir
- LIGHTING DESIGN: Richard Shaver Architectural Lighting
- LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: SCAPE/Landscape Architecture
- MEP ENGINEER: Plus Group
- STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: Buro Happold Consulting Engineers
- GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER: Langan Engineering
- GENERAL CONTRACTOR: Summit Construction Service Group

generous double-height opening between the first and ground floors make it feel quite open.”

Except for the side facing the industrial area, the walls are either clear glass or have channel glazing. Putting the children’s area on the second floor allows librarians to make sure that only adults who are with children are using the space. Teens are on the first floor. The top of the front façade declares the building’s purpose with the very 21st-century word “SEARCH” projected onto the glass curtain wall by sunlight that passes through a film with cut-out lettering set in the parapet. The word varies in position, scale, and legibility according to time of day, amount of sunlight, and season. Thirty different languages are spoken in the neighborhood, and the architects acknowledge them with a graphic film pattern on the ground-floor side windows that reads from a distance as a vertical abstract pattern, but up close as the word “search” in all of the area’s languages.

It is a given that library facilities will continue to change. What form they take has recently been examined by the Center for an Urban Future and the Architectural League of New York, which co-sponsored “Re-envisioning Branch Libraries,” a design study underway by five interdisciplinary teams including architects, real estate developers, and librarians. The study looks at the financial, programmatic, and architectural possibilities for branch libraries, and its insights and conclusions will offer a renewed sense of purpose for New York’s essential library systems. ■

Richard Staub is a marketing consultant and writer who focuses on issues important to the design and building community.

# Page Turners

The debate about the relevance or obsolescence of public libraries in the 21st century is pretty much settled. One need look no further than New York City's three public library systems, Brooklyn, Queens, and New York. Working with the NYC Department of Design + Construction's Design Excellence Program, architectural firms are currently renovating, expanding, or building new more than 20 library branches in all five boroughs. Here is a small sampling.



▲ Marpillero Pollak Architects: Elmhurst Library  
Queens, NY (2015): An Active Design Case Study, the new 30,515-square-foot library celebrates horizontal and vertical circulation. Two suspended structural glass reading rooms enable visitors to simultaneously position themselves within the building and engage the neighborhood. This project is on track to receive a LEED Silver rating.



▲ Work Architecture Company/WORKac:  
Kew Gardens Hills Branch Library  
Flushing, Queens (2016): The 10,000-square-foot library is organized around a perimeter of open rooms for adults, teens, children, and staff – topped with a green roof, completing a continuous “loop of green” with the building's side gardens. The project received a 2009 Public Design Commission Design Excellence Award.



▲ Steven Holl Architects: Hunters Point Community Library  
Queens West Development at Hunters Point, Queens, NY (2016): The glowing presence of the new library, in a landscape designed by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates along the waterfront, joins the Pepsi sign and the “Long Island” sign at the old Gantry as a new East River beacon. This branch will provide much-needed library services to a burgeoning neighborhood. The project received a 2010 Public Design Commission Design Excellence Award.



▲ Snøhetta: Far Rockaway Community Library  
Far Rockaway, Queens, NY (2017): The new, 18,000-square-foot building will double the size of the small library it is replacing, and continue the library's role as both an important community resource, and, when needed, an emergency center, as the original did during Hurricane Sandy. The project received a 2013 Public Design Commission Design Excellence Award.

