Buildings across Time
Third Edition

Michael Fazio
Marian Moffett
Lawrence Wodehouse

An Introduction to World Architecture
Creating an environment of random episodic incidents and encounters that can be experienced in myriad sequences and combinations and results in a unique, cumulative awareness for each participant. Their Museum of American Folk Art (2001) stands just west of the entrance to the Museum of Modern Art on 53rd Street in New York City. Almost menacing, with white-bronze panels hanging like giant shields on the outside, its eight-foottall facade designed by Toshio Ikarashi is a sculptural statement. It is difficult to imagine a better fit between architecture and museum contents, where the walls oscillate between the polarities of hard-edged, sometimes disturbing, reality and romantic longing. So it is difficult to imagine what the construction documents looked like, as the compressed detailing is dizzying as the internal spatial manipulation. Materials choices suggest the same kind of indeterminacy seen in the exterior, and include iron-like wood from long-abandoned Douglas-fir logs, bush-hammered concrete, cold-rolled steel, and aged Italian limestone. The architects have combined the rich and varied experience of moving through their buildings to that at John Sloan's 13 Lincoln's Ian Fields (see Figs. 14.7-14.8), and the comparison is valid, as both contain tall, top lit spaces and make virtues of their designers' obsessions.

MACK SOSCING AND MERRILL ELAM

Difficult to characterize—part 1950s drive-in restaurant, part Russian Constructivism, part art installation, part (sometimes by economic necessity) local hardware store—the steel work of Atlanta architects Mack Scogin (born 1943) and Merrill Elam (born 1944) speaks with the voice of authenticity in the language of originality. Their eclectic inspirations seemed to know no bounds, they the Mamertine Villa Giulia in Rome or a thrown-together hardware store in some forgotten corner of the South, and in the potentially spirit–sapping urban marketplace, they have somehow retained their sense of wonder about the process of building.

Long before the computer made it possible to more easily define irregular geometries and so to emphasize building enclosure systems, Scogin and Elam moved the selection of external cladding materials outside the realm of the familiar and into that of admirable strangeness. The Brunch Lobby in Clayton County (1989) outside Atlanta looks like a miniature airplane hangar wrapped in the mirrored cover of an oxidantly overstated composition book (actually made by camouflaging-paint covered sheet metal). When the facility opened, patron numbers soared.

In 2000, they completed their design for Knowlton Hall that houses the architectural school at The Ohio State University; the building opened in 2004. The earliest plans looked like a collage of overlapping theatrical plans, with their lines responding to the campus's pedestrian traffic pattern (a more site-specific take on Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum discussed below). Because of budgetary constraints and concerns for internal orientation, a second scheme became completely orthogonal, with studio spaces and faculty offices to each side of a "system of inclined [circulation] plans" (not unlike Aalto Siza's museum in Santiago de Compostela; see Fig. 16.44). Eventually, the architects gave up their grid plan dynamism—by exposing it to the original set of pedestrian traffic patterns—in favor of expanding it to the limits of the irregularly shaped site. Consequently, the building's cladding became as aggressive as the site-generated lines of force. Highly textured expanses of marble shingles (their patterning inspired by quarrying practices but given the architects' lexicon of Southern inspirations, perhaps comparable to a marble masonry) present a hovering curtain in front of set-back glazing. Canyon-like, transparent, landscaped courts and a huge, almost intimidating, cut-out corridor entry and interior spaces where architectural intentions never seem to end, make for a building that demands engagement.

At Wellesley College, southwest of Boston, Scogin and Elam got to take the architectural gloves off, to speak with their design for the Wang Campus Center (Fig. 16.59). The Wellesley buildings are drawn along an almost wild landscape that works its way down to a lake. The jagged massed Campus Center looks like something geological, powerfully carved and then deposited here during the last period of glaciation. Wellesley has long prided itself on diversity, before the word became politicized jargon, and on educating students to think for themselves, which means that the right institution and the right architects have met.

The Center stands at the heart of the campus, and has a plan outline that looks like a New England decapitated crucifix, clad extended and making its way across the landscape. The program called for spaces to support Wellesley's multifaceted student organizations as well as bookstores, pub, cafe, and a big room for varied events. Consequently, the wildly angular plan contains only a limited number of identifiable rooms, being made up instead of "amorphous spaces and the edges of those that invite students to gather up what they need and appropriate a place of their liking.

Taken to three dimensions, the building becomes lived-in sculpture, not the Frank Gehry type, where Barnaby exterior from sometimes gives way to conventional interior planning, but a spatial plurality that reflects the program and the institution. As for comparable thinking, the work of Hans Schultz comes to mind, but also of Herbert Green's kind like Prairie houses and the unlikely, fluid space investigations of Rieder Kiesler for his "endless house."

But comparison could just as easily be made to great up-on-oversized things in backalley Boston or in rural Georgia. All this contextual and historical energy notwithstanding, the Wang Campus Center is artfully composed without being overwrought and with its "geological" layers of copper-shingle cladding, could even speak coherently to a 1970s Roman brick subdivision house. It is another building from the minds of Mack Scogin and Merrill Elam that could not have been conceived without modern art, the computer, and steel erectors who appreciate a challenge.

DANIEL LIBESKIND

Daniel Libeskind was born in Poland in 1946 but studied architecture in England and the United States. At one time labeled a Deconstructivist, he is perhaps better described as someone intent upon expressing ideas and happening to use architecture as his means of communication. His working method has involved collaborating in urban circumstances, he has explored the topographic nature of the city, as in his winning design for the City-Campus concert in Berlin (1987). He created the plan of his Jewish Museum in Berlin in means of determinants ranging from the geographical plotting and connecting of addresses for notable Jewish Berliners, to a close scaling of the text for Arnold Schoenberg's unfinished opera Moses and Aaron and art critic Walter Benjamin's One Way Street. Needless to say, connecting the physical reality of the building with such myriad, some would say arcane, inspirations requires perseverance, if not elation, on the part of an observer. Supporters say that only through such rarefied means can such an extreme circumstance as the Holocaus be even approached, never mind understood, and that Libeskind has accomplished exactly that. His building is an extended, zigzagging, concrete box covered with a metallic skin in which angular openings have been left in a variety of shapes and patterns. The post-modern interior has the quality of a three-dimensional maze, more akin to a house of illusions or the set for a Kafka play than a conventional museum.

Libeskind won the international competition for the World Trade Center after Miron Yamazaki's towers (see Figs. 14.20) were tragically destroyed by terrorists-piloted airplanes in 2001. The intensely political and emotional circumstances surrounding the competition, and the overlapping jurisdictions and economic interests on a site at the base of Manhattan have led to co-authorship with David C. Childs and significant revisions in his proposal.