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VISION+VOICE 3

CHANGING THE COURSE OF FEDERAL ARCHITECTURE

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IT WOULD BE VERY SAD COMMENTARY ON THE STATE OF OUR DEMOCRACY IF WE DECIDED TO SKIP OVER THIS POINT IN TIME AND SUGGEST THROUGH OUR ARCHITECTURE THAT WE WERE NOT HERE. I'M A VERY STRONG ADVOCATE OF GSA'S ASSERTION THAT ARCHITECTURE SHOULD BE OF ITS TIME. THE TIME THAT WE EXPRESS IS THE TIME WE LIVE IN.

– Maurice Cox, GSA National Peer

INTRODUCTION

In 1990, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) reestablished its national design awards program, which had been dormant for more than a decade. The biennial program proved to be a clarion call that something was amiss. GSA's new buildings simply did not measure up. The awards went primarily to historic buildings designed by dead architects. The 1990 and 1992 awards juries, which were composed of private-sector design professionals, overwhelmingly recommended awards for preservation, sending a clear message that there once was a time when the federal government designed and constructed buildings of distinction that were worthy of restoration. Jurors raised a big question mark: Why couldn't federal architecture have the high standards it once did?

GSA got the message. In 1993, it invited the members of the jury and other prominent design professionals, along with representatives from the American Institute of Architects and the National Endowment for the Arts, to what was termed a "procurement" meeting at its headquarters in Washington, DC, to discuss how the process could be improved to produce well-designed buildings that provided quality work environments and brought civic pride and value to their communities. While dozens of recommendations emerged from the meeting, one resonated above all the others: focus on the quality of the lead designer—the person responsible for the design of the building. At the time, the GSA architect/engineer procurement process centered on putting together the whole team of architects, engineers, and consultants, along with meeting requirements for including minority and women-owned businesses. It was a cumbersome, time-consuming, and costly process that relegated creativity and quality to the bottom of the evaluation criteria. Architecture firms seemed to put their third string team on GSA projects, not their most talented designers. "Good enough for government" was—unfortunately—the mindset of both GSA and the design profession.

Following up on the recommendation to emphasize the lead designer, GSA initiated a couple of pilot projects. It asked architects in the private sector to participate in design reviews and architect selection processes for several new federal courthouses. Based on these successful efforts, GSA initiated the Design Excellence Program in 1994. The program streamlined the architect/engineer selection process for major new construction projects, focusing on the lead designer through an evaluation of

his or her portfolio. Fewer requirements and faster GSA response translated into lower costs for both the federal government and the private firms competing for projects. Lower costs, in turn, opened up opportunities for emerging talents and small businesses, making the process more inclusive.

Since its inception a decade ago, the Design Excellence Program has evolved and expanded to produce buildings that best reflect the dignity, diversity, vigor, and stability of the federal government. This two volume publication highlights those changes through the voices of architects, artists, landscape architects, and construction managers who have contributed to the program's development. Based on oral histories recorded from the summer of 2002 to the winter of 2004, their insights build on the first volume of *Vision+Voice*, which documented the recollections of public officials and design professionals on federal design initiatives from the 1960s to the initial years of the Design Excellence Program. This earlier publication highlighted the "Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture," a one-page document written in 1962 by the late U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, that laid the groundwork for the Design Excellence Program and its quest for distinguished contemporary architecture representing the best of America and its democratic values.

Volumes 2 and 3 of *Vision+Voice* trace the progress of the Design Excellence Program over the past decade, starting with some of the trail-blazing architects who helped establish its direction. Initially, Design Excellence only applied to new buildings costing \$25 million or more. Over time, it has broadened its reach to encompass virtually all new GSA construction projects as well as major repair and alterations to existing structures. As discussed in this publication, urban design and historic preservation have become increasingly significant parts of the Design Excellence Program in recent years as government officials and the public alike realize the potential of federal projects to revitalize neighborhoods and communities.

Several chapters discuss the role of Design Excellence peers who help GSA maintain the highest standards in selecting architects and guiding the design and construction of federal projects. Over the past

decade, these leading private-sector design professionals have grown in number and types of expertise to broaden the scope of the Design Excellence Program. The first National Register of Peer Professionals established by GSA in 1994 comprised 23 people who were all architects and acted as advisors to GSA's Architect/Engineer Evaluation Boards. By 2002, the register was composed of more than 350 experts representing a wide range of disciplines from architecture, preservation, and urban design to engineering and construction management, who were full-fledged voting members of A/E Evaluation Boards.

As reflected in this publication, the Design Excellence Program has continued to embrace a broader range of disciplines, with increased attention paid to interior design, landscape architecture, and civic art. The goal is to better integrate all elements of design in order to create more secure and inviting environments. With that aim in mind, GSA launched the First Impressions Program in 1998 to revamp the lobbies and public spaces of existing federal buildings. In 2000, Art in Architecture, the GSA program for commissioning civic artwork, was joined with the Design Excellence Program to form the Center for Design Excellence and the Arts. The objective is to foster closer collaborations between architect and artist in order to integrate artwork more fully into each building. A conversation between an architect and an artist in this publication illustrates the success of this collaborative strategy.