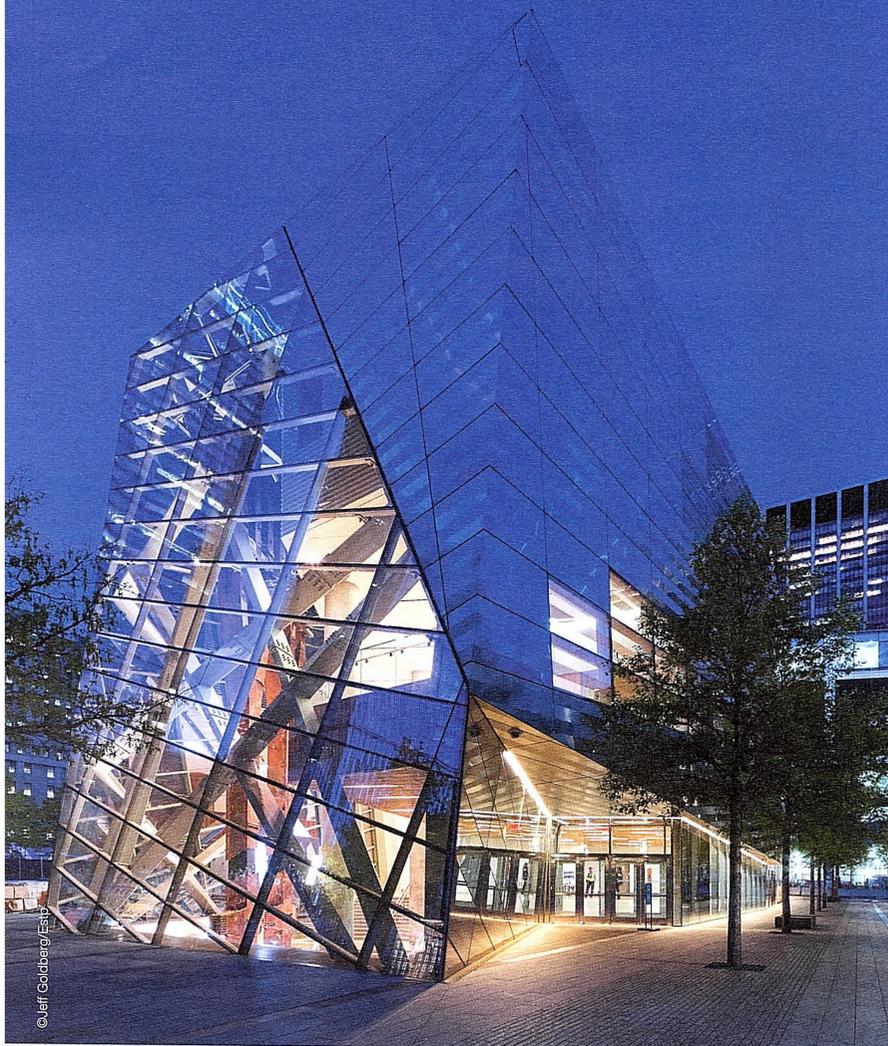


◀ Rice+Lipka Architects: Woodstock Branch Library  
Bronx, NY (2016): The three-story, 19,000-square-foot McKim, Mead & White-designed library in the Morrisania neighborhood will sport a new, contemporary identity for the 1914 branch with a fully accessible, LEED-certified interior.

# Subterranean Subtexts at the National 9/11 Memorial Museum

The programming of this museum is controversial, but its architects have provided a setting conducive to contemplation and healing

BY BILL MILLARD



©Jeff Goldberg/ES&P

Like Holocaust memorials and other spaces that speak of the unspeakable, the National 9/11 Memorial Museum addresses George Santayana's warning: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (and the brief, aspirational equivalent: "Never again"). Preserving memory is the first step, advanced on different fronts by the museum's architecture, exhibition design, and curation. Fostering local life beyond those memories – essential to a balanced mission in a site that Snøhetta Principal Craig Dykers, FAIA, says "is as much about September 12 as it is about September 11" – takes longer to assess.

Urban context and connectivity, says Dykers, are guiding concepts throughout the museum-pavilion-plaza complex. Keystone-shaped in plan, Snøhetta's 50,000-square-foot, three-story pavilion sits between the two memorial pools, guiding pedestrian flow toward the plaza center. Its full urbanistic effect should emerge, he adds, when local construction ends and a river-to-river Fulton Street passes just north of the pavilion, creating a pedestrian corridor organizing the neighborhood: "Our pavilion will be almost like the arch in Washington Square."

Its signature striations, crossing the borders of glass and stainless steel, reward close observation of reflected light, clouds, and neighboring buildings. Inside, visitors pass through mercifully brief airport-style security into an atrium full of daylight, neutral colors, and perspectival shifts dominated by two rescued trident columns. Dykers points to favorite spots where the pavilion's mullions, viewed from the escalator, momentarily align with those of One World Trade Center, and where people outdoors press their faces to the glass, reminding visitors descending into the museum of the vibrant urban life above. The pavilion, he says, is very much a building of the present: "It's not about people who have passed away. It's not about people in the future who are creating commerce in the skyscrapers. It's about you, at this place, at this moment in time."

## Circulation crafted with emotion in mind

At a second, below-grade lobby, the visitor enters the realm designed by Davis Brody Bond (DBB), with exhibitions reflecting the work of Thinc Design, Local Projects, and Layman Design. A "ribbon ramp" descends, opening at a switchback to an observation point above the Foundation Hall, then down a staircase beside the Survivors' Stairs (an avenue of escape for many) to the spacious exhibition areas 70 feet below grade. The long ramp prepares the visitor for a mythic descent into the

(opposite page) The museum pavilion has a crystalline presence on the memorial plaza.

(right, top) Two rescued trident columns from the original Twin Towers rise forcefully within the pavilion.

(right, middle) View of the South Tower footprint from the upper lobby overlook.

(right, bottom) Approach to the Slurry Wall overlook from the introductory exhibit.

underworld. The ramp, says Mark Wagner, AIA, associate partner and project architect at DBB, recalls the construction ramp where workers entered the excavation site, a daily procession rendering everyone “just speechless every time.” Ceilings slope to track the ramp’s path, forcing perspective so that tension subtly increases with movement toward the historical exhibits, while returning visitors emerge into an upliftingly broader space.

The circulation within the 121,000-square-foot museum creates options, lending a narrative integrity to even an incomplete visit. Large artifacts are arranged on the bedrock exhibition level, while the North Tower box-beam column footprints surround an enclosure for the historic exhibitions. The “In Memoriam” room occupying the South Tower footprint takes a digital approach to the problem of representing so many victims: visitors can call up images and audio of loved ones’ voices in an automated queue. Entering the historic segment requires a deliberate movement past a threshold; the architects recognized that some visitors will choose not to cross that doorway.

