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THE ARCHITECTURE ISSUE

A Milwaukee Dean Helps Reshape the City

By SCOTT CARLSON

Caltech's Staircase to the Stars • Treasured Spaces on Campus • Design in the Public Interest

A Tale



PHOTOGRAPH OF GEORGE PEARL HALL BY KIRK GOTTINGER

Separated at birth? The U. of New Mexico's new architecture-school building ...

of Two Buildings

By LAWRENCE BIEMILLER

ALBUQUERQUE
FORTY-FIVE YEARS and 2,000 miles separate Paul Rudolph's architecture-school building for Yale University and Antoine Predock's for the University of New Mexico. So do advances in construction techniques, the advent of sustainability as a design imperative, and stylistic shifts that have taken architecture from Modernism to postmodernism and then to the age of Frank Gehry, Rem Koolhaas, and Zaha Hadid.

But walk through the brand-new Predock building here, with its interior bridges and you-can't-get-there-from-here overlooks, its expanses of glass and masses of concrete, and it starts to feel so much like Rudolph's multilevel masterpiece that you may be tempted to look around for the Yale building's orange carpet and statue of Athena. The similarities are both entertaining and illuminating: The more you look at one building, the better it helps you see the other.

That's assuming, of course, that you've seen Rudolph's building since last fall, when Yale completed a \$126-million renovation and expansion at the insistence of the architect Robert A.M. Stern. He was a student at Yale while the building was being built and is now the university's dean of architecture, as Rudolph was when the building was designed. Known then as the Art & Architecture Building, it was constructed on a contract that allowed Rudolph to continue making design changes even as the building rose. And make changes he did, until the building's 10 stories (two of them below grade) packed in 37 levels and more than 40 flights of stairs.

When it opened, in 1963, Rudolph's building attracted reams of publicity, and it became one of the defining structures of the Brutalist era—even though, truth be told, its towers, bays, and windows look a bit like heavier, squared-off versions of the lacy Gothic spires, buttresses, and leaded glass with which James Gamble Rogers ornamented Yale's residential colleges. But changes made after a 1969 fire, a growing distaste for Brutalism's fortresslike concrete masses, and the indignities of passing years eventually left Yale with a building that Stern says "was not beloved by anyone who was not an architecture student or faculty member." It survived, he says, only "because it would be too expensive to tear down."

Brutalism will never be to everyone's taste, but if there's any example worth saving, Yale's renovation proves that this is it. Overseen by the architect Charles Gwathmey, who as a Yale architecture student be-

Antoine Predock's building for the U. of New Mexico's architecture school overlooks Central Avenue, once Route 66.

came an assistant to Rudolph and helped him tinker with the design, the renovation has restored Rudolph's interior almost to its original appearance. Decades' worth of parti-



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ATHLETICS

U. of Maine

Student Recreation and Fitness Center

Orono, Me.
Cost: \$17-million
88,000 sq. ft.
Architects:
Cannon Design



ANTON GRANDI-RETO

Designed to serve as both a recreational facility and a social gathering place for students, faculty members, and local residents, this building houses a three-court gymnasium, a fitness center, a swimming pool, a track, and support spaces. The building was designed to achieve LEED silver certification.

U. of New Haven

David A. Beckerman Recreation Center

West Haven, Conn.
Cost: \$12.5-million
56,500 sq. ft.
Architects:
Sasaki Associates Inc.



SASAKI ASSOCIATES INC.

This facility is designed to showcase activity, with a 15-foot-high glass wall along the entire length of the three-court gym and elevated jogging track. The structure is composed of two elements: the big-box gym, with a gently sloping roof, and the lower front section where all of the smaller spaces are gathered. A two-level weight and fitness area forms an entry pavilion with views into the gym and out to the campus.

CAMPUS CENTER

U. of Maine

Wells Commons

Orono, Me.
Renovation
Cost: \$7-million
38,233 sq. ft.
Architects: Bruner/
Cott & Associates Inc.



RICHARD MANDLAKOVY

Wells Commons occupies a prime campus location but suffered from poor internal circulation and limited connections to outdoor space. An addition to the north side of the building now provides both access to the first-floor dining hall and a separate lobby and entrance for the expanded second-floor conference facility. The straightforward brick architecture of the existing building was used as a backdrop for the glass-and-zinc addition. At ground level a large, multi-restaurant retail food operation was added, with a market and bakery that are designed to stay open late.

Wright State U.

Student Union / Recreation Center

Dayton, Ohio
Renovation
Cost: \$6.8-million
140,000 sq. ft.
Architects:
The Collaborative Inc.



HOWARD L. DOUGHERTY

Thanks to a series of additions over 50 years, this building lacked a cohesive identity. The renovation, by creating a sense of transparency, introduced new relationships among existing spaces and made the circulation pattern more intuitive.

