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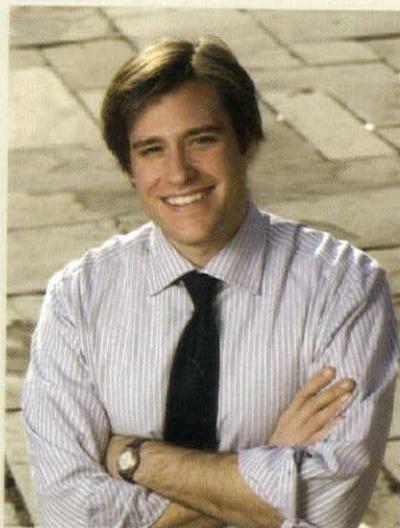
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FROM THE EDITOR

Ex-Libris

The language of library architecture varies greatly even if the program—how it works and operates—varies little across the board. But, as pure design goes, the gold standard in library design is about something more than stacks and study space. You probably have a favorite library in mind, but take Carrère and Hastings' 1911 main branch building for the New York Public Library at the head of Bryant Park. The marble and brick façade, the axial symmetry of its plan, and the orthodox hierarchy of its spaces surely makes it one of the most iconic Beaux-Arts designs of its time. Banks of heavy oak tables, ornate chandeliers, and brass reading lamps define the experience of studying



its main reading room, owing much to Henri Labrouste's 1850 Bibliothèque Ste.-Geneviève. The plan is a model of rational design theory—the generator of the building, in fact, to sacrilegiously quote *Vers une architecture*—with a tightly controlled set of spaces that represent discreet elements of the program. Formal considerations aside, the building continues to make a strong statement about civility, self-education, and access in the public's right to both books as well as good design.

Three things revolutionized the American public library and made it a productive typology for architects in the twentieth century. In the 1890s, Melvil Dewey's decimal system economized how books could be cataloged and arranged (and in line with a century-long cultural obsession with taxonomy). Of course, a new way of organizing books prompted a new way of thinking about program. Two decades later, Andrew Carnegie's estate funded the construction of hundreds of public libraries in the United States, which created a lot of work for architects (and spawned a lot of stoic, neo-Classical façades in the landscape). The second great library building boom for architects occurred at mid-century. An expanding post-war population, suburbia's ascent, and the 1956 Library Services Act (which guaranteed federal funding for public libraries) created thousands of opportunities for main and branch public library design and construction.

The architectural legacy of these factors is a spate of perfectly functional libraries in every town and city. Some are so dreary as to be considered facilities while others are small jewel-boxes of carved ornament, murals, and stained glass. Now, 100 years after Dewey's revolution and Carnegie's patronage, libraries across the country are once again locked in expansion mode. Some have commissioned starchitects to deliver icons that define the "new library" while others have quietly added onto existing facilities. New acquisitions across a variety of media and growing education and outreach programs demand a range of event spaces for lectures, workshops, receptions, and fundraising. It is also widely understood that fostering public appeal in the twenty-first century is an act of transubstantiation to digitize sources. The library has grown to be something more than a repository and reading room, even if the role of books continues to shrink every year.

—William Richards

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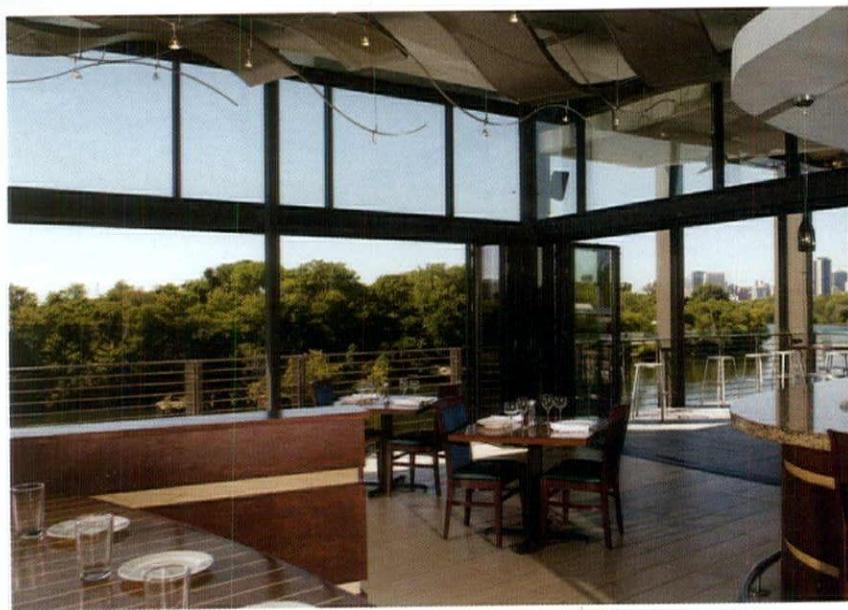
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volume twenty-two number one

p14

14 Open Stacks

Davis Brody Bond Aedas knits together a neighborhood with the Watha T. Daniel/Shaw Library in Washington, D.C.
By Anne Dreyfuss

20 New Chapters

The Freelon Group completes a dynamic urban library in the Anacostia neighborhood of Washington, D.C., with another one on the way near Tenleytown
By Kim A. O'Connell

26 Silver Sprung

Machado and Silvetti carve out a new civic center and plaza for one of Montgomery County's largest towns
By Elizabeth Evitts Dickinson

6 Design Lines

new developments in design

11 Power Button

design, technology, and the marketplace

12 NetWorks

the business of design

36 Taking Note



p23

Next issue:
Tradition and
Architecture

Green
Products
Directory

p31

On the cover:

Machado and Silvetti's Silver Spring Civic Building and Veteran's Plaza
Anton Grassl - Esto, photographer



St. Florian combines the probity of the strong vertical with the lyrical elements of curved canopies and seemingly wind-blown curtains—or the billows of a winged victory's gown.

Tryon Bridge Beacons Beckon

Friedrich St. Florian designs a new gateway for Charlotte, but has the city arrived, yet?

Tim DeCoster

Light transforms these abstract yet traditional gateway monuments, intended to be true beacons at night for drivers entering Charlotte.

The Tryon Bridge Beacons signal a remarkable design event for Charlotte. North Carolina's largest city may be wealthy, but it forever seems to be one of those Sun Belt skylines in search of a city. And even though it has a school of architecture, Charlotte has lacked a strong architectural identity. That may change with the construction of the two bridge pylons that flank one of the major streets that enter uptown.

The catalyst for this revolutionary construction was a group of local philanthropists—none of whom are design professionals—who call themselves the Queen's Table. Over country club dinners or businessmen's lunches, these latter-day Medici work quietly behind the scenes to enhance the quality of urban life in Charlotte. Until now they have underwritten outdoor sculpture, but their decision to commission Friedrich St. Florian to build a symbolic gateway was a brilliant stroke



Tim DeCoster

of civic patronage. “My sense was that some committee members had fixed ideas about what a bridge head should look like—something solid and traditional, made of stone,” said St. Florian. “Based on my impressions of Charlotte—a city in process, one that looks forward to its best days—I argued for the most contemporary interpretation.”

St. Florian has created a symbolic gesture that redefines the entrance to Charlotte’s commercial heart in what he calls “gateways—as metaphors of arrival.” The twenty-five-foot-high stainless steel pylons are triangular in elevation; their upward-sweeping canopies provide a sense of lightness, while sinuous, cast acrylic curtains billow out from the canopies. The bases of these framing

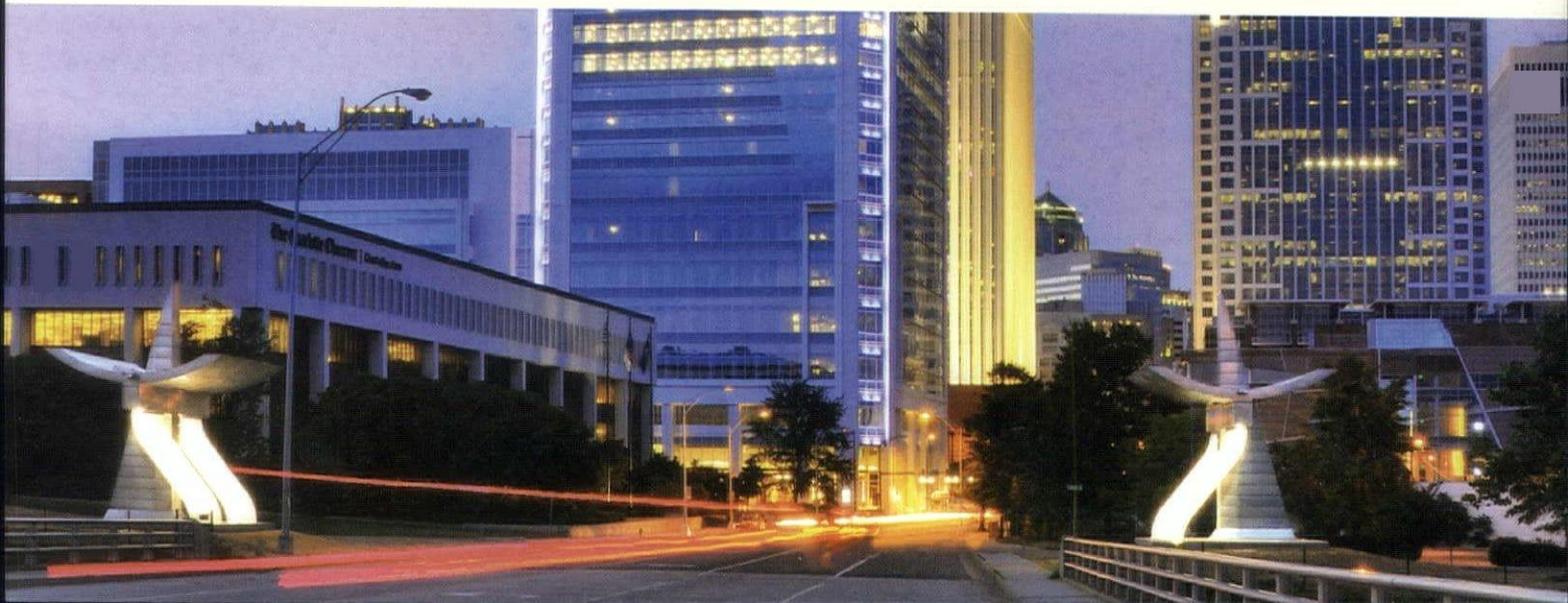
devices are sixteen feet square and the sail-like canopies displace eighteen square-feet. The curtains are lit along their edges by LED fixtures that create an ethereal glow at night.

Charlotte’s movers and shakers undoubtedly knew St. Florian as the designer of the World War II Memorial in Washington. The Austrian-born and Columbia-trained Providence, Rhode Island architect has nevertheless had a distinguished, if under-heralded, career as an avant-garde designer of monuments. A finalist in the competition for the Centre Pompidou, St. Florian also designed a Constructivist tower as a “Monument to the Third Millennium” in San Juan, a laser-lit bridge across the Charles River for Harvard, and a giant

hologram of the Statue of Liberty that could sail the skies above an apartheid-era South Africa. He also worked at MIT’s media lab before becoming a professor at Rhode Island School of Design.