Within the historical exhibition, zones dedicated to the day of the attacks, their background, and the recovery efforts are subdivided so that visitors control the rhythm of the experience: when the images, sirens, and newscast loops approach sensory overload, another segment (e.g., a lighter-toned room on the Twin Towers’ role in cinema, or Minoru Yamasaki’s architectural model) offers lower emotional temperature. Alcoves with discreet warning signage cordon off the most disturbing material, including photos of people jumping from the towers. “If it’s becoming too much for you,” Wagner says, you can exit the historical exhibits. “We thought it was very important to provide flexibility for a range of emotions.” That spacious central chamber surrounding the signed and decorated Last Column removed from the site assumes a rejuvenating aura after the full encounter with reminders of sacrifice and resilience.

### Not ordinary museum fatigue

“The farther away from an event you get in time, the more difficult it is to tell that story accurately, and to convey the true essence of that story,” ob-



©Jeff Goldberg/Esto

### 9/11 Memorial Museum

- ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING: Davis Brody Bond
- DESIGN TEAM: Steven M. Davis, FAIA, Carl F. Krebs, AIA, Mark Wagner, AIA
- EXHIBITION DESIGN: Thinc Design; Local Projects; Layman Design
- LIGHTING DESIGN: Fisher Marantz Stone
- STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: WSP Cantor Seinuk
- STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS: SLURRY WALL: Guy Nordenson and Associates; Simpson Gumpertz & Heger
- GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER: SLURRY WALL: Mueser Rutledge Consulting Engineers
- GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER: Langan Engineering & Environmental Services
- BLAST DESIGN: Weidlinger Associates Consulting Engineers
- MEP/VERTICAL TRANSPORTATION: Jaros Baum & Bolles
- CODE CONSULTANT: Code Consultants, Inc.
- ACOUSTICAL AND VIBRATION DESIGN: Cerami & Associates
- GRAPHICS: C&G Partners
- HISTORIC PRESERVATION: Higgins & Quasebarth
- SECURITY DESIGN: Arup
- SUSTAINABILITY CONSULTANT: Viridian Energy & Environmental
- BUILDING ENVELOPE AND WATERPROOFING: Wiss, Janey Elstner, Associates
- SPECIFICATIONS: Construction Specifications, Inc.
- COST ESTIMATING: Faithful + Gould
- CONTACTORS: Port Authority of New York and New Jersey; Bovis Lend Lease



©James Ewing Photography



©James Ewing Photography

serves Wagner. “If you really want to never forget, this is how we’re going to do it.” The museum’s design is premised on understanding, he says, that “this is not a complete or finalized story.”

One can note this space’s gravity, its respect for the site’s major icons, its inversion of the tower-footprint pools above into visually suspended volumes clad in foamed aluminum, its measured pace in preparing a viewer to confront unimaginable things – and still recoil. Isn’t immersion in 9/11 likely to attract aficionados of the macabre, a tribe as unhinged as pilgrims to Dealey Plaza’s grassy knoll? Can the museum serve memory’s imperatives without also serving up memories as



terrorism porn? The architecture is hardly responsible for such effects; still, it must consider them. The museum's inevitable detractors have weighed in early, perhaps crowding out appreciation of its strengths and of difficult elements it refuses to forget: the nature of the perpetrators (a flak-magnet topic presented forthrightly, in a dark, quiet exhibition chamber) and the documentation that U.S. officials had warnings.

Some decisions resulted from the site's three-dimensional complexity, with long, wedge-shaped spaces wrapping the PATH tunnels, or from legal conditions. The Section 106 Programmatic Agreement, requiring under the National Historic Preservation Act that projects using federal funds consider historically important elements, Wagner and partner Carl F. Krebs, AIA, point out, identified in situ elements – the slurry wall and box-column bases – for preservation and access. The design team also treated the Survivors' Stairs as an important artifact. They needed to honor the perspectives of victims, survivors, responders, families, neighbors, citizens national and global, and visitors who may approach this space hesitatingly or embrace its full catharsis. The design helps these artifacts speak purposefully rather than sentimentally, jingoistically, or deafeningly. Typical visit lengths have outstripped initial estimates, Wagner reports. If this trend holds up, it may imply that the design succeeds at easing a challenging experience. An alternate explanation is that early visitors find this content mesmerizing, perhaps ghoulishly so. Whether remembering the past is

Foundation Hall looking south with the Last Column and Slurry Wall.