New voices continue to be added to the Design Excellence Program. Emerging talent, small, small disadvantaged, and women-owned businesses, along with artists, designers, and managers from other disciplines, are steadily enriching the design of federal buildings. But even the best design can be thwarted with poor project management and poor construction. That reality prompted GSA to create the Construction Excellence Program in 1999. The voices of several construction excellence peers reveal the variety of methods used by GSA during recent years to improve the building process and to prevent cost overruns. Working in tandem, the Design Excellence Program and Construction Excellence Program have helped GSA achieve a lasting legacy of quality federal buildings and a strong framework for future projects.

I TRY TO DISCIPLINE MY DESIGNS SO THAT THE OBJECTS IN THE ROOM RELATE TO THE ROOM ITSELF, JUST AS THE COLLECTION OF ROOMS OR SPACES RELATE TO THE WHOLE OF THE BUILDING, AND THAT BUILDING THEN RELATES TO THE LARGER URBAN SCALE.

– *Michael Graves*

VISION+VOICE

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MICHAEL GRAVES

I'm one who plays within the humanistic rules of architecture. What's the difference between a window and a door, a floor and a ceiling? I consider those kinds of things within the building or the urban setting. Some architects say, "We don't use rooms. We're only interested in space." I find that limiting. I think about how the room or the space is inhabited with artifacts such as chairs and tables. It never occurred to me that architects should stop at the skin of the building and hire an interior designer to do the insides. I try to discipline my designs so that the objects in the room relate to the room itself, just as the collection of rooms or spaces relates to the whole of the building, and that building then relates to the larger urban scale.

ONE CAN LOOK AT OUR CIVIC BUILDINGS OF 15 OR 20 YEARS AGO AND SEE THAT THERE WAS A KIND OF RANDOM SELECTION OF ARCHITECTS FOR THOSE BUILDINGS. THE SELECTED ARCHITECT MAY HAVE BEEN FROM THAT REGION OR KNOWN FOR DOING A CERTAIN KIND OF TYPOLOGY, WHETHER IT WAS A COURTHOUSE OR A LIBRARY. THEN ALONG CAME GSA'S DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROGRAM TO USE THE BEST AVAILABLE TALENT OUT THERE AND TO BE STRONG ENOUGH TO WRITE ITS POLICY DOWN. THE PROGRAM IS ENGAGING TO ME IN HOW IT CAN GET A CITY OR A PLACE TO CHANGE ITS STRIPES.



Lately, GSA's selection process is being done in a variety of ways. Sometimes, GSA projects are awarded through design competitions of various lengths. Other times, the way of engaging an architect is through a series of interviews that reveal the architect's knowledge of place and context, which may be relative to the selection of a site, for instance. One problem always with a competition, no matter what its length, is that you have very little interaction with the client. So you end up winning or losing based on inaccurate knowledge of what the client might want. If the competition is held in



Design concept for the E. Barrett Prettyman U.S. Courthouse, Washington, DC

one day, which we've done, the architect doesn't lose as much capital as working on a competition for three or four months, having six or eight people on it for all that time, and then losing. You don't get anything back except a design that you can put in your next monograph. That's not enough. Even when clients say we'll accept the cost, sometimes you have the feeling that they don't know how costly it is to make something to win. And the competition might end up being the choice of an architect but not the choice of that site. Having a competition among four or five architects is a very costly way of doing a hypothetical site development when the site that's ultimately picked isn't that one at all. So those are the kinds of questions that need more sorting out.

In the short [charrette] competition that we did for the federal courthouse in Nashville, Tennessee, we were allowed to use four people in a drafting space that was separate from the other teams. It was a very reasonable way to do it. You were only giving up one day, and the jury made a decision quickly. Again, the competition happened without interaction with the users of that building, so there was a little fly in the ointment for that. But I've found the national charrette to be quite rewarding, and I think it's the best use of our design talents. We do about as much work preparing for an interview as doing a design charrette. They are about on par with each other.

Our interest in doing any project and certainly doing anything for the GSA is to make buildings and enhance sites in a way that is exceptional. At least, we try and some projects are more successful than others. We are also interested at how the next generation will look at our work. Today, there's nearly no consensus as to what a building should be. It's very different from the Renaissance when the language was established and the conversations within that language were the places for invention. There was a strong consensus as to what architects were doing.

Many architects today think a building can be in opposition to the form of the city and be read that way. I'm not one of those. I'm interested in the idea of making architecture that gathers up influences from the city's structure, not just the buildings next door. How a building might use the material of the place, but most of all, how a building deals with the underlying context—wherever we are, whatever city we're in. That causes the design character and the larger scheme of the whole.

I try to find the language that's established within the urban structure, such as street patterns or patterns caused by climate, and get those into the scheme of the building. And in doing that, you're a lot closer to the context, it seems to me, than simply engaging the more cosmetic idea of compatibility with the city.

In the Prettyman U.S. Courthouse in Washington, DC, at the intersection of Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues, there was an urban architectural war going on. On one side of the street is John Russell Pope's National Gallery of Art and I. M. Pei's extension to the National Gallery. On the other side, is Arthur Erickson's Canadian Embassy. All of that architecture was demanding to be sure. And none of the buildings, in my view, were getting along with each other. Each is so strong that you wouldn't know that the community of buildings around them made up the classical city of Washington.

In our project, one architect was brought in to make the master plan, and we were brought in to elaborate the master plan. I don't think that's the best way of doing it. I think the people who make the master plan ought to be the building architects. I'm sure that our building would have been very different if we had been given free reign and not had the first architect give his version of the site plan.