St. Florian’s solution for Charlotte is remarkable because it draws intelligently upon forms as old as civilization—the Ishtar Gate in Babylon, Roman triumphal arches, or more recent commemorative portals such as Berlin’s Brandenburg Gate or Claude-Nicholas Ledoux’s *barrières* in pre-Revolutionary Paris. Friedrich St. Florian’s Tryon bridge beacons are supremely contemporary works of architecture that celebrate a moment of arrival—that of a more architecturally literate Charlotte. —*William Morgan*

Charlotte’s non-descript, everywhere-and-anywhere skyline has found some definition with the lively gestures of St. Florian’s gateway.





The New Old

David Jameson transforms a 1969 "Record House" outside Baltimore

Alexandria architect David Jameson, FAIA has cast a new beam of light straight through a 41-year old Owings Mill, Maryland Record House. In its 1969 debut among twenty other homes in an *Architectural Record's* building type study, "tranquil formality" summarized this understated contemporary rancher by architect Charles Richter of the Baltimore firm Fisher Nes Campbell & Partners. Tranquil because of its setting and formal because of the tight control that program had over the arrangement of spaces within. Paying deference to the bones of the house, Jameson has transformed it into what he calls a, "porous, open, and organic space," for its new owners.

Against the grain of the Modernist open plan, the house originally commis-

sioned by Mr. and Mrs. Milton Miller was recognized by *Architectural Record* editor Herbert J. Smith for recalling "a Colonial past while fulfilling modern needs of practicality and comfort." The spaces of the Miller rancher were partitioned by a glass atrium, which connected a small pavilion (with a master bedroom) to a large pavilion (with four separate living spaces). Further closing off the interior, the kitchen seemed to be barricaded in the corner. "They lived in the least beautiful areas of the house," says Jameson, adding that the kitchen's configuration was a design decision made around having a live-in servant.

A structural analysis of the original house revealed a truss roof system, which meant that only the exterior walls of the two pavilions were load-bearing.

"We simply took the house back to the condition to where it had been framed and didn't have any interior walls," says Jameson, "and then we stopped and said, let's not put in those walls." Using the skylight-surrounded masonry fireplace as the dramatic centerpiece for the new configuration, Jameson eradicated the partitions to connect the spaces not only to each other, but also to the site that was the selling point for the clients.

"Within these load-bearing walls was a series of apertures that could not be easily understood in the context of the old house, whereas our new project highlights that," says Jameson.

The apertures became a conceptual gallery for the new clients, which defined the interventions against the old house through the use of warm, walnut



Jameson contrasted new materials with the exposed masonry of the fireplace and the exterior envelope.





A sheet of acid-etched glass between the foyer and the master bathroom (above) interrupts the continuous aperture running through the horizontal axis of the house (at left).

casework. By breaking down the interior walls, Jameson opened up the living spaces to generous views of the adjacent woods. A sheet of acid-etched glass between the foyer and the master bathroom shower is the only opaque glazing in the entire project.

“I was really interested in the luminous quality of the egg,” says Jameson. This is an apt description not only for the acid-etched glass and the predominantly white interior, but it also speaks to his choice of new materials. Jameson articulated difference by incorporating white Corian in the kitchen, mudroom, and bathroom against the interior’s rough-faced masonry. The simple fluidity of the master bathroom’s polished Arabescato marble also distinguishes the new from old. As a whole, the new materials create a juxtaposition between the between the hand of the artisan who crafted the masonry and the machine-precision of the casework.

Jameson’s Record House Revisited project swept AIA Awards of Excellence in Maryland, Washington, D.C., Northern Virginia, and Virginia in the architecture and interior design categories, but the project had its roots in preservation. As an alternative to selling the house to pro-



Walnut cabinetry and strategic glazing created “conceptual gallery” for the new clients.

spective residential developers, Jameson explains that, “The Millers wanted a family who were stewards of good design.” The result, which received Millers’ seal of approval (with a gasp), is a case study in how current mid-century Modernism can be preserved by working within an existing structure in order to adapt to contemporary programmatic needs.

—R. Tyler King

Digital Media(tion)

By Will Rourk

Rows of stacks and quiet old ladies strolling up and down the aisles with their book carts used to come to mind when you thought about the local library. The web has changed all that and the conventional pile of bricks and mortar filled with a forest's worth of printed books has been augmented by virtual repositories like the Internet Public Library, the Free Library, Google Books, and Google Scholar. With texts becoming digitized (and born digital), print is fading in the background. But, the content itself—in any form—is no less meaningful and access and literacy-training are still provided by libraries.

University libraries in particular, which remain reasonably well funded through endowments and annual budget allocations, have been at the forefront of actively supporting media and technology literacy. In the mid-1990s, media literacy for faculty and students became an institutional imperative and not just a novel interest across the country. In response, the University of Virginia Library System began developing a Digital Media Lab (DML) to provide hardware, software and technological expertise to the entire university.

"Although it was not unusual to find a computer lab in a library in the mid-90's, it was fairly unusual to find one equipped with a full complement of media authoring equipment, and with staff ready to teach a wide range of technologies," says Judy Thomas, Director of Arts and Media Services at the University of Virginia.

Today, the DML is unique compared to other university library services because it has become a teaching and learning environment that offers software and hardware (like high-definition video and audio-capture devices) as well as training. As university instructors realized that a course's content could be deployed in alternative ways, the lab—and departmental curricula—grew to accommodate the idea. Fifteen years later, it's fairly common for instructors to assign projects that require video production, YouTube content or web-based interactive media.

U.Va. English professor Stephen Railton looked to the DML for an electronic aid for his students who were struggling to understand Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* "Faulkner, himself, provides a chronology at the end of the novel, but that gives the plot away," says Railton. "I wanted to use new technology to come up with a way for them to [visualize] the main events of the story." Working with Railton, the DML staff devised a Flash-based program to maintain the plot's integrity while helping students visually see how the elements of that plot unfold in time. Since then, the program has been used by hundreds of Railton's own students as well as thousands of other students around the country.

Information is not just limited to the printed or digital word. Textual information can be considered a component of the larger sphere of information media. "Tools for delivering media-rich content are transforming research, scholarship, teaching, and learning," says DML Director Jama Coartney. "[The] field blends information-gathering and information-sharing with online communities actively seeking to consume and reuse this information."

George Sampson, Director of the Arts Administration program for U.Va.'s School of Architecture, frequently seeks out the DML for help. "It has been a partner in a number of enterprises over the past few years, from salvaging tapes of my guest speakers, to partnering in a prototype class using new technology and programs, to using one of my students as a key peer-to-peer educator," he says, "and always as a backstop for when a new technology needed explaining."

In this sense, recognizing media as information is vital. Nearly every aspect of our daily lives is affected by technologies that increasingly make it easier for a variety of media to be consumed. The challenge conventional and media librarians face today is making sense of text, audio, video and other analog and digital media resources for designers, researchers, academics, and the public. The medium is the message after all, it seems, and you don't have to read that line again to know it's true.

Book Worms and Bytes

By Nicholas E. Vlattas, AIA, with Deborah Marquardt

Thom White, a young Virginia Beach architect, returned from the recent Greenbuild conference in Chicago jazzed about something he had seen. Yes, new building technologies were interesting, but he was just as intrigued by all the vendors who had their product information stored on iPads and tablet PCs—not in cumbersome binders.

It got him thinking about the library in his office, often cluttered and out of date. “If we had a product database, we could eliminate a lot of paper,” says White, of Ivy Architecture. “It would save the vendors from having to change binders out once a year. Instead, products could be searched online and vendors could bring a sample for viewing and then take it away again.”

Architectural firms, not unlike traditional libraries, struggle with how to achieve the right balance between digital references and hard copies. Yet in architecture firms, keeping things organized and up-to-date is often not anyone’s job. We count on vendors to keep product binders up to date, but cataloguing other contents falls to the wayside.

Erin Sterling Lewis and Matthew Griffith just opened a new firm, in situ studio, in Raleigh, North Carolina. They recalled the library at their previous firm: a back storage area that everyone avoided except for the annual clean-up, when they would fill up a dumpster with binders and samples. The partners made a pact to be as clutter-free as possible. They are storing data in the clouds and their product and design research occurs almost exclusively on the Internet. “Archdaily.com is a daily burst of eye candy,” says Griffith about searching for design inspiration. Favorite materials and reps are bookmarked on their laptops. “It’s just quicker to go to a website,” he adds. “Things are ever-changing, and often websites are updated even before a new product is released.”

Beyond archdaily.com, a general news site, online databases like www.materialconnexion.com and www.materialsmoonthly.com are useful sources that deal specifically with materials. Some product manufacturers have made it easy for architects to sample their wares. The wall-covering manufacturer Wolf-Gordon, with showrooms in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, just launched a website that allows customers to search their catalogue by color, texture, features, and designer. Customers can also click on selections to reveal larger swatch images, which

contain specifications and availability.

Digital solutions are practical for many, but some are reluctant to give up on the old reference model.

At Richmond’s Glavé & Holmes Associates, a long corridor of their newly renovated office in Shockoe Bottom is lined with bookshelves, which hold code books, periodicals and product manuals—all of which are logged into the firm’s computer system for reference. Firm principal Randy Holmes’ personal collection of more than 200 volumes on topics ranging from history of places, master planning, and landscape design to architects, theory, and technical data is open to everyone. “Our book culture is critical to us,” says Holmes. “Books give us a long view of history, our rich architectural heritage in this country and globally back to the Greeks and Romans. Understanding that is critical to thinking about the future.”

Recently, upon returning from a trip, he found two colleagues in his office researching quoins to understand how they were used as details in the past. “Without reference materials, a dialogue with the past would be hard to have. Books and buildings are valuable teaching tools,” he adds. “And books are a lot easier to get to.”

“The library is a tool for thought and ongoing discussion, which we constantly use,” writes Steven Holl in *Unpacking My Library: Architects and Their Books* (Yale University Press, 2009). “If one of the aims of teaching and work is to raise architecture to the level of thought,” he notes, “the library and its books provide a transcendental field with ongoing operative tools.” Even Griffith admits that he and Lewis maintain a good-sized bookshelf of favorite design books.

Our firm, Hanbury Evans Wright Vlattas+ Company, makes more and more use of digital research tools for product and inspiration but, like many firms, we still have product binders and code books on shelves. We also have a conference room that contains a “library” of inspirational books on architects and design. As more information comes to be stored in our building information models and on the web, a day may come when we can use our bookshelves for other things. While that may rid our building of paper, it may not solve the clutter dilemma. As Thom White warns, a server can get cluttered, too, and a library—digital or real—still requires care.

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Nicholas E. Vlattas, AIA, is the Chief Operations Officer for Hanbury Evans Wright Vlattas + Company.

Bookmark

Art & Activism: Projects of John and Dominique de Menil

Josef Helfenstein and Laureen Schipsi, editors
New Haven and London: Yale University Press
2010, 344 pages, \$65.00

"My first clients, my best clients, the clients who found all my other clients, founders of my career, good friends, good critics, courageous appreciators of Art." This is how Philip Johnson described Dominique and John de Menil in an inscription to his first monograph published for the first time in this new collection of essays and documents released by the Menil Collection. As patrons of architecture, the de Menils left their stamp on their adopted city of Houston Texas, particularly those several blocks in Montrose where Johnson's Rothko Chapel and Renzo Piano's Menil Collection now reside in an oasis of understated modernity in a desert of decorated sheds.