#### 9/11 Memorial Museum Pavilion

ARCHITECT AND INTERIOR DESIGNER: Snøhetta  
 DESIGN TEAM: Craig Dykers, AIA, MNAL, FRIBA, Aaron Dorf, RA, NCARB, Anne Lewison, AIA  
 ARCHITECT-OF-RECORD: Adamson Associates  
 STRUCTURAL, MEP, FIRE PROTECTION, SUSTAINABILITY ENGINEER: Buro Happold  
 BLAST ENGINEERING: Weidlinger Associates Consulting Engineers  
 LIGHTING: Fisher Marantz Stone  
 ACOUSTICS, AUDIO/VISUAL, SECURITY: Arup  
 VERTICAL TRANSPORTATION: Barker Mohandas  
 GRAPHICS, SIGNAGE: C&G Partnership  
 FIRE & LIFE SAFETY: Code Consultants, Inc.  
 COST CONSULTANT: Davis Langdon  
 CLADDING CONSULTANT: Front Inc.  
 IT: Shen Milson & Wilke  
 LEED CONSULTANT: Viridian Energy & Environmental  
 GENERAL CONTRACTOR/ CONSTRUCTION MANAGER: Bovis Lend Lease

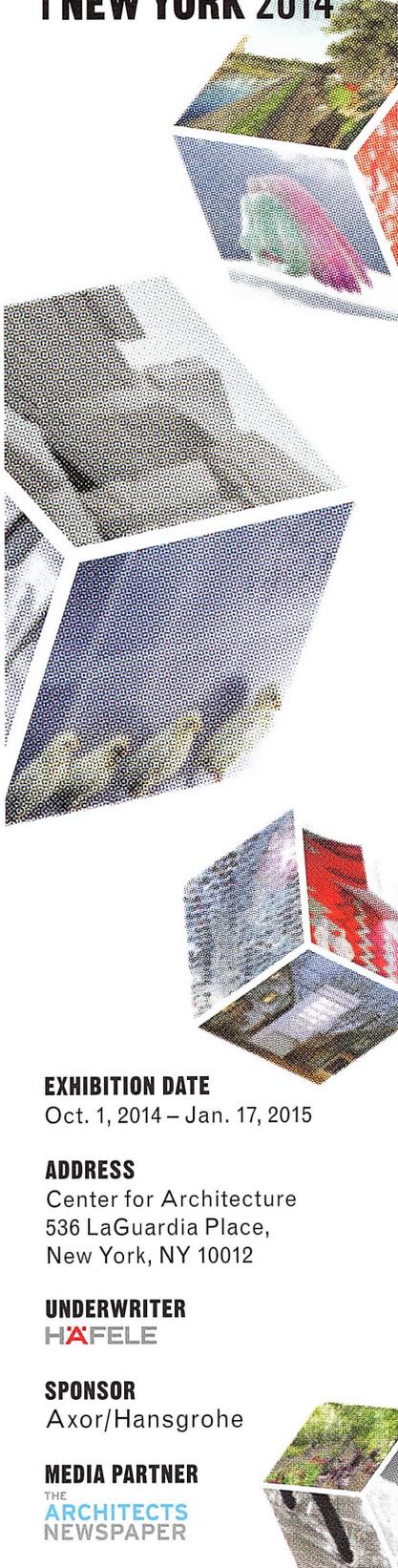
sufficient (not just necessary) to prevent repeating it is not an architectural question. The architecture nonetheless has been caught in the crossfire in polemics over adaptations to post-9/11 conditions.

The *Washington Post's* Philip Kennicott, noting the implicit underworld-descent motif (and, with a degree of cultural obliviousness, calling it a specifically Western story), complains that the museum encodes a perception of "America Militant, Suffering and Exceptional" – an America few would want to live in. Yet the museum tempers its nationalistic aspects with reminders of how polyglot the response was in the days when practically everyone on Earth identified as a New Yorker. "The tragedy of the site is that people were polarized," Dykers notes. "And we should have learned from that – that sticking a stake in the ground and trying to become very righteous about how you feel is perhaps not what we should be doing at the World Trade Center site."

Interpretive contests over this material will undoubtedly continue; the museum's capacity to provoke them seems not a liability but an integral part of its mission. Though the content may be inherently polarizing, the building welcomes diverse experiences, disparate readings, and perhaps even dialogues that advance the process of healing. ■

Bill Millard is a freelance writer and editor whose work has appeared in *Oculus*, *Architect*, *Icon*, *Content*, *The Architect's Newspaper*, *LEAF Review*, *Architectural Record*, and other publications.

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# Raves + Reviews

REVIEWS BY STANLEY STARK, FAIA

## Mies

By Detlef Mertins

Mies Van De Rohe (1886–1983) had a long life and career that spanned from Wilhelmine Germany to the post-Modern 1980s. He was justly acclaimed as a hero and shaper of modern design, in particular the International Style. The glass skyscraper, the development and refinement of the glass curtain wall, and the masterful creation of buildings of crystalline form and perfection were regarded as his major achievements. No presence dominated the post-WW II design landscape as did Mies, whose best works define Modernism.

In the 1970s, as reactions against Modernism and the International Style gathered force, Mies was blamed for the bland, faceless, corporate-bureaucratic architecture that Modernism had spawned. But his stature has re-emerged and grown as the new modernity of the post-millennial age has captured the public and critical imagination. Mertins observes that Mies's career was contradictory and complex, full of discontinuities, struggles, and compromises. Mies was hard to pin down, employing a relational style rather than a fixed ideology. His career resonates strongly with many of the fundamental preoccupations and complexities of architectural practice today.