It's interesting that the Prettyman Courthouse was one of the first buildings built after the Second World War that addressed the idea of comfort and the way a building

behaves relative to the climate. It was one of the first buildings in Washington to have air-conditioning. And, therefore, the structure of the building changed in terms of the courtyards and depth of inner spaces. There weren't as many windows to the interior courtyards and so on. The girth of the building played against the sunlight and so on because it was to be air-conditioned. So that affected the way of walking through the spaces and going to the courtyard and going from the public realm to the private. It got switched around a little bit.

One of the things we did was to position the judges' chambers to frame the corner of Pei's National Gallery wing and the axis to the U.S. Capitol. That's the kind of engagement I like: using the context in a way to bring more players into the urban fabric and not doing it differently for the sake of being different.

We have a very interesting site plan to work with in the Department of Transportation headquarters in Washington. It's a new building not a renovation. That helps a little bit. The blocks are very elongated in the east-west direction. And therefore, we had the chance to break down the mass in almost a four-block area and create an appropriate scale for the city. In the center, we made a continuing atrium between one block and the other. We could have just closed the street, but we found it more interesting to break the building down to the urban scale of the surroundings.

The people working at DOT deal with bridges, highways, railroads, trucking, and the largest scale of transportation in this country. So we made a bridge out of the building in the interior. That was pretty exciting. The other ingredient that was perhaps a little less exciting was working for the developer, who tried to get the maximum square footage out of our scheme. The role of GSA in that project was enormously helpful because GSA had terrific clout and support for the architect. It wasn't easy to work

for DOT, the developer, as well as the city of Washington in terms of approvals. The project was a balancing act for all of us.

The artist is helped by the inclusion of his or her work within the building fabric, the storytelling of a building. Sometimes an architect can choose an artist from a short list of painters, sculptors, and other people who would work well within the building fabric. Sometimes that choice is out of the hands of the architect. Sometimes it's plunk-down sculptures that have nothing to do with the nature of the building. And you often get somebody from the nearest museum acting as a curator for all of these artists, who chooses a figurative artist or an abstract artist that they like. Sometimes when the architect is left out, he or she can't tell the story of the building in a way that seems appropriate and use the art as a continuum of that story.

When McKim, Mead and White, a turn-of-the-century American architecture firm, was awarded the commission to design the Boston Public Library, the first thing Charles McKim did was contact his painter collaborator and to his sculptor collaborator and say, "we've got a commission." McKim knew that architecture alone could do one thing, but he couldn't tell the story of the culture as clearly as he wanted. Architecture, painting, and sculpture were seen as a whole. Today, we bring in the painter, the sculptor, and the other site artists after the beginning of the building design. Sometimes, the architect isn't a part of the committee and, in that case, the project is bound to go awry. And there's no reason to hire the top guns. That's never going to expose younger artists who have their own ability to participate in a project. I would love to see more involvement by young artists who are willing to get into the intention of the architect if they agree with it. One thing I rally against is artwork that's already done and then peddled to the building because of the successes of an older group of artists.

IN MY STUDIO, WE WORK IN A WAY THAT IS ALMOST LIKE A BEGINNER SO THAT THE MAN ON THE STREET WILL KNOW WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO DO. I THINK ARCHITECTURE IS RICHER WHEN THERE ARE SECRETS TO BE DISCOVERED IN READING THE WORK, BUT ALSO WHEN IT IS ACCESSIBLE ENOUGH TO GET INTO THE QUESTIONS THAT ARE APPROPRIATE FOR ARCHITECTURE TO ASK OF THE OBSERVER.

If I could hum up a phrase from a Mozart opera, I might do that at a level of tunefulness. But if I were a musician, I might hear that phrase with entirely different ears. The way we parlay that, ultimately, as architects is to address both the popular and the sophisticated onlooker. When people ask me about color, texture, or rooms and so on, I can address all those issues in a very broad way so there is something for the uninitiated and there's something there for the connoisseur, too.

The way we see ourselves in architecture is often not rich enough. In federal buildings, for example, we think "open" is glass and glass is good. It isn't necessarily that way. Glass might be good, depending on the setting of the building. But it also might be a kind of continuum with the outside that contradicts the need for more privacy. In some cases, we equate modern buildings with openness and, therefore, freedom. There might be an entirely different range of spaces from outside to inside that you're missing when you make that kind of analogy of glass to openness and to democracy. One of them is the storytelling capacity of what freedom means in a building through decoration and the portrayal of human activities. There's a whole range of ways to see openness, freedom, or any other value, you might say. But to so closely equate these values with glass, I think, is an impossibility for many, many sites.

The wheel chair that I'm sitting in makes me think about the design of buildings before and after my life changed. In the hospital after my paralysis started, it was interesting to roll into the bathroom, see the mirror positioned above my forehead, and not being able to reach

the faucets. It's also curious to me why we have toilet partitions that are a little wider for folks like me with just two handrails inside. That isn't even close to what it should be. There are people who catheterize themselves. There are people who stand up. There're people who do all kinds of things in those toilet rooms. Then there are simple things like tolerances of getting through doorways and so on. The issue isn't just slapping ramps onto fronts of buildings just to get you in. One day in the chair and you start to realize how little is done and how much is done backward.

Being in a wheelchair changes the way I look at federal courthouses and all buildings. ADA requirements are one thing, but there is so much more we can do. Architects should spend time in a wheelchair for a week or so to see what they have done to a whole community of people. I think there are inventive ways to retrofit a building for ADA without having to tear up the original one when it's significant. Think of putting ramps all the way up St. Peter's in Rome, one of the great monuments of the Western world. Find a way that is equally interesting to get the disabled up to the floor of the church or whatever. Never see it as a compromise.