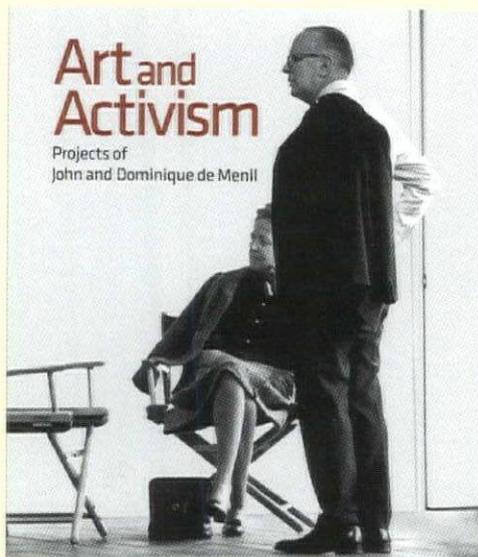
Art & Activism is an unabashed love letter to the couple who, almost singlehandedly, transformed the city's cultural character. Nevertheless, the book contains a hefty collection of historical writings and reminiscences by former students and beneficiaries of the de Menil's largess. It also contains a trove of unpublished images and documents that evidence the couple's patronage and collecting habits as they related to their spiritual and political beliefs.

This is a monograph, but it's also local history. The couple, at one time or another, played important roles in the development of every major cultural institution of Houston (Rice and St. Thomas Universities, the Contemporary Art Museum, and the Museum of Fine Arts) before going on to create some of the nation's most successful collaborations between art and architects. Like the Institute of Contemporary Art's show *Dissent: the Issue of Modern Art in Boston*, which proposed a Brahmin strain of "mild modernism," *Art & Activism* explores another geographical strain of modernism in the United States.

Pamela Smart describes the collecting habits of the de Menils as "off-modern" in her introductory essay. Their Catholic faith led them to seek out new audiences from among Houston's poor, its ethnic minorities and its children, in order to give them access to the unadulterated influence of "hard art." Another essay chronicles the mission of the Menil Collection in relation to the civil rights issues specific to Texas. Further essays on the influence of Black Mountain College, the formation and design of the Cy Twombly Museum, and a chronology of Menil exhibitions, flesh out the complex program undertaken by the couple over the course of their lifetimes.

While the individual writings often lack critical distance (they do not, for instance, dwell on John de Menil's dealings as president of the oilfield service company Schlumberger, the collection's problematic relationship to "primitivism," or the hitches in presenting a synchronic "history"), they represent a valuable addition to the history of modernism as seen from its provinces.

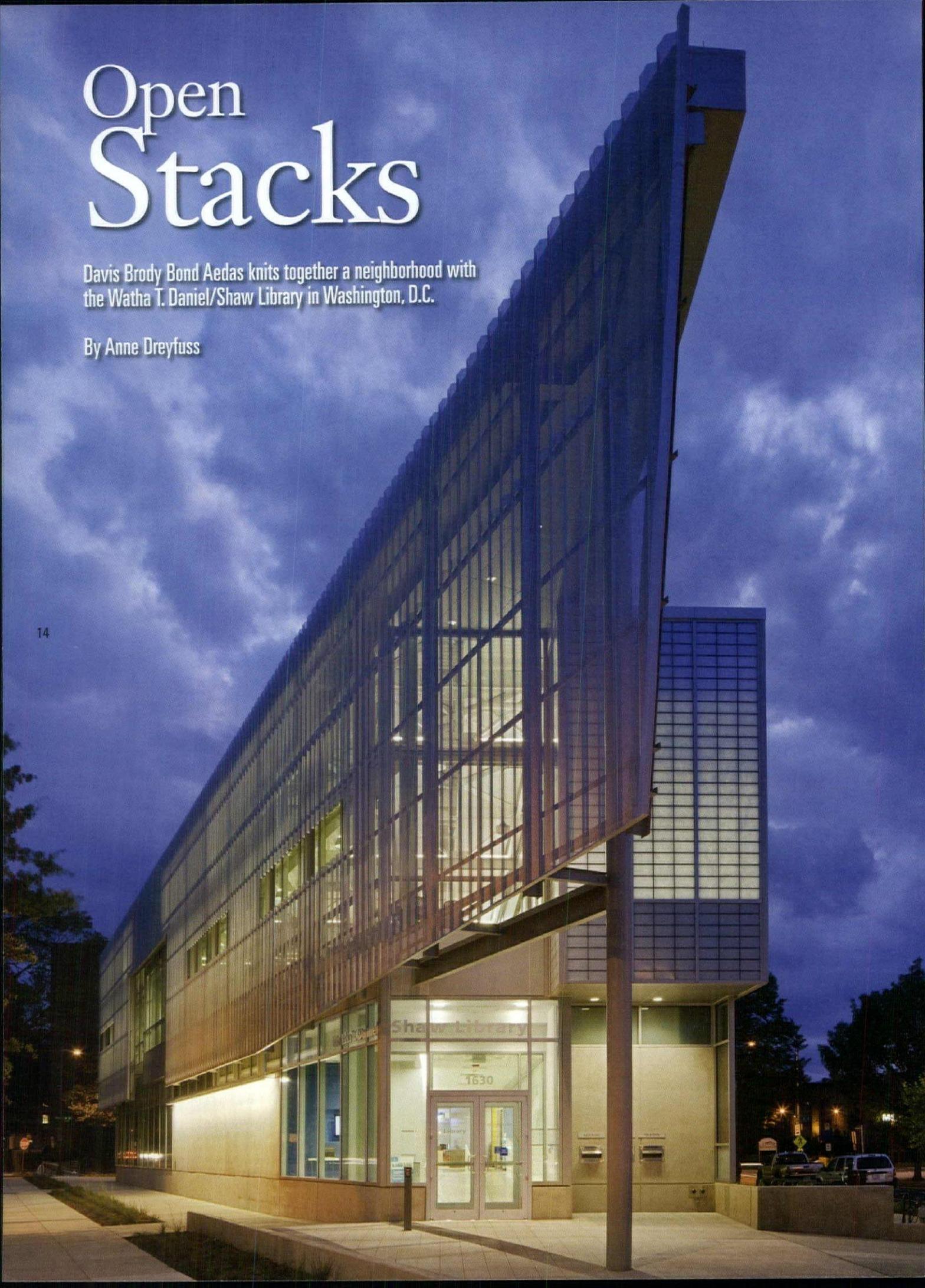
—Melissa Ragain

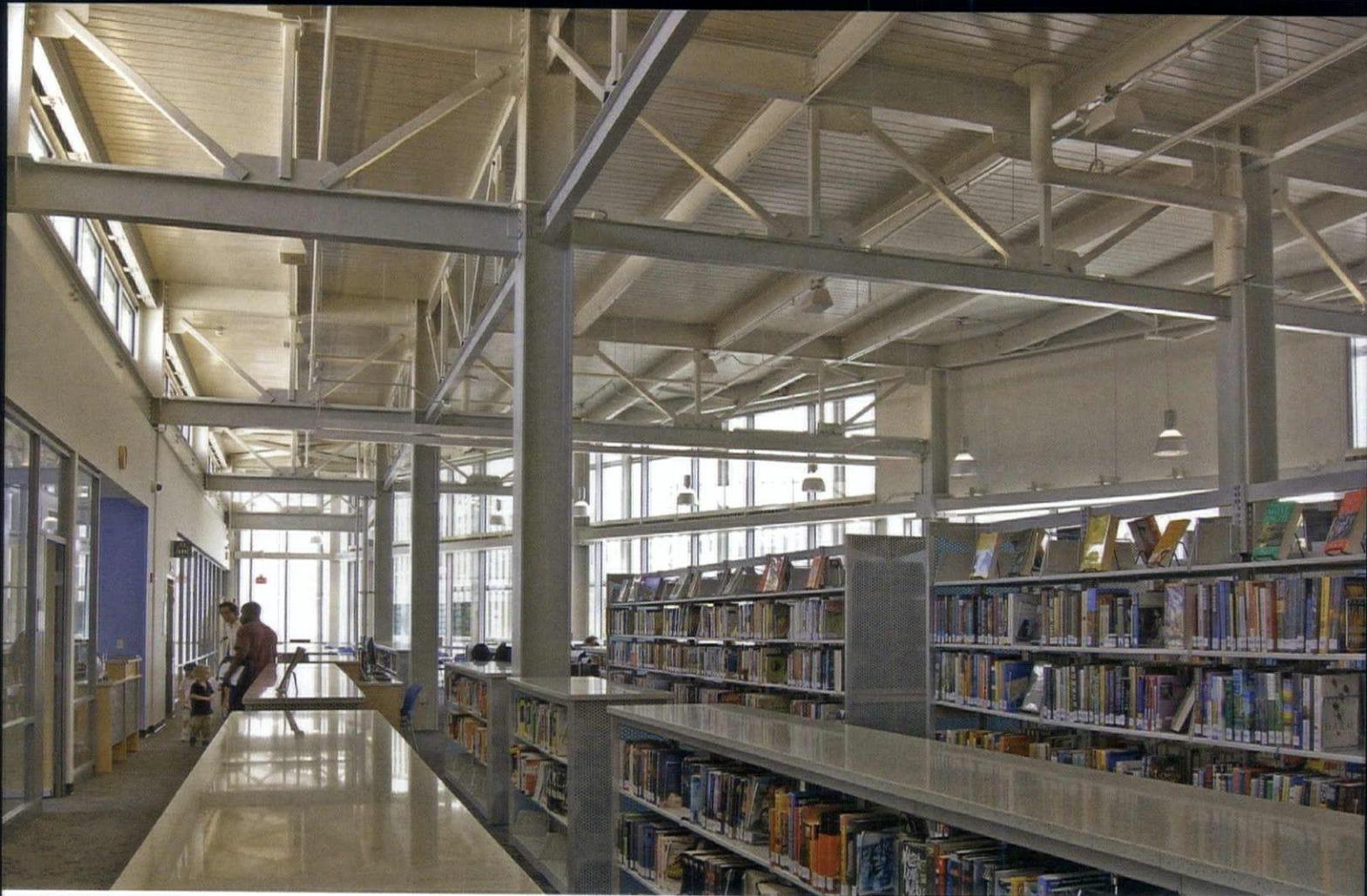


Open Stacks

Davis Brody Bond Aedas knits together a neighborhood with the Watha T. Daniel/Shaw Library in Washington, D.C.

By Anne Dreyfuss





Davis Brody Bond Aedas' steel and glass library (which replaces a 1975 concrete "bunker" by Cross and Adreon Architects) sits on a triangular site in the heart of Washington's Shaw neighborhood.

On a sharply cold Thursday morning, a crowd gathers outside the entrance of the Watha T. Daniel/Shaw Neighborhood Library in Northwest Washington, D.C. The sleek building juts into the busy intersection of Tenth Street and Rhode Island Avenue like a shard of glass in a mass of brick and concrete.