## The Architecture of Paul Rudolph

By Timothy M. Rohan

Paul Rudolph (1918–1997) was the star of the post-WW II architectural realm. Highly expressionistic and monumental, his work rapidly emerged as an alternative to the International Style. He shaped a generation of architects through both his projects and his leadership of the Yale School of Architecture, which he made one of the world's most important architectural programs. His students – Foster, Rogers, Gwathmey, Stern, among others – became the architectural leaders of the next generation. Rudolph's masterwork for the Yale School of Art and Architecture building (the A+A, 1958–1963) created excitement unmatched until Gehry's Guggenheim Bilbao opened almost 35 years later. His expressive sculptural designs directly challenged the austere International Style – as did his fascination with megastructures.

A maverick and counter-authority, Rudolph was a strong advocate for self-expression, whom many tried to follow. But the spirit of the 1960s turned against him. His designs – formerly regarded as compelling – were attacked and viewed as monumental, egotistical symbols of authority. The 1969 fire that gutted the A+A propelled his fall from public esteem, and his practice and reputation declined. He retreated and worked quietly on apartments, residences, and high-rises in Southeast Asia.

Rudolph's emphasis on self-expression and iconic form was admired, then demonized and relegated to background status, and now still with us as a central preoccupation. He was a star before we had starchitects. In this beautifully illustrated volume, Rohan charts the arc of Rudolph's career with great insight.

## Szenasy, Design Advocate: Writings and Talks by Metropolis Magazine Editor Susan S. Szenasy

Edited by Ann S. Hudner, Akiko Busch, and Angela Riechers

This collection of critical writings, advocacy pieces, and biography/memoir by Susan Szenasy and by associates and collaborators about Szenasy, spans the 1950s to the near present. While it covers a kaleidoscope of design issues, it focuses strongly on interior design and its growth in both design responsibility and seriousness as a collaborator with architecture. This is the design world according to Szenasy, and it is a viewpoint worth considering.

## Noted but Not Reviewed

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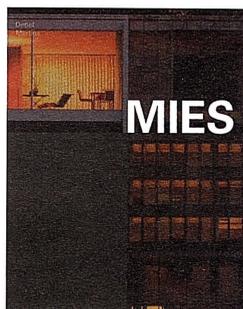
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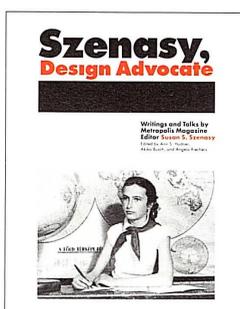
Stanley Stark, FAIA, served as chair of the Oculus Committee from 2005 to 2007.



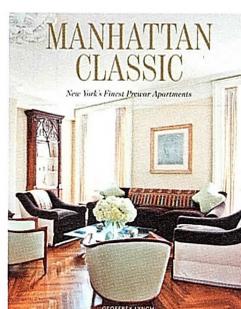
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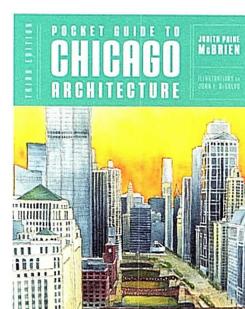
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New York: Metropolis Books, 2014. 353 pp. \$29.95



New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2014. 224 pp. \$50



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# Growing in stages

along the Grand Concourse, the Bronx Museum of the Arts acquired a bold architectural presence in 2006

BY JOHN MORRIS DIXON, FAIA

Too few New Yorkers are familiar with the relatively modest but ambitious arts museum in the heart of the Bronx. Founded in 1971, it was initially housed in the Bronx County Courthouse. In 1982 the fledgling institution moved into a former synagogue at a prominent street corner along the borough's broadest thoroughfare, the Grand Concourse.

When the synagogue building was renovated in 1988 by Castro-Blanco Pacioneri & Associates, the worship spaces and auxiliary rooms proved reasonably adaptable to galleries, offices, and classrooms. A two-story, glass-enclosed lobby at the street corner established a public image for the museum, but the scale of the building remained small for its setting among the mid- to high-rise apartment buildings that line the Concourse.

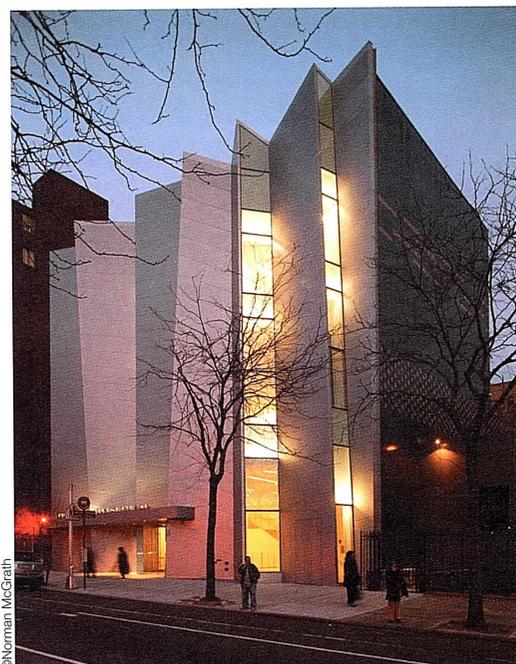
When the opportunity arose to expand the museum on an adjoining Concourse-front site, the museum commissioned the widely known Miami-based firm of Arquitectonica to provide additional space along with a bolder public presence. And, given the limits of this \$19-million undertaking, Arquitectonica fulfilled that mission well.