The idea of GSA being in the avant-garde of architecture probably has some abstract bias behind it.

THE AVANT-GARDE IMPLIES THAT THE BUILDING SHOULD BE A MONUMENT WITHIN THE CITY AND AN ICON SET APART FROM THE FABRIC OF THE PLACE. THAT DOESN'T INTEREST ME AT ALL. I FIND THE REAR GUARD TO BE EQUALLY TROUBLESOME.

That is part of the issue with judges who want traditional courthouses and have a fixed notion about style in architecture.

We're working at a time when if X is doing this, then Y wants to do something completely different and there is a lot of stand-alone architecture. You can't distinguish a courthouse from a library, a library from a church, a church from anything else. They're all done with the same emphasis on modernity and abstraction because of the way our critics work today—new is news. And the press needs to churn out new masters and new combatants in the game of architecture and not look at what that building might be over a period of time and how it stands for the community at large. Some of those buildings that we revere at this moment will stale very quickly.

What's avant-garde to me is staying within the playground of the city, not opposing it.

MICHAEL GRAVES IS A PIONEER IN THE POST-MODERN MOVEMENT. HIS DESIGNS, FOR EVERYTHING FROM TEA KETTLES TO FURNITURE TO BUILDINGS, ARE RECOGNIZED AROUND THE WORLD. GRAVES DESIGNED THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION HEADQUARTERS IN WASHINGTON, DC; THE U.S. COURTHOUSE IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE; AND THE EXPANSION OF THE E. BARRETT PRETTYMAN U.S. COURTHOUSE IN WASHINGTON, DC. GRAVES IS A FELLOW OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS AND RECEIVED THEIR GOLD MEDAL IN 2001.

N. MICHAEL **McKINNELL**

MOST OF OUR PROJECTS FOR THE DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROGRAM REFLECT OUR DESIGN PHILOSOPHY OF NOT DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN DESIGN. ARCHITECTURE IS THE VEHICLE BY WHICH GOOD URBAN DESIGN IS ACHIEVED. A BUILDING SHOULD BOTH BE EXCELLENT IN ITSELF AND ENHANCE ITS NEIGHBORHOOD.

The U.S. courthouse in Cleveland [which McKinnell designed] is necessarily a tall building. The tall building has a limited history, but there have been some marvelous propositions for tall buildings. Most courthouses from the 19th century, which we admire and respect, are built in a classical mode. In our design, we sought to combine these notions. The tower draws on Viennese architect Adolph Loos's entry to the Chicago Tribune competition, which, somewhat ironically, proposes a giant Doric column. Our building is columnar in character, although it is only a quarter of the shaft in plan. It has an extended roof, which refers to the idea of a column capital. Of course, it's abstracted. So the courthouse makes reference to the history of skyscraper architecture and to Classical architecture through this notion of the capital. It has a complex set of references that many people will not understand. But most people have commented on the classical nature of the building with which they seem to be quite pleased.



Cleveland is very much like a medieval city. It stands on the upper heights of a very steep slope going down to the Cuyahoga River, which is being rehabilitated and revived in quite a marvelous way. In making a tall building on a relatively small footprint, we saw the opportunity to design a park that would connect the city on the upper level of the site, past the curving form of the courthouse, and down to the riverside. Unfortunately, by the time we finished the building, there wasn't the money to build the park. GSA has since found some. At the dedication ceremony, I pointed out that while we had finished the building, we had not finished the project. One of the main contributions that GSA can make through the Design Excellence Program is to make the city look better and to make the city function better. One can understand, although not forgive, private developers for being totally self-interested. But the government has the responsibility to contribute to the city.

The urban design for our Food and Drug Administration building in Beltsville, Maryland, is really nascent because no other buildings are there. We attempted to make a wall building that would define the streets, which, of course, are lacking any definition at the moment. In terms of the interior, the principal objective was to bring together scientists and researchers in visual contact across an atrium, which is the symbolic and the actual heart of the building. In the base of the atrium is a library where people can read recent scientific magazines and publications. The laboratories face the offices across the light-giving atrium,

reminding researchers that the source of their work is really in the laboratory and vice versa. It's an attempt to build a community.

On the face of it, security seems to be antithetical to the idea of urban engagement. There's a tendency to wish for the buildings to be isolated, to be approached across an open-fire field, if you will, and that people have to be checked going into them. These are the facts of contemporary life and culture. Somehow our buildings must also embody the idea of openness, accessibility, and egalitarianism, which is at the heart of our government. Resolving the conflict is an ongoing challenge. It's one that we have to wrestle with. I know that there's an impetus towards centralization and towards economy of scale and so forth, but I'm not totally convinced that it wouldn't be possible, for instance, to split the Cleveland courthouse into three buildings and disperse them in different parts of the city. Perhaps younger architects could design these buildings because they wouldn't be quite so big.

In the 1970s, we would never have sought a commission from GSA because of the quality of architecture that was coming out. This changed radically with the Design Excellence Program. Now when we are waiting to be interviewed for a GSA project, I see all my colleagues. The next step is to give younger architects more commissions. GSA will be rewarded because there are some very good young architects who deserve to be considered for government projects. I can understand that as guardian of public trust and public money, GSA has a certain responsibility to ensure experience from the architects that it commissions. On the other hand, GSA will limit the field from which it can draw architects if five completed buildings are required to shown in an architect's portfolio. Perhaps there are smaller projects that could be given to younger architects. Before my first building, the Boston City Hall, I had never built a building and neither had my partner. But we

managed to struggle through that, and I don't think the city hall is going anywhere.