A Georgetown college student sits with his laptop bag slung across his back on the curb beside mothers with children in strollers and old men in layers of tattered sweaters. The library receptionist Jamilla Terry unlocks the door at nine o'clock and welcomes everyone inside.

"There's always a crowd," Terry says.

Patrons flood past the polished concrete floors in the diminutive lobby and disperse along the three levels of the building. Some climb the spare staircase to the *piano nobile*, where the main reading space opens up in every direction.

"Certainly the idea was to inspire," says Peter Cook, AIA, a Washington, D.C.-based principal for the New York firm Davis Brody Bond Aedas.

Cook says he wanted the modern structure to be inviting and full of light, "allowing for people to find their way, explore and discover."

Davis Brody Bond Aedas' design replaces the original 1975 library by Cross and Adreon Architects, a concrete building that opened in the wake of the 1967 D.C. riots. "It was kind of a bunker of a building, very jail-like," Cook says. The new structure is built on the foundations of the original building and, beyond that, no other evidence remains.

Davis Brody Bond Aedas was selected for the project in August 2007 and broke ground in 2009. The building's \$11 million price tag (about \$10 million for construction and an additional \$658,000 for furniture, fixtures, and equipment), was funded out of the District of Columbia's Capital Improvement Plan, according to Jeff Beonvenchio, Director of 21st Century Capital Projects. 21st Century Capital Projects is a department within the Washington, D.C. public library system responsible for the design, renovation, and reconstruction of all city libraries. Davis Brody Bond Aedas' LEED Silver library includes a row of bike racks and a vegetative green roof filled with succu-



The library draws from a wide patron base, which includes Howard University students (just up the street), neighborhood children, and Bollywood dance classes.



17

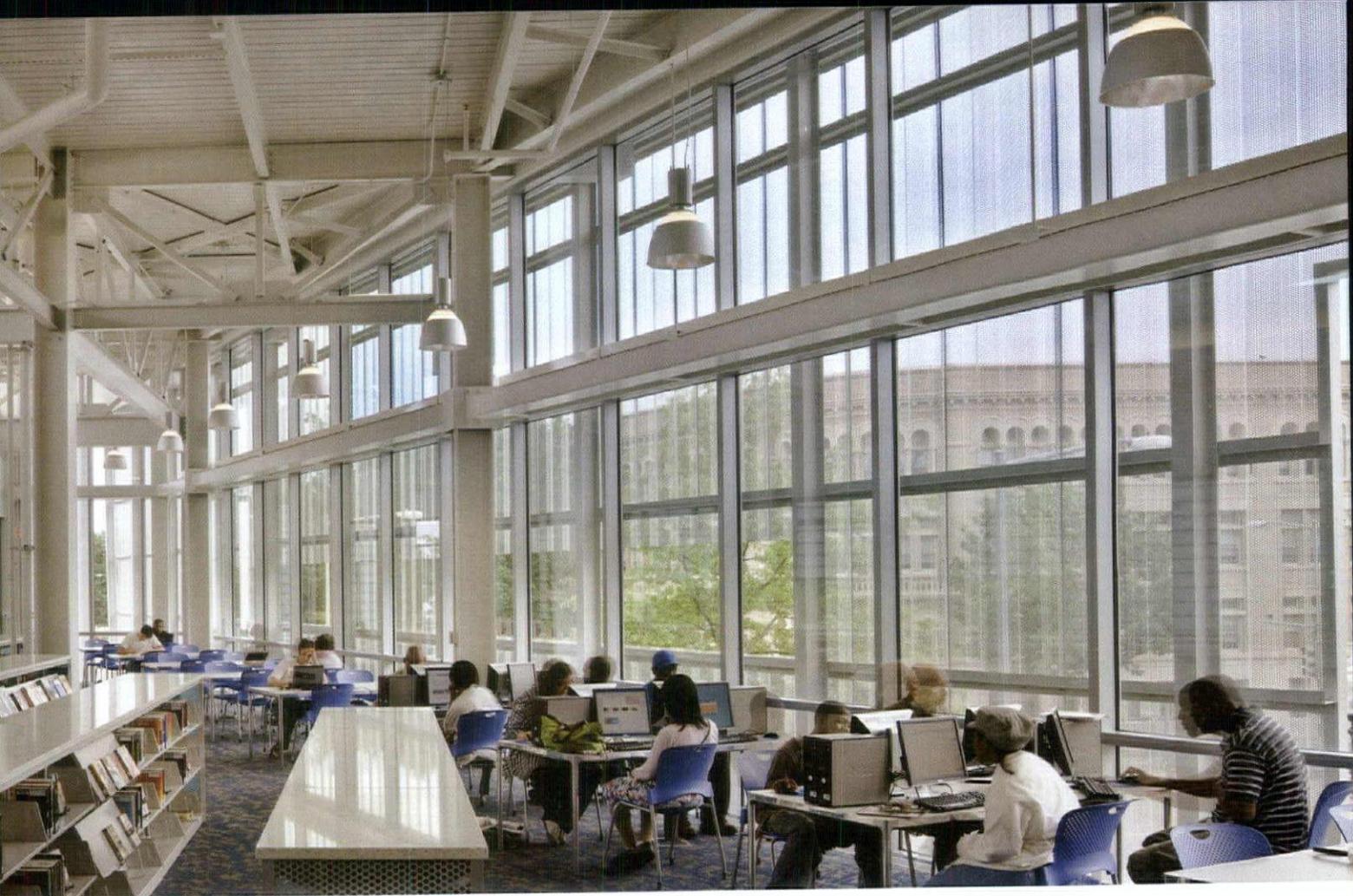
lent plants, intended to address storm runoff. The building also uses low-VOC paint, post-consumer waste materials in the carpet, and a raised floor heating system to cut down on costs to the environment.

In the tangerine-colored children's play area, toddlers bounce along to an electric guitar player strumming familiar children's tunes at the weekly Rock-a-Long program. Meanwhile, Tulane University graduate student Erica Bustinza studies upstairs. She says she comes to the library because of the large windows. "It's important to see the outdoors," Bustinza says.

"A library is a something that we should look up to and celebrate as the cultural institution that it is," says Cook. He rejected the approach of trying to understand and respond to the pre-existing context when building a new structure. "If other people want to respond to our library in the future, then great, but we shouldn't necessarily replicate what is already in place." The modern glass building makes no effort to blend into the surroundings, but rather than appearing obtrusive, it lightens the concrete and rebar buildings of the neighborhood.



Horizontality in such a slim building is emphasized in two ways. The children's reading area (top) is intimately scaled with a low ceiling, while the general stacks are about transparency and bringing light in from the street across the space.



Even if the firm eschewed designing for an urban context, there are gestures inside intended to draw the neighborhood closer in a different way. A colorful mosaic of portrait photos runs along the upper border of the library's entire main floor. The photos of mostly Shaw neighborhood residents include a laughing child, a stoic older woman and a smiling middle-aged man with spiky gelled hair. "Most people do come by and identify themselves [in the photographs]," reference librarian Paul Sweeney says.

Inconspicuously, amidst the medley of neighborhood residents, is a photo of President Obama and below the length of the mural runs a quote from his inaugural address: "We know that our patchwork heritage is a strength...We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth...We cannot help but believe...that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself."

If there are lines of tribe in the Shaw neighborhood, they do not reveal themselves inside the almost 23,000 square foot library, which opened in August of 2010. The library, situated in a historically African-American community, has seen an influx of urban gentrification as derelict buildings have been torn down and remodeled in recent years.

Still, everyone meets at the library.

"It's a huge mix of people," says Eric Riley, Branch Manager for the library. "But it doesn't matter where you're coming from, because we're all here."

Riley says the community still looks to the library for an extensive collection of urban fiction and lectures about the history

of the neighborhood, but "we also have people from this different economic social strata that are right there along with them."

In addition to the standard public library programs such as story time and book clubs, the Daniel/Shaw Library offers at least 50 additional public programs per month, including a Bollywood dance class, a series of workshops on computer skills for job seekers and a lecture on the history of go-go in D.C. "Our programs are really what draw people in," says Riley, who was profiled in the *Library Journal Magazine* as a "mover and shaker" of 2010 in the category of innovation for creating exceptional public programs.

And drawing people in was exactly the aim of the Davis Brody Bond Aedas architects. "While you're standing in the building, you can participate in what's happening on the street," Cook says. "And people walking by can look in and see what's going on inside."

Project: Watha T. Daniel/Shaw Neighborhood Library

Architect: Davis Brody Bond Aedas (Peter Cook, AIA, principal-in-charge)

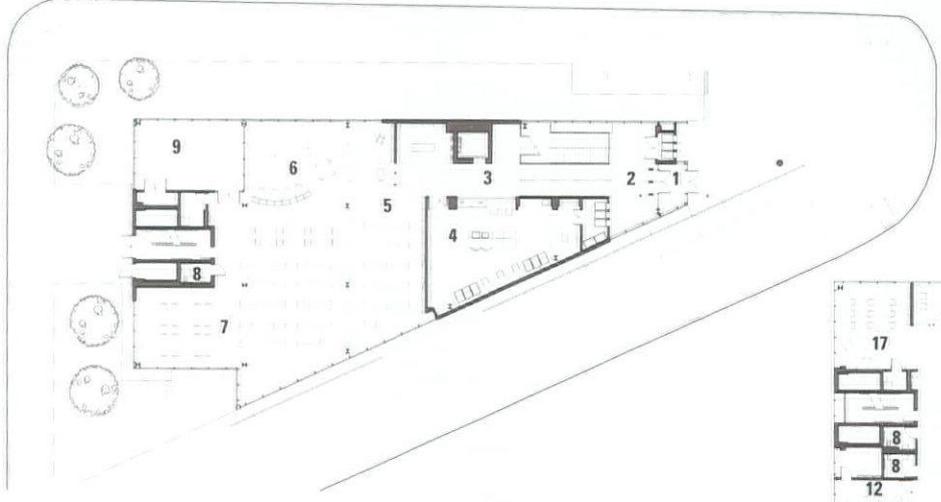
Landscape Architect: Lee and Associates, Inc.