The addition, three high-ceilinged stories rising 45 feet, is considerably taller than the converted synagogue. The height of its façade is further emphasized by a distinctive configuration of vertical folds, which Arquitectonica Partner Bernardo Fort-Brescia, FAIA, compares to giant louvers. Windows placed in the folds to minimize direct sun penetration allow glimpses of street life from the lobby, without full exposure, and offer pedestrians inward views without a show-window effect. Twists in the folded surfaces as they rise – along with their sleek aluminum cladding – suggest the contemporary arts mission of the museum and enhance the building's individuality.

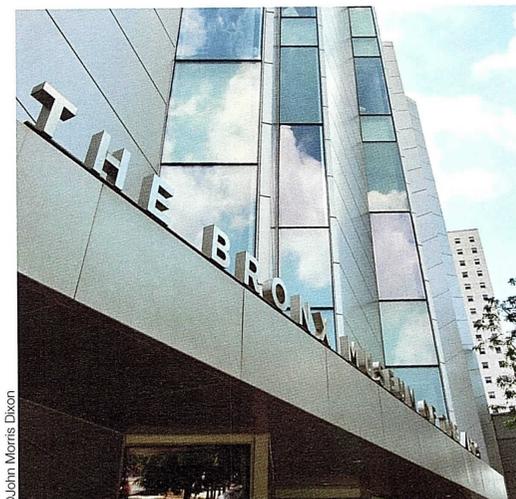
Besides its lobby – ample but by no means grand – the Arquitectonica addition includes gallery space, a third-floor media lab, and a second-floor room suitable for meetings, lectures, and dinners. Most of the museum's gallery space remains essentially unaltered in the older structure, along with many of its back-of-the-house and education facilities.

*New York Times* critic Nicholas Ouroussoff, reviewing the addition in 2006, cited its “pleated façade” and “refreshingly unpretentious interiors” as “a reminder of how architecture can have a profound public impact when its values are in the right place.” The museum's executive director, Holly Block, praises the façade as “enticing,” and reports that “people love the lobby and the galleries.” The exhibition program under her direction is by no means cautious. “Beyond the Supersquare” (on view through January 11, 2015), exploring “the influence of Latin American and Caribbean Modernist architecture on contemporary art,” more than meets Manhattan museum standards.

The museum leadership is working on plans to improve its facilities and increase its community involvement. Museum Trustee Joan Krevlin, FAIA, recently announced its intention to upgrade the older street-corner structure as a community gallery, while adding rooftop gardens, a space for outdoor movies, and neighborhood garden plots.



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The Arquitectonica addition was designed as the first phase of a project that would have replaced the older building with new construction, possibly as a base for an apartment tower. If such an expansion were to be undertaken in the future, its architect would most likely be chosen under the provisions of the city's Design and Construction Excellence program. Arquitectonica might or might not have a chance.

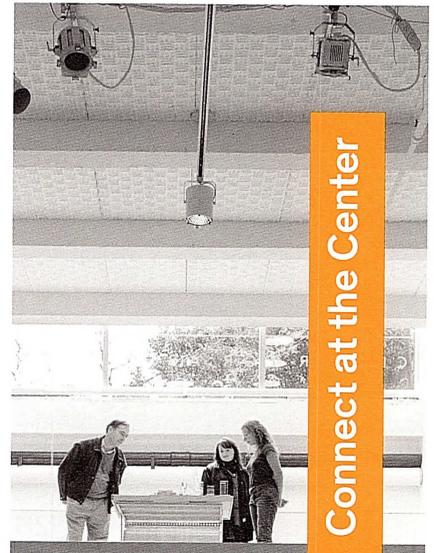
John Morris Dixon, FAIA, left the drafting board for journalism in 1960 and was editor of *Progressive Architecture* from 1972 to 1996. He continues to write for a number of publications, and he received AIANY's 2011 Stephen A. Klimont Oculus Award for Excellence in Journalism.



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Bell at PS1

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Folk Arch

“Change is occasioned by the many ways in which entities join and separate. Actuality concerns their instantaneous arrangement, and history treats of their successive positions and relationships.”

—George Kubler in

*The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things*, 1962

“This act of welcoming, and of giving some message about what to expect – uplifting or downright scary – has been, for most of the civilized past, one of the important functions of architecture.”

—Charles W. Moore in

*Chambers for a Memory Palace*, 1994

“Façades with this degree of detachment can actually be portable: when endangered, they can be cut off and displayed elsewhere, in a museum or on another building.”