As a public agency, GSA must be mindful of the trap of fashion. Federal buildings, while they should be exciting and contribute to architectural culture, should avoid the ephemeral because they must last for a long time. Symbolically, they have to represent the longevity of an institution that is to last as a permanent contributor to the cityscape. That doesn't mean that federal work should in any way be stodgy and the work that is coming out of the Design Excellence Program is not. But it should embody enduring notions about architecture rather than court fashion, which may look very stale after a few years.

GSA must be able to build a well-working building, which will satisfy the practical and functional needs of the user at a price that the government has deemed appropriate for this structure. That must be its first priority as a public agency. Marrying these objectives in a satisfactory way without compromising the budget and the quality of the design is the challenge. The business of separating the construction documents phase and the construction administration of a project from the designer is injurious to the design process. Architects, whatever their reputation, don't have their hearts in producing drawings of a design that they did not do. It's had a deleterious effect on some of our projects. It's understandable from a political point of view that if one is working on a government project in Cleveland, say, that the government should insure that a considerable portion of the work is done in Ohio. But in our experience, it's not a happy way of working.

There is never enough budget on any job. It doesn't matter whether it's a government job or a university job or a private job. People understandably always want more than they can afford. But even before schematic design, there are ways to establish to everybody's satisfaction that what is being asked of the architect can be afforded by the



Carl B. Stokes U.S. Courthouse, Cleveland, OH

client and meet the level of quality expected by the government. We are doing this with our university clients now. We rarely enter schematic design without having a test run to see whether the budget, the program, and the expectations of the client are synchronized. That method could be pursued a little more by GSA.

In the past, art and architecture were always inseparable, even for penny-pinching Bostonians. When Charles McKim finished the Boston public library, more money was spent on commissioning John Singer Sargent, James McNeill Whistler, and Augustus Saint-Gaudens to embellish the building with paintings and sculpture. At the time, it was unthinkable that a public building should not be embellished with this kind of work.

In the same vein, GSA's Art in Architecture Program is an absolutely wonderful idea. But more thought should be given to associating the artist with the architect at an earlier stage of design. Many sculptors and site artists want to create something more than a mere embellishment to a building. They are interested in the design process of the building and can make a considerable contribution to it. But they can't be asked to do their kind of work when the design of the building is finished. They have to be engaged with the architect at a very early stage. At the Cleveland courthouse, I was monomaniacal about this. Once we had decided that the building should be tall, I absolutely insisted on an artist interested in humanism and figurative work, which would unequivocally declare our courthouse a public building, not a commercial skyscraper. We had an unfortunate time with an artist who wasn't quite the right one and went back to our first choice. Now we have a magnificent work from Jim Dine, who thinks it's one of the best pieces that he's ever done. It's very controversial, but it engages everybody. Like our building, it has references to classical periods of art without replicating them. It suggests the antecedence of the law in the Hellenic and Roman legal

systems, without declaring them overtly. It's a very subtle piece and really works with the building in a wonderful way. The selection process was also very good because the people who were engaged in commissioning Jim Dine were people from the community, art historians, curators, and so forth. They raised private money to make up the difference in the funds that Jim needed to make this sculpture. I'm very enthusiastic about this process, but let's get the artists involved very early. It would also be reasonable to involve the architect in the artist selection process and give him or her veto power so the architect would not be saddled with totally incompatible work from an artist.

There's certainly a growing awareness in America that design matters, that architecture matters, that cities matter. The Design Excellence Program is fulfilling that yearning for decent architecture with decent public buildings. To

raise public awareness of design excellence, GSA should keep putting good architecture in front of the public for their use. People will get used to it and then they will not be satisfied with buildings less good. One of the reasons that people don't like public buildings is that they are not kept up in the way that private buildings are kept up. Some old federal buildings look dingy. When people don't care for buildings, they take on the same mien with respect to them. So an endowment to keep the buildings looking the way they did when they first opened is very important.

Federal buildings should be federal buildings and proud of it. They should be different from commercial buildings. That's very important. I'm not in favor of bringing so-called "life" to these buildings. The fact that there is not a shop on the ground floor of a courthouse doesn't diminish its contribution to a city. Federal buildings should be dignified and they should represent the ideals of our government, which is not toys in the basement and that kind of thing.

FEDERAL BUILDINGS MUST BE DESIGNED TO GROW OLD GRACEFULLY. THEY MUST AGE WELL BECAUSE THEY SHOULD BE AROUND FOR A LONG TIME AND THE OLDER THEY GET, THE MORE THEY WILL REMIND PEOPLE OF THE STABILITY AND LONGEVITY OF THE IDEAS ON WHICH OUR GOVERNMENT IS BASED.

They should become like wonderful old citizens in the city. And for that to happen, they have to be built of decent materials. It's very important that this kind of sustainability is addressed by the federal government through GSA.

