

OMA - Architecture Building at Cornell

2013-02-21



[Milstein Hall](#), a new architecture building at Cornell University, in Ithaca, New York, was designed by [OMA](#) with [Kendall/Heaton Associates Architects](#). Photo: © Iwan Baan

[Milstein Hall](#) by OMA, at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, connects with an existing building as a rigidly orthogonal second floor, appearing to float above the ground, using deep cantilevers, slender columns and a glazed ground floor.

The uppermost level of the 47,000-square-foot (4,400-square-meter) addition contains studio and classrooms, with a nearly floor-to-ceiling ribbon of glazing admitting light on three sides and with skylights providing light from above. Behind this curtain wall, large steel diagonal elements suggest the box trusses that make it possible for the building to appear at times to float.



Upper-floor plan rendering. Image: OMA

Designed by the Rotterdam, Netherlands-based [Office for Metropolitan Architecture](#) (OMA) with local architect [KHA Architects](#), the building's aesthetics recall other recent designs, such as the [Dee and Charles Wyly Theatre](#) in Dallas, Texas.

Milstein Hall has received an Honor Award in the Architecture category of the [2013 AIA National Design Awards](#). OMA partner Shohei Shigematsu, director of the New York City office, led the design, along with [Rem Koolhaas](#). The hall's studios opened for students in late August 2011.



The building cantilevers over a campus street. Photo: © Iwan Baan

At the building's middle, a domed concrete volume appears to bubble up from below grade with its top just barely connecting with the floor of the second level. A shallow and glazed arched opening in the concrete along one side exposes a large basement-level space.



A series of bridges and arching stairs cross inside the ground-floor level of Milstein Hall. Photo: © Iwan Baan

Jury Comments

A powerful parti with emphasis on transparency places the entire design school on display to the campus in largely successful ways.

The hall is praised by users for its “transactional” qualities: The college’s activities have become far more visually accessible within the Cornell campus; spaces created are connective between Sibley and Rand Halls; and functional relocations—such as the design library—have enhanced communication between student cohorts within the college.



Inside the basement-level domed space. Photo: © Philippe Ruault

The exposed systems and relaxed social ambience tolerate and celebrate the creative clutter created by students.

The dramatic insertion of the new program in relationship to the existing buildings and site creates exciting new conditions while posing a series of creative opportunities for future uses and artistic additions by the college (some already underway).



Milstein Hall section drawing. Image: OMA

Completed in mid-2011, Milstein Hall is the first new building for the university's College of Architecture, Art and Planning in more than 100 years.

Project Credits

- **Architect:** [OMA](#)
- **Architect of Record:** [KHA Architects, LLC](#)
- **Client:** Cornell University
- **Acoustical Consultant:** DHV V.B.
- **Audio/Visual Consultant:** Acentech
- **Curtain Design:** Inside Outside
- **Elevator Consultant:** Persohn/Hahn Associates, Inc.
- **Engineer – Civil:** T.G. Miller P.C. (Site and Grading); GIE Niagara Engineering Inc. P.C. (Site Utilities)
- **Engineer – MEP/FP:** Plus Group Consulting Engineers PLLC
- **Engineer – Structural:** Robert Silman Associates, P.C.
- **Façade Design and Engineering Consultant:** Front, Inc.
- **Graphic Design:** 2x4, Inc.

- **IT/Data/Security Consultant:** Archi-Technology
- **Landscape Architect:** Scape Landscape Architecture PLLC
- **Lighting Consultant:** Tillotson Design Associates, Inc.
- **Roofing Consultant:** BPD Roof Consulting, Inc.
- **Sustainability Consultant:** BVM Engineering

Project Details

- **Materials:** Steel, concrete, glass
- **Energy Use Intensity:** (not available)
- **Number of Floors:** 3 (2 above ground, 1 below)
- **Building Area:** 47,000 square feet (4,400 square meters)



A plaza with white seating under the rear cantilever of the building. Photo: Iwan Baan