—Paul Spencer Byard in

*The Architecture of Additions: Design and Regulations*, 1998

The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s website states that “the Cloisters is a special place,” and describes how the reconstructed 12th-century courtyard from the Benedictine Abbey of St. Michel-de-Cuxa “comprises some 460 fragments.” Building components, initially collected in the south of France by sculptor George Gray Barnard, “evoke or suggest their original appearance, function, or character” while, since 1938, forming a courtyard where a variety of rooms display other artwork. Medieval relics are not the only elements that a museum can collect, display, reuse, and incorporate from elsewhere. Nor is it unusual to see the use of non-original fabric to frame a new entrance to a museum, creating a portal that helps define and brand a pre-existing cultural institution. I.M. Pei’s pyramid at the Louvre seemed out of place to many when completed in 1989, but it has become the museum’s postcard symbol and unifying wayfinding device.

At MoMA, Diller Scofidio + Renfro have proposed significant new changes to the manner in which people see, approach, and enter the museum’s West 53rd Street campus. The iconic sculpture garden will be accessible from West 54th Street and its entrance redefined. One consequence of rethinking the MoMA complex has been expansion onto the site of the now-demolished American Folk Art Museum (AFAM) building of 2001, designed by Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects (TWBT). The debate over the fate of this award-winning structure is well known, and was the subject of a public forum on January 28, 2014, organized by the Architectural League of New York, Municipal Art Society of New York, and AIA New York Chapter. One result was MoMA’s decision to store the carefully disassembled AFAM façade, a TWBT collaboration with artist Darcy Miro, in a remote warehouse.

The façade could become a new point of entry at MoMA’s only other public facility, MoMA/PS1 in Long Island City. Working well with the robust entrance lobby by Andrew Berman Architect, the 65-foot-tall “billboard” could help create an identity for MoMA/PS1 that redefines the relation

of entry sequence, courtyard, and pre-existing structure. Storing this work of art out of sight does not diminish its importance. It should be on view.

The idea of a temporary portal, erected as part of a special exhibition or commemoration, is not new to New York. A monumental arch straddling Fifth Avenue was created by philanthropist William Rhinelanders Stewart just north of Washington Square Park. Designed pro bono by Stanford White, it was built of wood, plaster, and painted papier-mâché in 1889 to celebrate the centennial of our first president’s inauguration. The 71-foot-tall temporary structure was replaced six years later by the current white Tuckahoe marble archway, also designed by White.

Recently unveiled plans for the expansion of the Frick Collection, by Davis Brody Bond Architects, address the problem of adding much-needed space by inserting building fabric that looks as if it could have been there all along. The Frick addition challenges us to consider the merits of two ways of relating to pre-existing design elements. Are architects and preservationists ready to accept the revisionist notion, on the one hand, that new fabric can match existing, and on the other, that building fragments can be harmoniously incorporated out of context?

A description of AFAM on the TWBT website likens it to “an abstracted open hand,” and states that its bronze panels are “a quiet statement of independence” for what had been “an idiosyncratic home for idiosyncratic art.” Resurrecting the façade at MoMA/PS1 as a temporary – or even permanent – installation could be deemed an experiment to see how an “open hand” billboard entry, perhaps serving on the courtyard side for projection, could augment the number of visitors to this most remarkable home for contemporary art. To quote Charles Moore from *Chambers for a Memory Palace*: “The portal has the strength, even, to come off the buildings and stand alone.”