AS DESIGN DIRECTOR OF KALLMAN MCKINNELL & WOOD ARCHITECTS IN BOSTON, **N. MICHAEL MCKINNELL** DESIGNED THE CARL B. STOKES U.S. COURTHOUSE IN CLEVELAND, OHIO; THE U.S. COURTHOUSE IN GREENEVILLE, TENNESSEE; AND THE HARVEY W. WILEY FOOD & DRUG ADMINISTRATION CENTER FOR FOOD SAFETY AND NUTRITION IN COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND. MCKINNELL'S OTHER PROJECTS INCLUDE BOSTON CITY HALL AND THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE COURTHOUSE IN BOSTON. MCKINNELL IS A FELLOW OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS.

FRED KOETTER

THE COMBINATION OF URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE IS CENTRAL TO OUR PRACTICE. WE'RE CONSCIOUS OF HOW BUILDINGS WORK WITHIN URBAN SETTINGS. GSA'S FEDERAL COURTHOUSE PROGRAM IS A NATURAL CONNECTION FOR US BECAUSE MOST OF ITS BUILDINGS ARE LOCATED IN THE CENTERS OF TOWNS AND CITIES.

One of the issues that comes up again and again is the scale of buildings within the urban setting. These days, when additions are made to the city, they may be considerably bigger than before. So mediating the presence of new buildings in an older city is a major issue because they don't automatically work well within the city's existing context and scale. Another issue is the ability of public buildings to express themselves as public buildings and take on the significance within the city that they deserve.

We're designing a federal courthouse in Rockford, Illinois, which prior to World War II was thriving. Like many other cities, much of Rockford's energy was drained into the suburbs along one of the most extensive commercial strip developments I've ever seen. So Rockford is a shadow of its former self. The site of the courthouse is in the old center of the city. That's of interest to us because of the potential of the courthouse to become a positive presence in the regeneration of the city center. So we approached the project as solving an urban problem as well as a courthouse design problem. We talked to a lot of people in Rockford. We had meetings with all the users of the building, of course, and they're looking forward to the new courthouse because it's going to be one of the most significant buildings built in the center of Rockford for quite a few years. The site is near the Rock River, a park system running along the





Design concept for the U.S. Courthouse, Rockford, IL

river's western bank, and the old business center. So our courthouse is well positioned to make a new open space, a courthouse square if you like, that would integrate the whole project further into the life of the city. Maybe the new space and the new building will inspire other new buildings to be built around it. If designed the right way, they might stimulate further development in the city. And that's how we approached the program.

A federal courthouse is different than a state or a county courthouse. It has an importance within a larger setting, and therefore, an expectation of a certain stature and stability within the community. To some people, a traditional, classical courthouse is an important symbol of the judiciary. We imagined a building that has stability and a scale related to those traditions but not literally. Facing east toward the river, the building has a colonnade or porch to create what is obviously the front facade. That porch integrates the building into the park setting and projects the image of an important public building. And there's a clear entrance and a large, public lobby so when you're in the building, it's easy to tell where you're going. So our courthouse has the attributes of a public building but not literally in terms of a classical style.

GSA's commitment to design excellence should be extended to urban design, the ways in which buildings contribute to the growth and life of the city. Producing buildings that are more engaging within the community can mean a lot of things. A building that is more accessible doesn't always go hand in hand with security. So there's this theme of back and forth: Should a courthouse have other uses in the building? If you say, "yes" to that question, which I have a tendency to do, you'd be compromising security because within the basic volume of the building

you're going to have access patterns that you're unaware of. So conflicts occur. There needs to be more discussion of these issues because the increased security regulations after 9/11 have changed the role of buildings within the city.

Architects have done a pretty good job with new federal buildings where, for instance, the security apparatus is pulled outside. In our courthouse, for example, security at the magnetometers is located outside the main body of the building to create an intermediary space between the building and the city. In our competition entry, we imagined that this element would be a public room for the city, which makes great sense. It was a beautiful idea, but it still did not add up from the security point of view because federal courthouses don't typically have those kinds of spaces. You also get into budgetary questions. So one of the priorities of the Design Excellence Program should be addressing the relationship between security and budget, and the expectations for the building within its immediate surroundings. The federal courthouse in Portland, Oregon, for example, is a wonderful urban building, but according to current security standards, that building wouldn't be possible today. So I think that some difficult judgments have to be made as to what's realistic in certain situations, which sometimes means security regulations shouldn't be taken literally and alternatives should be found. We have to find a way of assessing setbacks, blast-control on exterior walls, and other conditions on a case-by-case basis because they could make a lot of difference on how the building relates to its surroundings and how much the building costs. Security regulations need to be established, but they also have to be a dynamic part of the design process. If security doesn't undergo a constant re-evaluation, public buildings are going to start closing back in on themselves.

We're right in the middle of selecting an artist for the Rockford courthouse. It's been an interesting process because it brings up questions as to the relationship of art to architecture, and there's a million ways of interpreting that. The judiciary, GSA, the architects, and the art consultants have a full range of interpretations as to what that might mean. So we have to be clear. The architects' views are extremely important because they're probably closest to the issue of how art might be integrated. The judges' views are extremely important because art is symbolically and sometimes representationally important to the building. So that's what I'm finding most interesting. In this particular building, what should that art and architecture relationship be? You keep asking yourself about the various ways that this interchange can take place. The building design is at a point where there's enough there for an artist to react to and to interact with. So I think it's in a good place right now.