Contractor: Forrester Construction Company

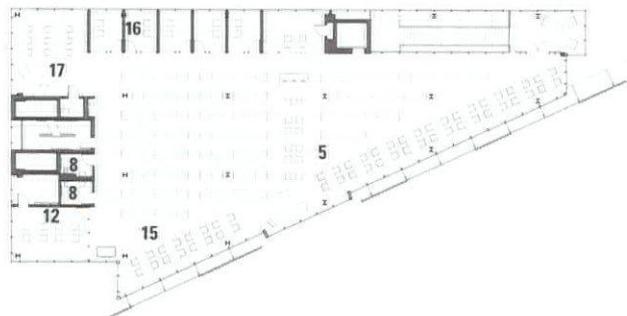
Owner: District of Columbia Public Library

RESOURCES

AUDIO-VISUAL SYSTEM: Vision Technologies (see ad., p. 33); **COMMUNITY OUTREACH:** Collaborative Strategies Group; **STRUCTURAL & CIVIL ENGINEER:** Delon Hampton & Associates; **MECHANICAL ENGINEER:** JVP Engineers; **GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER:** Professional Consulting Corporation; **LIGHTING CONSULTANT:** MCLA, Inc.; **INTERIOR SHADES:** Valley Lighting LLC, Shading Division



Ground Level Plan



Upper Level Plan



Lower Level Plan

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Vestibule | 10 Display Hall |
| 2 Lobby | 11 Office |
| 3 Main Hall | 12 Conference Room |
| 4 Staff Work Room | 13 Staff Lounge |
| 5 Collections | 14 Meeting Room |
| 6 Toddler Area | 15 Periodicals |
| 7 Juvenile Area | 16 Study Rooms |
| 8 Restroom | 17 Young Adult Area |
| 9 Program Room | |

New Chapters

The Freelon Group completes a dynamic urban library in the Anacostia neighborhood of Washington, D.C., with another one on the way near Tenleytown

By Kim A. O'Connell



When it comes to urban development, “renaissance” is an overused cliché. Yet in the gritty Washington, D.C., neighborhood of Anacostia, once known only for its poverty and crime, signs of the R-word are everywhere. The once-neglected Anacostia River waterfront has been targeted for new parks, trails, and mixed-use development. The still relatively new Washington Nationals baseball stadium anchors a major nearby corridor and on the aptly named Good Hope Road. Encircled and embraced by the local residential community, a modern library has risen.

Designed by the Freelon Group of Durham, North Carolina, the Anacostia neighborhood library is just one of 12 new D.C. Public Library branches that are being built—or rebuilt—all over the city, part of a major government effort to reinvest in a chronically underfunded and unappreciated community resource. Led by Chief Librarian Ginnie Cooper, the multi-phased initiative has brought diverse architecture firms to the city, emphasizing modern design, community input, and sustainability. No longer just stuffy book reposi-

tories, these branches are designed to be vibrant meeting places and media centers, fully plugged into the information age. In tough urban neighborhoods like Anacostia, they are getting kids off the street.

Freelon Group, which has already become known in D.C. as the co-designer of the forthcoming National Museum of African-American History and Culture, won commissions to design both the Anacostia branch, which opened last April, and the Tenley-Friendship branch, scheduled at press time to open in late January. (The firm is partnering with D.C.-based R. McGhee & Associates, which is serving as the local on-site architects.) The two sites could not be more different in terms of their urban environment and socioeconomic profile—Anacostia is predominantly African-American, family-oriented, and lower-income, while Tenley has a more upwardly mobile, affluent, and transient population. Freelon Group took care to reflect these differences in the buildings’ design, layout, and relationship to the street. At the same time, both libraries evince a modern aesthetic in keeping with the precedent set by



In less than a year since its opening, the Anacostia Library (at left) has already become a thriving meeting place. The building "floats," according to its designers, incorporating a large patio or "porch" (above).

Philip Freelon, founding principal of Freelon Group, considers the building to have two fronts. The building reads as a two-story building on this side (at right), allowing access to lower-level meeting spaces.





Library patrons can choose from a variety of reading spaces, whether private study rooms, computer stations, or open tables. The children's area faces busy Good Hope Road, reflecting community desires.



Mies van der Rohe in his iconic design of the District’s main Martin Luther King Library.

“The function of the library has changed over time,” says Philip Freelon, FAIA, the firm’s founder and president. “They’re really community centers. We think that our designs are appropriate for the time and place of these libraries. We’re responding to the needs of the current library in the twenty-first century, and the environment these buildings fit in.”

The 22,000 square-foot Anacostia library, for one, is located in a dense residential neighborhood characterized by semi-detached housing and apartments, yet the building also faces Good Hope Road, which has commercial elements. The site was large and sloping and featured several large trees that the community identified as worthy of saving. Freelon Group scaled the building to the neighborhood, with a more horizontal appearance and a long unbroken green roof, punctuated only by a tower.

To accommodate the grade change, the building reads as one story along Good Hope but transitions to two stories on the back side, which faces a long row of duplexes. On Election Day in November, the library served as a polling place, and this “back side” was enlivened by election volunteers offering a smile and a ballot. Freelon says he considers the building to have “two fronts.” The building is set back from Good Hope and is fronted by a wide patio with built-in seating and a bike rack. This space acts almost like a porch, an important symbol in African-American culture that also reflects the local neighborhood houses, according to associate principal Zena Howard, AIA. “Here we wanted to let the building float, as opposed

Freelon was inspired by the aesthetic of the modernist pavilion for Anacostia. The building’s low profile complements its residential surroundings, but the tower at the front lights up and strongly signals its presence to the community.

to pushing it toward the edges like at Tenley,” Howard says.

The most noticeable aspect of Anacostia’s layout is that the children’s reading area is situated along the front of the building, completely visible through the exterior glass along Good Hope Road. Freelon says that the children’s area reflects a larger percentage of Anacostia’s footprint than any of the other branches and was the direct result of community meetings. At Tenley, where the library abuts busy Wisconsin



Extensive daylighting, recycled-content materials, and lighting controls, are also being employed by Freelon Group at Tenley Friendship Library, due to open in January of 2011.



Avenue right across from a Metro subway station, local residents felt that children should be more hidden, and so the kids' area is sited on the back and side of the first floor. At Anacostia, local families felt that the community could collectively protect the children—"it takes a village" in action—and they wanted to encourage other kids and parents to use the library too.

"You want to celebrate the active reading and learning for the youngest kids, and from an operational standpoint, keeping an eye on the kids is important," Freelon says. "The practical approach is to have a highly visible children's area."

In addition to the kids' area, the library has a long central volume, shaped like a parallelogram, that holds the main stacks. Reading and quiet study rooms are punched out from this main space. On a recent weekday, library patrons lined up outside waiting for it to open, and they quickly filled tables, computer

The most striking feature of the library is its perforated green metal roof, which hangs down in strategic locations to act as a sun shade.

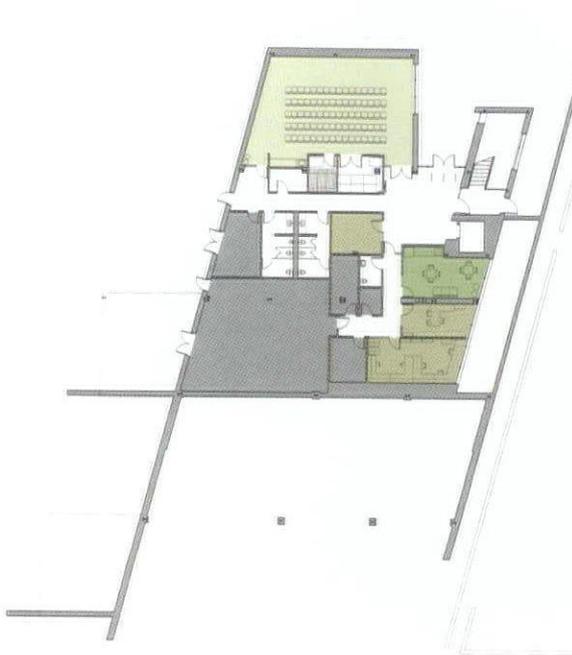
stations, and study rooms. Yet, the building still felt roomy and airy, thanks to the abundant sunlight streaming into the building.

This emphasis on daylighting is just one sustainable element used by Freelon Group to pursue a LEED Silver rating at Anacostia. Other efforts included lighting controls, a raised floor system to accommodate mechanical systems, recycled-content and regionally acquired materials. One of the most visible of these are bookcases made with recycled reading material—strips of which are still visible and readable in the furniture. Outside, a vegetative bio-retention swale to handle stormwater runoff is functional and sustainable, as well as lovely.

Some of these same interventions—extensive daylighting, recycled-content materials, and lighting controls—were employed at the 22,000-square-foot Tenley Friendship branch as well, albeit in a very different space. The two-story branch is sited on a very tight urban lot with an oddly shaped footprint. Among other constraints, the architects had to design a party wall to allow the adjacent developer to abut the library if desired. The building is also structurally sound enough to accommodate a mixed-use development above it, should the community and the city ever opt for one. Unlike Anacostia's horizontal aspect, Tenley Friendship emphasizes verticality, an effect enhanced by coppery vertical sunshades covering the exterior curtain wall that block glare and heat gain while allowing in abundant light. Tenley is also going for LEED Silver certification.

Despite the inherent challenges of the site, the interior is extremely flexible and open, to accommodate changing library needs over time, as D.C. Chief Librarian Ginie Cooper said during a recent tour of the branch. In addition to primary reading areas for children, teens, and adults, the building includes a large public meeting room that can be closed off from the stacks and used for receptions and other after-hours community functions.

"As architects, we like to solve problems and find creative ways to meet the needs of our clients," Freelon says. "We want these buildings to function, but we also want that functionality to be delightful and beautiful."



First Floor Plan

- Special Program
- Building Service/Mechanical
- Classroom / Conference
- Library / Study / Lounge
- Office



Second Floor Plan



Project: Anacostia Library
Architect: The Freelon Group (Philip Freelon, FAIA, principal-in-charge) with R. McGhee & Associates
Landscape Consultant: Lappas + Havener
Contractor: Forrester Construction
Owner: District of Columbia Public Library

RESOURCES

MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL ENGINEER: John J. Christie and Associates; **STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:** Stewart Engineering; **CIVIL ENGINEER:** Delon Hampton and Associates; **GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER:** Professional Consulting Corporation; **LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEMS:** Lutron Ecosystem; **RENEWABLE ENERGY SYSTEMS:** Solar Skies—Solar Hot Water Heater; **LIGHTING:** Horton Lees Brogden Lighting Design; **ACOUSTICAL:** Draper; **ENERGY MODELING:** EMSI



The landscape is an integral part of the design. A vegetative bioretention swale is both attractive and functional, filtering stormwater runoff and contributing to the site's sustainable profile. The team took care to retain several large trees as well.

Silver Sprung

Machado and Silveti carve out a new civic center and plaza for one of Montgomery County's largest towns

By Elizabeth Evitts Dickinson



Located less than eight miles from Washington, D.C., Silver Spring, Maryland is one of the many suburban spurs born out of the Nation's Capital. Over the years, a shopping and business district grew up to serve the township's 76,000 residents, but by the mid-1990s it was evident that downtown Silver Spring needed a boost. The unincorporated township within Montgomery County had blossomed into a bustling suburb, yet it never had a proper civic space—a central area to root its public functions and daily business. Until now.

In 2010, the \$22 million Silver Spring Civic Building & Veteran's Plaza opened to the public. The 44,555 square-foot building and 27,660 square-foot plaza are the cornerstone of a public-private effort to revitalize a stagnated downtown and create a home for both the township's civic functions as well as its public celebrations and daily life.

Boston's Machado and Silveti Associates (MSA) was selected in 2003 to design the project after winning an invited design competition and Lukmire Partnership, with offices in

Arlington and Annapolis, served as architect-of-record. MSA's brief for the building: create a permanent and highly visible space for the Silver Spring Regional Center for town management functions, incorporate an all-purpose community center, and house the non-profit Round House Theater group. The project is at the end of a long corridor of multi-story businesses and shops, including the 550,000 square-foot headquarters of the Discovery Corporation, parent company of the Discovery Channel.