Rick Bell, FAIA

Executive Director, AIA New York Chapter

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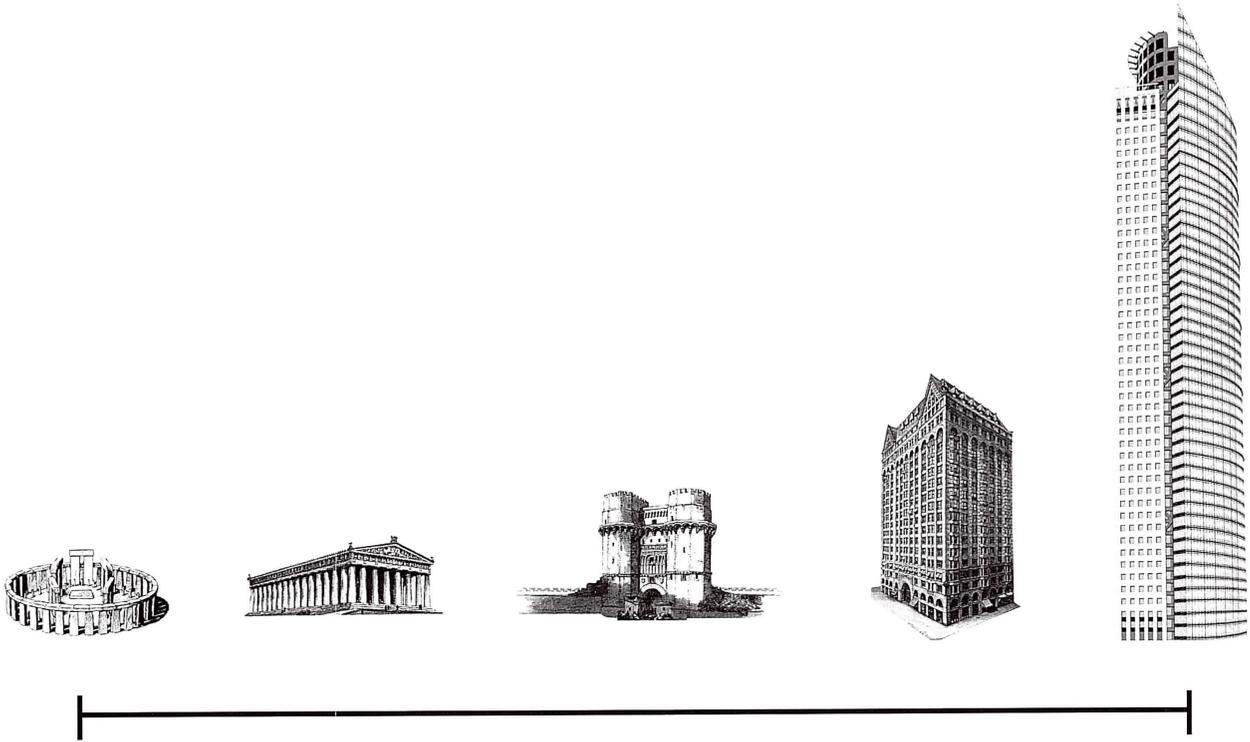
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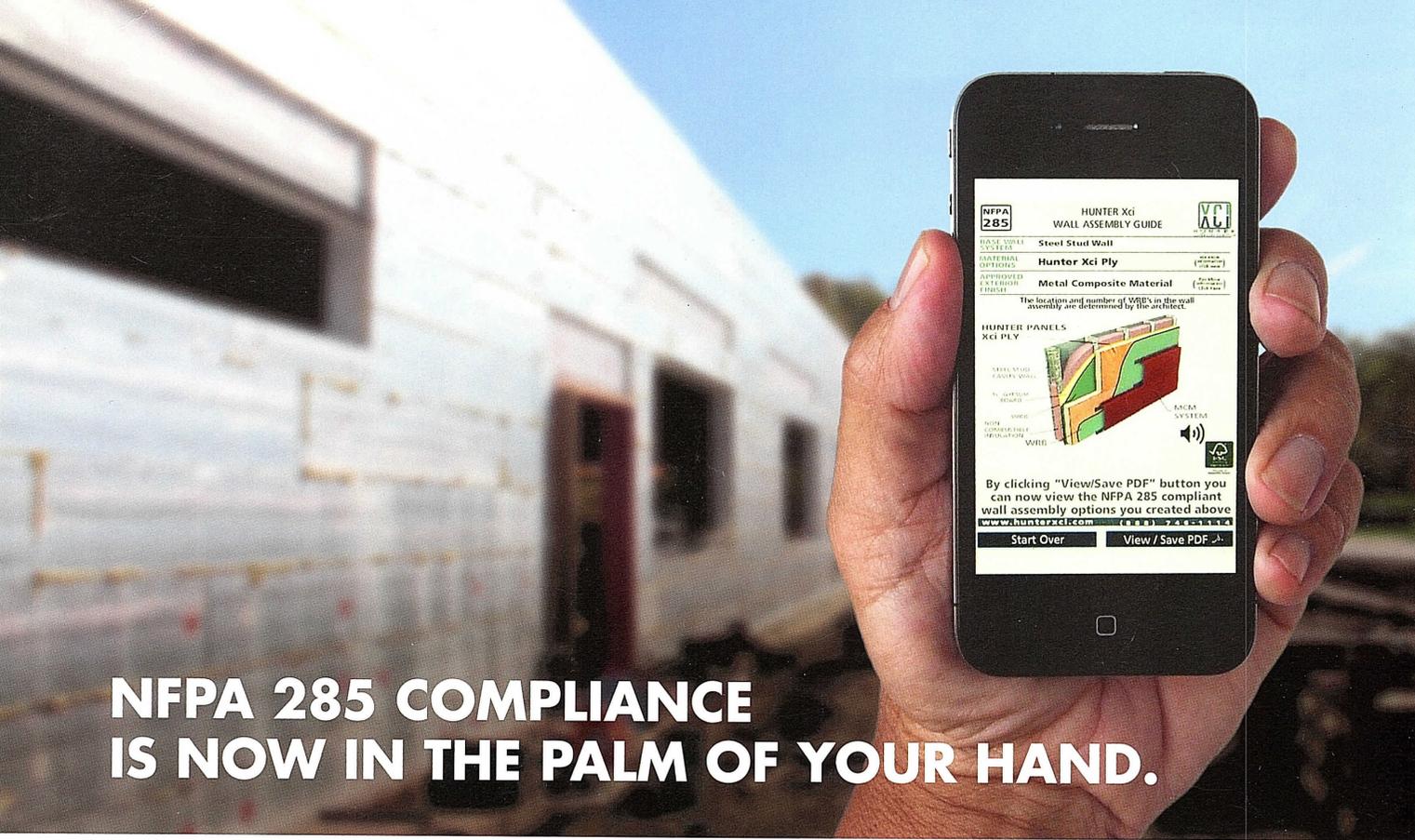


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