SUSTAINABILITY IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS BECAUSE THEY ARE PAID FOR BY TAXPAYERS. IF A MAJOR PUBLIC BUILDING CAN'T REPRESENT THE BEST SUSTAINABLE DESIGN, THEN WHAT KIND OF BUILDING CAN? SOME ASPECTS OF BUILDING DESIGN, WHICH MAY BE GOOD FOR SUSTAINABILITY, MAY AGAIN PUSH THE LIMITS OF THE BUDGET.

So when we're asking for these kinds of designs, which are obviously worthwhile, we should have the financial resources to cover them.

Involving peers in the selection process is good in that it brings other players into the mix along with GSA and the judiciary. The peers have the capability of broadening the perspective of the selection process by bringing forth candidates for commissions who might not be considered. It may be that those architects wouldn't have a voice or an advocate without the peers, so I think the peers are

important in bringing a greater breadth of selection to the process. During the selection process for the new federal courthouse in Fresno, California, for example, I strongly supported Los Angeles architect Eric Owen Moss as a candidate because I thought he might bring another kind of approach to the problem of the courthouse. He's really never done one and during the interview, the discussion was fantastic because Eric was giving the courthouse a lot of thought. He obviously had a vital interest in the building design as well as in the building's interpretation of the legal structure. Although Eric was not selected, he went quite a long way in the process. If the selection had been based on a competition, Eric might have had a better chance to indicate how he would approach the project, which might have led to a commission. So in cases like this one, a competition would have been very good.

One of the problems of competitions is that they take an awful lot of effort and architects put a tremendous amount of time into them because they're important. We've been involved in several GSA competitions, including a one-day charrette, which I found to be very good. It's very intense so you have to think quickly if you're going to design a building in one day. One could say that the charrette favors people who bring an idea and can work fast, but basically the process is good because it addresses the issue of time and resources that it takes to get involved in a competition.

I was a peer reviewer for the federal courthouse in Brooklyn designed by Cesar Pelli. It's a very interesting building because it is one of the first high-rise courthouses, which makes the building more efficient on a limited site. As peer reviewers, we were able to comment on the nature of the building organization and how the courthouse works in the city. I don't know if my input changed the project,

but I certainly endorsed certain aspects of the approach. More recently, I was peer reviewer for Moshe Safdie's federal courthouse in Mobile, Alabama, which is a very horizontal building. There were some questions as to whether or not it was overly extended horizontally and had too many courtrooms on each floor. But on the site in that part of the city, it worked extremely well. The peer reviews of our own courthouse project have been good. Questions have been raised about the building design and organization that, as the process has evolved and progressed, have led to very good communication with the judge. He's truly involved in the project and brings up issues that we have to sort through. Other architects involved in the peer review have made suggestions to clarify certain aspects of the design. They bring a fresh eye to the work in progress. The most important aspect of all the peer reviews has been the constructive nature of the comments.

Our office got involved in GSA through the peer review process. As I was doing peer reviews, I got more and more interested in designing a federal building. We started sending in our credentials for commissions and got involved with several selection panels. The more the architecture profession is aware of the Design Excellence Program and the more it realizes that the program is committed to design excellence not only in word but in fact, then serious, good architects will be drawn to the program. The peer review may be one of the avenues towards identifying potentially good young architects for the program. I know several architects who are in the early years of their careers who don't have big commissions under their belt but who might be good for the program. Another avenue to finding younger architects is to publicize the intention of the Design Excellence Program through articles in trade magazines. You'll probably get more inquiries than you can imagine.

I'm not sure federal architecture should be in the vanguard of design. It depends on the building. But new federal architecture should be opening up new possibilities with respect to the nature of public buildings. It should represent fresh approaches because that's part of public responsibility. The process of designing and constructing public buildings should be an open one, a representational one that is fair and just. That should be reflected in the buildings through a sense of accessibility, fairness, and balance. These qualities should be present when you experience the building, and in many cases, the position of this building in the city. Seeing the building from the outside should be an inspiring experience. Even though someone may not go inside, the building should represent something that is positive. That by itself is an engaging thing. People are part of this process as well.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS ARE PUBLICLY ACCOUNTABLE, PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE. THEY CAN BECOME PART OF THE EXPERIENCE OF THE LIFE OF THE CITY. SO THE ARCHITECTS AND PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT NEED TO LOOK AT PUBLIC BUILDINGS AS PART OF A BIGGER SETTING. THIS NEEDS TO BE REAFFIRMED THROUGH THE DESIGN PROCESS. YOU SHOULD HAVE TO MAKE A DRAWING THAT SHOWS INTERACTION OF THIS BUILDING WITH ITS SURROUNDINGS. THAT WOULD ENSURE THAT THAT AN URBAN DESIGN CONSCIOUSNESS IS AT WORK.

ARCHITECT **FRED KOETTER** DESIGNED THE U.S. COURTHOUSE IN ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS; THE NATO HEADQUARTERS IN BRUSSELS; AND UNIVERSITY PARK FOR THE MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY. AS A GSA PEER SINCE 1996, KOETTER PARTICIPATED IN PEER REVIEWS FOR THE U.S. COURTHOUSES IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK; AND MOBILE, ALABAMA; AS WELL AS THE SECURITY CHARRETTE FOR THE JOHN JOSEPH MOAKLEY U.S. COURTHOUSE IN BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS. KOETTER IS FORMER DEAN OF THE YALE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND A FELLOW OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS.

WILLIAM RAWN

All civic buildings in our culture should reflect democracy. Public buildings have to be welcoming and embracing. They should not be elitist but reflect the democratic qualities of our culture. Public buildings should reach out and welcome a highly diverse population. If a city full of buildings like that start connecting to one another, those connections create the fabric of our society.