The approximately 66,000 square-foot site once held a two-story garage, but that had been torn down years ago and replaced with a large swath of AstroTurf to host summer concerts and Silver Spring's famous Jazzfest, an annual event that attracts thousands of people. Jazzfest proved to be a driving force in the site plan. "The event was a thread running through the project," says MSA's project director Paul Schlapobersky, AIA. "We needed to make a home for Silver Spring's largest annual event and deal with the challenges of designing a building and an out-



Veteran's Plaza and the Civic Building took their cues from the surrounding urban plan as the project acts as the terminus of commercial corridor between two neighborhoods.





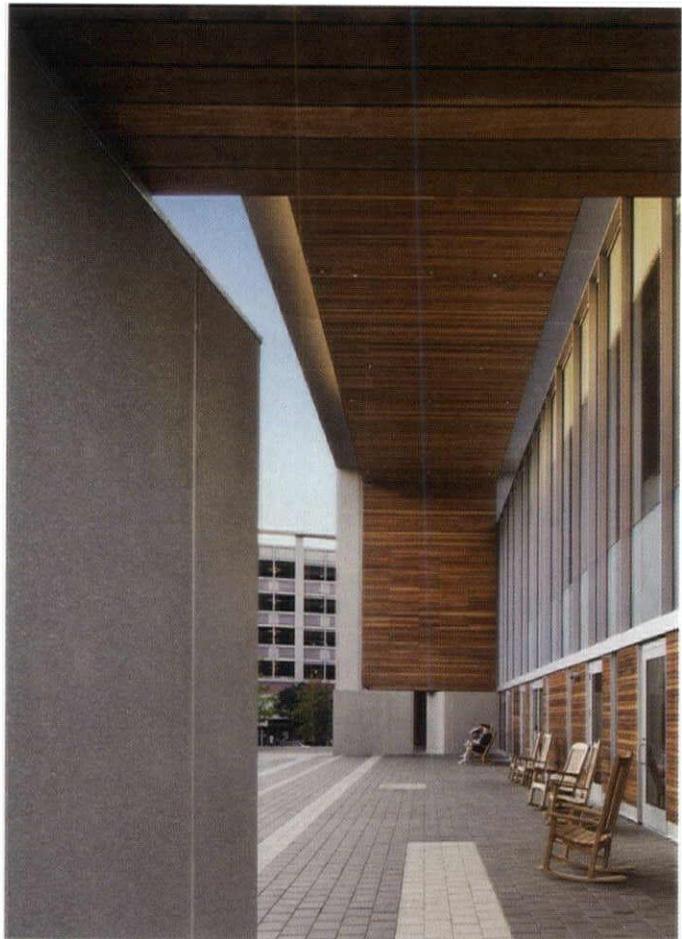
door space that wouldn't feel empty for the rest of the year."

To that end, the architects created an exterior pavilion and ice rink to help bolster activity downtown in the winter months. The ice rink is nestled into a natural indentation on the site's southern side and juts into an exterior plaza that fronts the building. In the summer, it is envisioned that people could lunch in the shade of the covered rink using tables and chairs provided by the town.

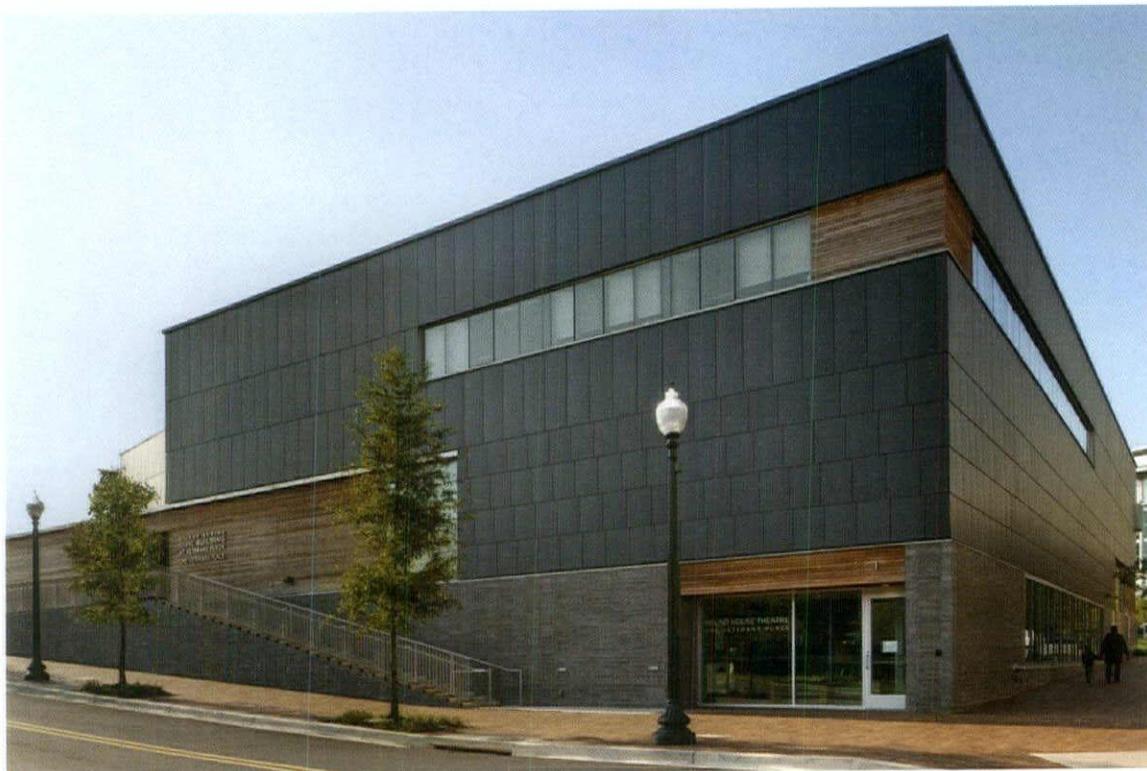
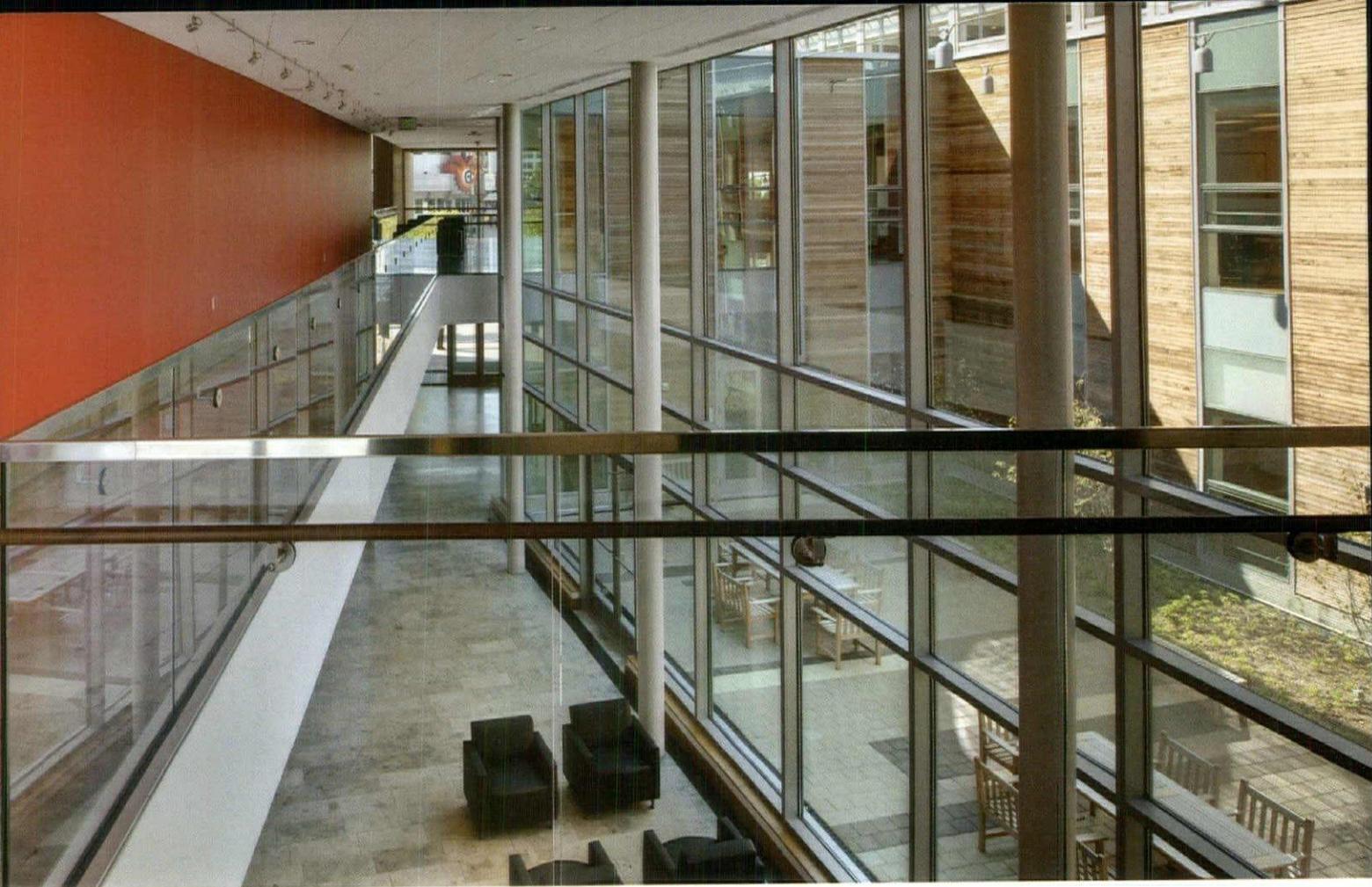
The surrounding context of the site proved a challenge. A block north, the area is primarily residential. To the south, it's commercial. The design team mediated this zoning clash by distinguishing the building's facades. The most visible gestures are south-facing, where the commercial activity lies. The project seems to unfold like one of those expandable travel cups, unfurling from the exterior into the interior with a progression of grand spaces. First, there is the outdoor plaza, created with the help of Massachusetts-based landscape architect Richard Burck Associates, Inc. This leads into a portico—a grand, two-story element that provides a proscenium for outdoor performances. A wall of glass and eight doors allow the public to flow in and out of the building, imbuing the structure with porosity.

The spaces took their cue from the surrounding urban plan and the project acts as the terminus of a commercial corridor along Ellsworth Drive and the design references that pedestrian route. "There is a spine that runs through the building. It traces the line of the sidewalk of Ellsworth Drive," Schlapobersky says.

The line serves as the main organizing tool for the exterior and interior spaces, which are ordered along this axis. The outdoor "rooms" continue indoors with a pre-function space intended to serve as a gathering spot before events for the adjacent Grand Hall, a 5,300 square-foot room intended to house everything from meetings to weddings. This main level also includes a lobby, a 1,650 square-foot indoor courtyard, two activity rooms, and an educational classroom for the



The project seems to unfold like one of those expandable travel cups with outdoor "rooms" (opposite), performance spaces and seating areas (top), and a two-story portico (above).