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KIRK GETTINGER

The Predock building's gallery runs underneath an outdoor terrace with tiered seating for classes or films.

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as Rudolph's. You can glance into the workshop or the administrative offices, or out at the cartoon-hokey Frontier Restaurant across Central Avenue, which was once Route 66. And the openness of the vast studio space is fantastic—at any time of the day or night a student can see who else is revising drawings or constructing models. While you're looking around, notice the big white wall on the west end of the building that's perfect for screening films, and that is faced by rooftop seating on top of the building's gallery space. And be sure to ask for directions to the all-red men's room in the basement—it's a hoot.

One other point: Just as Rudolph's exterior at Yale is in some ways a reflection of the Collegiate Gothic all around it, Predock's building reflects its own Southwestern locale—not the early-automobile-era motels and restaurants that line Central Avenue, but the geological features along old Route 66 just outside Albuquerque, where the highway faced an imposing escarpment called La Bajada on the way to Santa Fe. The front of Predock's building is dominated by huge masses of concrete that look like they might be rock formations pulled apart by time to reveal the windows between. It's a subtle but intensely confident facade, the perfect foil to the busy commercial streetscape it faces, and the perfect landmark for an architecture school. ■

Lawrence Bemiller is a senior writer at The Chronicle.



LAWRENCE BEMILLER

Bridges and mezzanines overlook the Yale building's main studio space, which features the building's signature orange carpet and corduroy-finished concrete and a statue of Athena.

Bridges and mezzanines are also key elements of the New Mexico building's studio space, which has expanses of glass and enormous trusses that support the library above.



LAWRENCE BEMILLER



PHOTOGRAPHS OF RUDOLPH BUILDING BY RICHARD BARNES

... and its 1963 counterpart at Yale, renovated and expanded last year

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itions were cleared away, new windows were installed, and the orange carpet was recreated. (Air-conditioning was added as well.) Sid Bass, the investor and Yale alumnus who gave \$20-million for the overhaul, asked that the building be renamed, too—it's now called the Rudolph building. Gwathmey's 87,000-square-foot addition opened to dismissive reviews from some people who don't like his zinc-and-stone exterior, but there's no question that he solved a host of long-standing interior problems and made almost all of the building accessible for the disabled. He also created attractive new offices for art-history faculty members and added a two-level library that serves both art-history and architecture students.

Where his renovation really succeeds, though, is in highlighting the openness and playfulness of Rudolph's design, in which no floor resembles any other and a doorway might as easily lead to a tiny balcony in an auditorium as to a hidden seminar suite originally intended as an apartment for visitors. Above the second-floor gallery—around which Rudolph wrapped a third-floor mezzanine lined with offices—is the heart of the building: the fourth-floor studio space, where students' cluttered work tables surround a sunken area kept open for crits, the gatherings in which students critique each other's work. A fifth-floor mezzanine holds more studio space and is connected by a pair of long, narrow bridges that soar over the studios below and let you peer down on students as they work. This is definitely a building to experience firsthand, not just in photos.

The staircase that climbs up inside one of the main facade's towers is even more fun than the bridges. Each landing is shaped differently—some are suspended in air, balconylite, with orange-cushioned benches for private conversations, while others are miniature gallery spaces with reproductions of ancient friezes. From the staircase it's worth your while to wander each floor, going up a few stairs here to reach the dean's office, down a few stairs there to admire a conference room. You come to realize that the building is a giant jigsaw puzzle of shapes that interlock vertically as well as horizontally.

THE SAME IS TRUE of George Pearl Hall, Predock's big, new architecture-school building at the University of New Mexico, which Predock attended. The two ends of the building's main level are connected by a long, glass-walled passage over a large sunken courtyard, one side of which can double as an outdoor theater. The passage can become a crit space by turning panels along one side to close off the view, creating a long surface on which projects can be tacked up. Meanwhile, people in the passage are overlooked by those one level up, in the soaring main studio space, where the passage creates a rift splitting the space in two. More studio space occupies a mezzanine above the main studio—a mezzanine that you reach on a staircase that angles up and over the void of the passage. Architecture puzzles don't get much more interesting.

And everywhere in the building there is glass—between outside and inside, but also looking from one interior space into the next. All this glass admits plenty of bright New Mexico daylight, as well as letting occupants see what their colleagues and classmates are working on. Roger Schluntz, the university's dean of architecture and planning, says transparency was one of the faculty's aims for the new facility—and that in the first months, students' work seemed to improve noticeably because they could see what everyone else was doing.

The many views also make the building as much fun to walk through
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Paul Rudolph's architecture-school building at Yale U., an icon of Brutalism, was renovated by Charles Gwathmey.