Dark gray, fiber cement exterior cladding contrasts with the use of the warmer, tropical hardwood ipe (at left). Inside, the design team sought to make the building's functions (and spaces) visible to each other (top).

Round House Theater School. The upper level houses the Silver Spring Regional Center, conference and activity rooms, and an informal gathering spot that overlooks the pre-function space below. A lower level has additional administrative and classroom spaces as well as mechanical and storage.

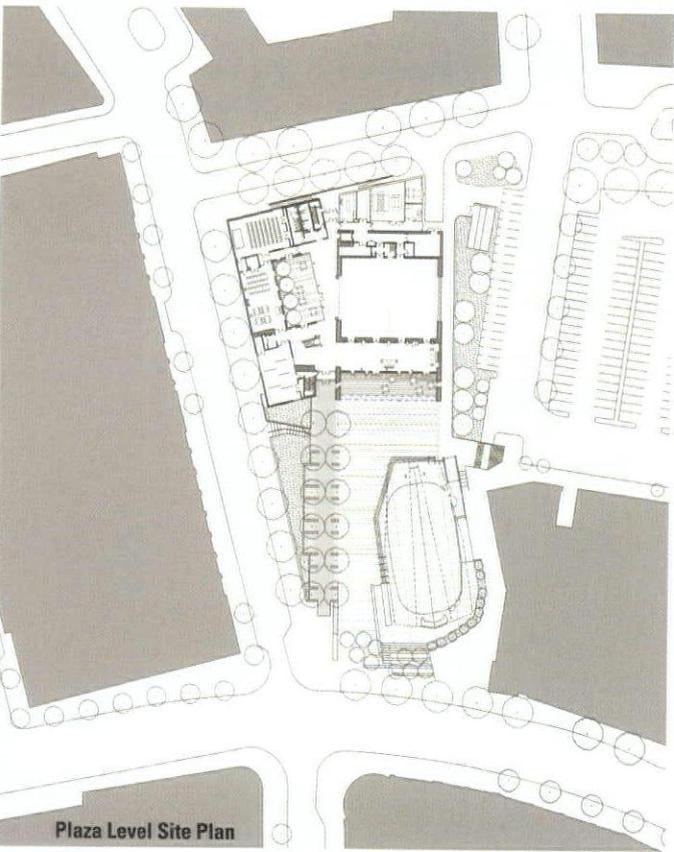
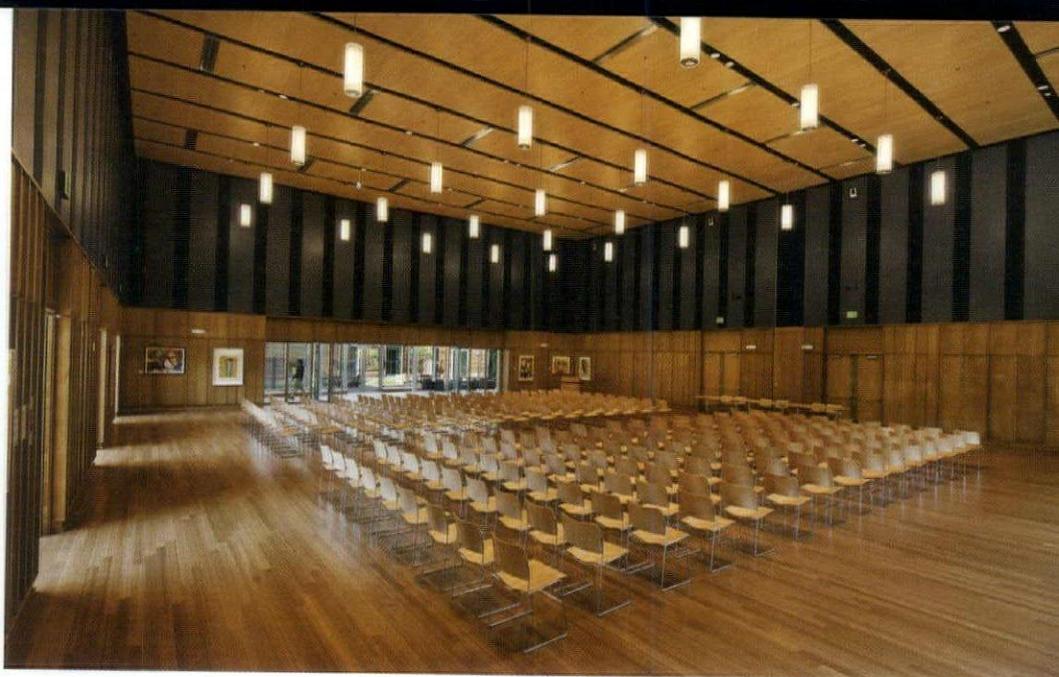
With such diverse activities and clients under one roof, MSA endeavored to honor the town's goal of an open, public

space by creating a lively interior that affords views to other activities. The building is equipped with WiFi and breakout areas with sofas and armchairs that allow the public to pop in and log on. "Internally, we wanted the building's functions to be visible to one another so that you could be in a community meeting and look up across the courtyard and see someone working in one of the break-out areas," Schlapobersky explains.

To the north, the building defers to its residential neighbors and the scale is broken into a more demure, single-story element. MSA recognized that the building doesn't have a "back" to hide mechanical systems, so great care was taken in masking things like air handling units. "We treated it as a building that has four public facades," Schlapobersky says.

The building understands its dual role as the arbiter of community and civic engagement and a showpiece for downtown. As such, the material palette provides a compelling contrast to the surrounding pastel and brick structures with parapet corners. "A lot of thought and conversation went into materials," Schlapobersky says. "The building had to fit in on the urban level with the way it tucked into the site, but then we wanted it to be like the jewel in the crown. It would have a different quality from the surrounding buildings."

Perhaps the most striking element is the dark gray fiber cement exterior cladding, which contrasts with a tropical hardwood called ipe (or, alternatively, epy). "The combo of the wood and fiber cement made a striking composition," says Schlapobersky. "The wood went a long way to making quite a warm building."



Function and pre-function spaces inside (above and below) are flexible enough to accommodate a range of groups to use the civic center. The 66,000 square-foot site (at left) hosts Silver Spring's annual Jazzfest, which proved to be a driving force in project's design.

- Project:** Silver Spring Civic Building and Veteran's Plaza
- Architect:** Machado and Silvetti Associates (Paul Schlapobersky, AIA, project director) with The Lukmire Partnership, Inc. (Nicholas Germano, AIA, partner-in-charge)
- Landscape Architect:** Richard Burck Associates
- Contractor:** Costello Construction
- Owner:** Montgomery County, Maryland

RESOURCES

- SLIDING STOREFRONT:** NanaWall Systems (see ad., p. 4); **MECHANICAL, ELECTRICAL, PLUMBING, & FIRE PROTECTION ENGINEER:** Setty & Associates, Ltd. (see ad., p. 2); **CIVIL ENGINEER:** Loiederman Soltesz Associates; **STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:** Richmond So Engineers, Inc.; **CIVIC BUILDING ARTWORK:** Francie Hester Studio; **PLAZA ARTWORK:** Toby Mendez Studios; **ICE RINK DESIGN:** TriState Ice Management

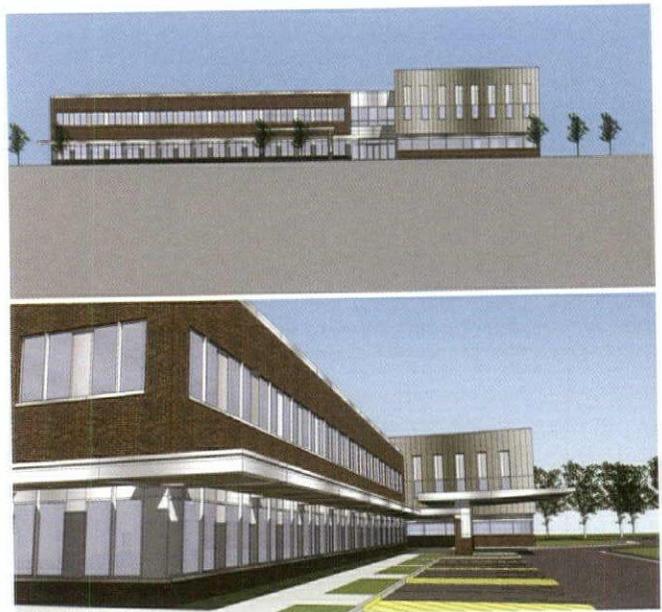


On the Boards



Architect: Clark Nexsen Architecture & Engineering, Norfolk with Gund Partnership, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Project: Duke Hall at James Madison University

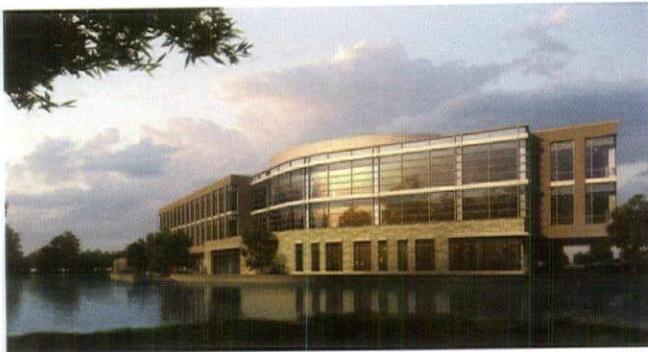
The 82,000 s.f. LEED-Silver renovation and addition of Duke Hall will serve the School of Art and Art History and accommodate several academic programs. Tel: 757-455-5800 / www.clarknexsen.com



Architect: Baskervill, Richmond
Project: Zion Crossroads Health Clinic, Zion Crossroads

This 46,000 s.f., two-story ambulatory shell and core building will provide multi-tenant medical facilities for a general practice clinic, radiology/imaging, and an outpatient surgery center. Tel: 804-343-1010 / www.baskervill.com

32



Architect: Odell, Richmond
Project: Harbourview Medical Arts Pavilion, Norfolk

Anticipated LEED Silver certification, this 90,000 s.f. advanced clinical services facility for cancer treatment will be sited at the water's edge to provide patients with coastal views. Tel: 804-287-8200 / www.odell.com



Architect: PSA-Dewberry, Inc., Elgin, IL
Project: Elgin Community College Academic Library, Elgin, IL

This LEED Silver, 72,000 s.f. library will provide state-of-the-art space for study, reading, a café, a technology center, three biblio-instruction rooms and an exterior green. Tel: 847-695-5840 / www.psa-dewberry.com



Architect: SK&I Architectural Design Group, LLC, Bethesda, Maryland
Project: Halstead 2 at Halstead Square, Merrifield

This 329,000 s.f., mixed-use project includes 220 residential units, retail, basketball court, landscaped courtyard, pool, outdoor cinema and two levels of underground garage parking.
 Tel: 301-654-9300 / www.skiarch.com

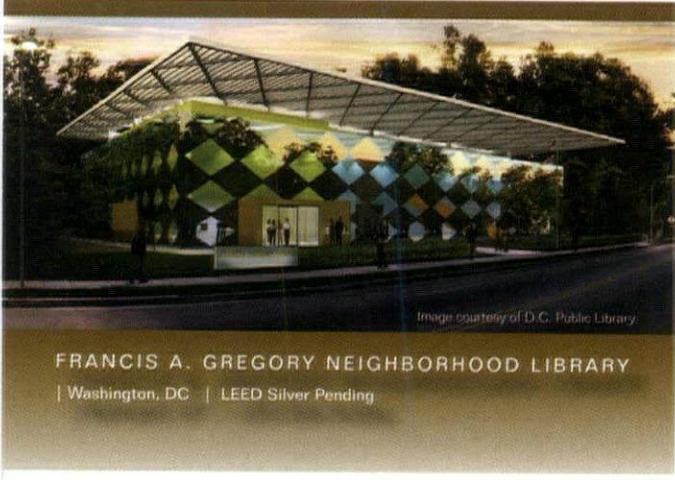


Image courtesy of D.C. Public Library
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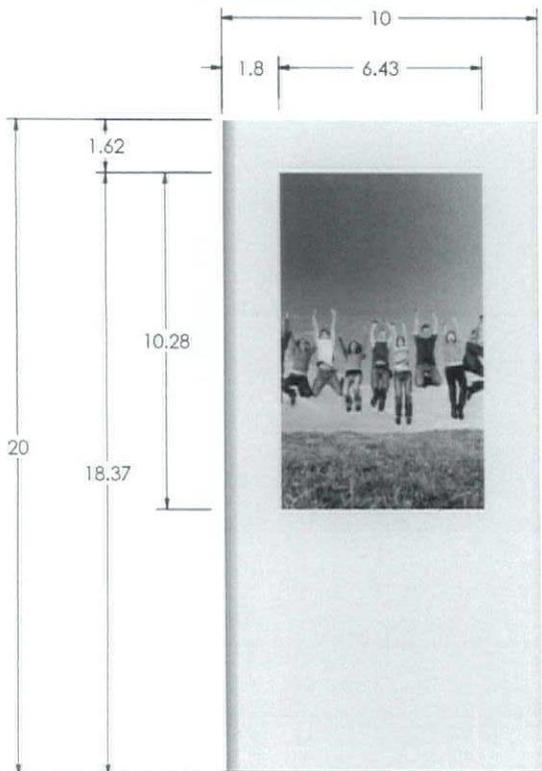
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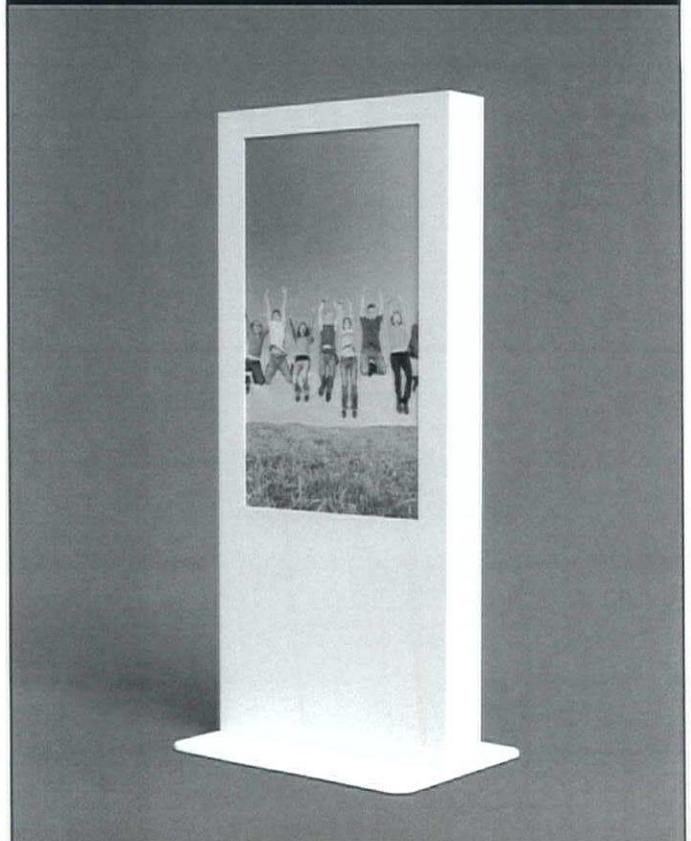
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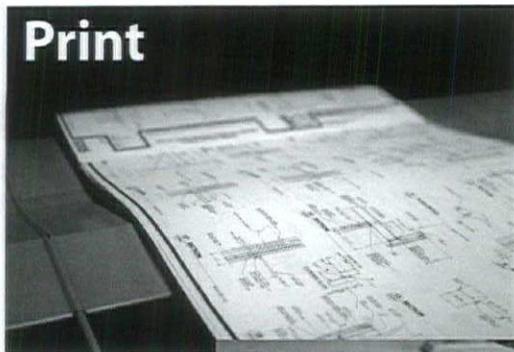


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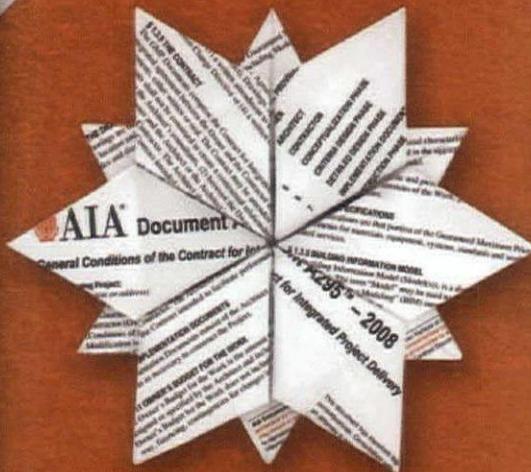
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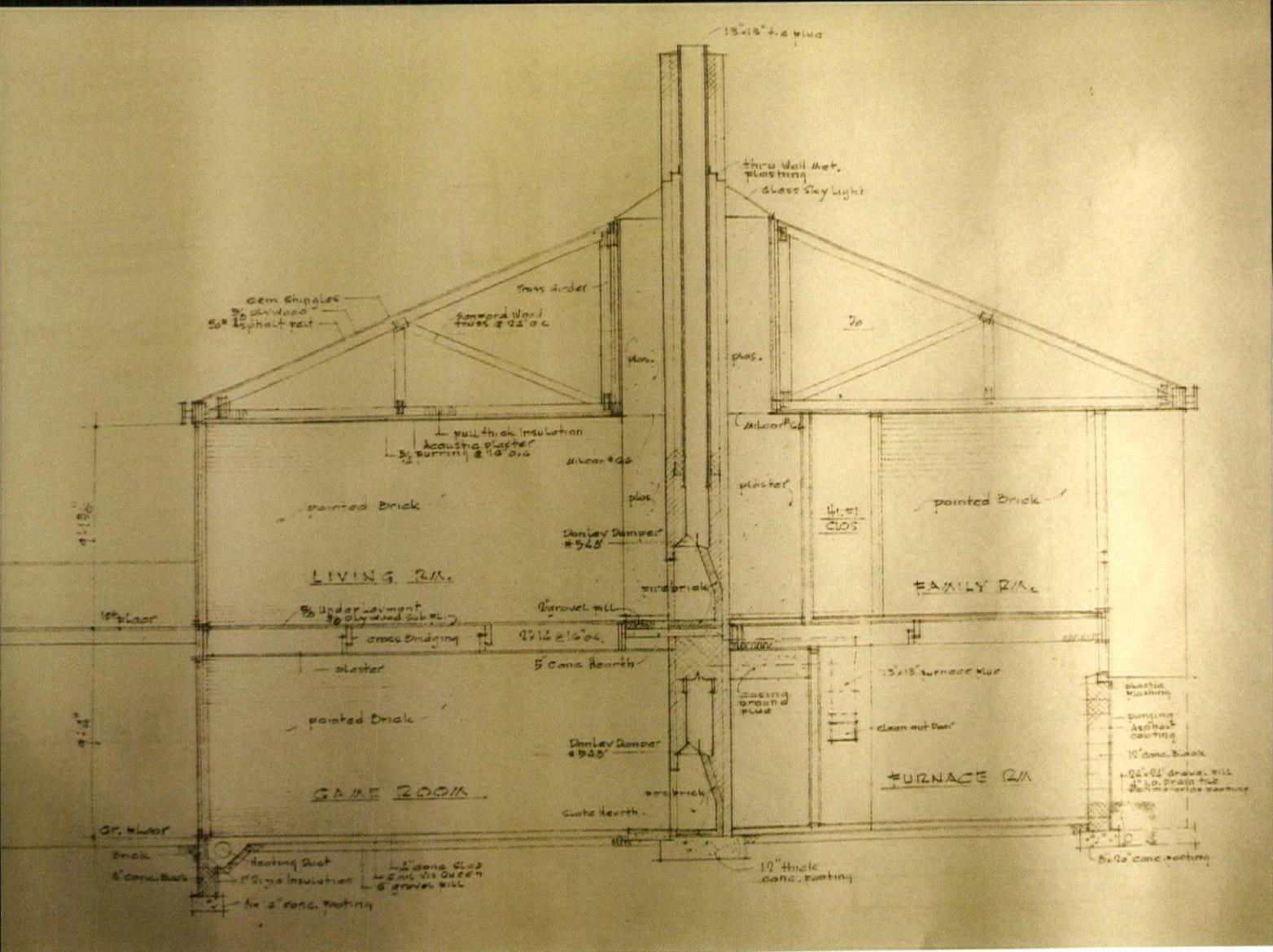
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Cunningham Quill Architects PLLC, with Terrance R. Williams, FAIA



Taking Note

Glancing at the before and after plans of architect David Jameson's Record House Revisited renovation project (see pages 8-10), you wonder where all the interior walls went. Seeing that Jameson succeeded in creating what he calls "a porous, organic space" for the new homeowners, you also want to know how the building stands up.

"When we got the commission, we expected to find bearing walls as typical of the era," reports Jameson about the happy moment of discovering the wooden truss roof system at the Owings Mill, Maryland Record House of 1969. "This is very rare in 1960s houses. Everything [in that era] was usually stick-built," or, composed

Truss Me

of individual framing elements, he reports. Despite the native truss system, the house's interior design by architect Charles Richter and engineer Van R.P. Saxe was partitioned by non-loadbearing walls. It essentially ignored the potential that a truss system afforded.

The science behind the truss system is simple. A series of triangular pediments run parallel across the load-bearing exterior envelope, creating the framing for both the roof and the ceiling. "It is composite construction that can span significantly further than the single depth framing members found in stick construction," says Jameson. The binuclear plan of the house—in two linked pavilions—resulted in two separate truss systems, supported by the

envelope's rugged exposed masonry.

Jameson's intervened by gutting the interior to create space, rather than submitting to the placement of load-bearing interior walls as a guide to define space. "(We) read the pavilions as singular spaces instead of a series of rooms that are carved out by plaster walls," says Jameson. Although it remains hidden, the truss roof system at the Record House defines the home's openness—its original owners reportedly "keeled over" when they visited their former abode—and created a dialogue between the interior design and the bones of the house. "While it's an interiors project," says Jameson, "we used the exterior envelope as a guide."

—R. Tyler King



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