Buildings should reflect their place, but they also should be about invention. In my mind, invention is what is absolutely fascinating about architecture. Harry Cobb, who designed the federal courthouse in Boston, talks of buildings having a balance of memory and invention. That's a wonderful phrase. The aesthetic result of this philosophy is that the massing and the site planning of a building are really important, as is the way the building faces and connects to the street.

THE STREET IS A FUNDAMENTAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTION IN OUR CULTURE AND BUILDINGS SHOULD HAVE A RELATIONSHIP TO THE STREET.



In the course of designing the federal courthouse in Cedar Rapids, I looked at courthouses all over Iowa. Like many other states, Iowa has a tradition of placing the courthouse in the middle of a public square or on a corner of a square. The courthouse square is such an important central point in the public life of towns throughout the state. Iowa was affluent during the late 1800s and many of the courthouses were built then, so there's a powerful civic presence in very small Iowa towns. The courthouse is the only big building. It's a four-story building in a town full of one and two-story buildings and, as you approach the town, you can see it across the prairie five miles away. In Cedar Rapids,

GSA bought a wonderful site for a federal courthouse. It's right on the Cedar River on the edge of downtown. It's a two or three-block walk from the heart of downtown, but it's very much a part of the life of downtown. The new courthouse is all about bringing economic development to downtown Cedar Rapids. This plays itself out in our project through urban design connections. Because the project involves some rerouting of streets, we organized the courthouse so that the front door is aligned on axis with First Street, which is one of the city's major streets. That led us to propose a courthouse square that would front the courthouse building. All of that is to anchor the building in the life of downtown and make it pedestrian-accessible as well as highly visible from passing cars. Then we oriented the building so part of the site embraces significant parkland facing the river. So as you approach the courthouse, you also engage the Cedar River.

ENGAGING THE DOWNTOWN AND THE RIVER, AND ALL THE LIFE OF THE RIVERFRONT, WHICH IS GETTING QUITE ACTIVE RECREATIONALLY, IS DEEP IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF OUR BUILDING.

The front of the courthouse will incorporate a lot of glass and will be exceedingly welcoming. We are being very careful to make sure there is plenty of light in that building and that the glass appear transparent, not black. The front door, which we hope will be on axis with First Street, will be seen quite prominently. So that the courtrooms are immediately accessible as you enter the building, we've gathered them around an atrium. The organization of the building is about the process of approaching the courtrooms, connecting to the city, and getting to the courtrooms quite quickly.

One of the challenges of a courthouse is that a large percentage of the building's functions are generally office-oriented—the clerk's office, probation offices, U.S. Marshals' offices, and the like. In a building full of governmental



Design concept for the U.S. Courthouse, Cedar Rapids, IA

offices, how do we bring a civic quality to the passages within the building leading to the courtrooms, which are the heart of a courthouse? That is an incredible challenge.

Another challenge is security, which after the events in Oklahoma City and on 9/11, one has to take very seriously. Fortunately in Cedar Rapids, the judges feel very strongly that their courthouse is a public building and every index of the building should be its public-ness. They have been exceedingly outspoken on the subject, which has certainly made my life easier because we are very much on the same page. We toured several new federal courthouses, and, granted, most of those were built before the current security guidelines. In Las Vegas, we saw a courthouse that felt very much part of the city, yet had strong security measures in place. Through careful handling of steps, retaining walls, bollards, and the like, the courthouse maintained a sense of openness while protecting access to the building.

In Cedar Rapids, we are trying to learn from that. Obviously, the guidelines requiring about 50-foot setbacks from the street can be exceedingly onerous on many sites. On our site, we're using that 50-foot buffer as a recreational space. It is located on the main bike trail from the river to another park system in Cedar Rapids, and so part of our strategy is to use that 50-foot buffer as a way to connect the life of the courthouse to the life of the river. The courthouse is set behind that buffer, but by aligning the building directly with the main street, it becomes a focal point within the city. Another part of the courthouse faces the park. So we are trying to achieve the goals of openness and accessibility through the urban positioning of the building. It's certainly not built right on the edge of the sidewalk like the federal courthouses in Boston or Phoenix, but it's going to feel close enough to the life of the street.

Right now, the hardest part of security is that it's constantly changing. We design for today's security needs, but three years from now, the rules will have changed and five

years later, the rules will have changed again. Will those changes be so wrenching that our building will feel instantly inadequate? We look at the security apparatus for buildings built in the early 1990s and say, "why didn't they imagine what's evolved?" That, to me, is a very scary thing because security is all about the entrance. We're not talking about some corner of the building that people don't see. It affects your experience the minute you walk into the building. If you were a retailer and you had to put people through that kind of rigmarole to get into your store, most people wouldn't come to your store. If that started happening to courthouses, it would be a real shame.

We are just beginning to meet with the art committee for the courthouse. The committee includes the director of the Cedar Rapids Art Museum, which is in a Charles Moore-designed building, interestingly enough. This process will be my first foray into art in architecture in a GSA setting. I strongly believe that when the artist integrates art into the world of architecture, it's a far more interesting project than when the artist is viewing the architecture as an opportunity to place a piece of art in a particular spot in a building. The synergy between the architect and the artist is about collaboration, sitting around a table and brainstorming ideas. Each is sketching, building models, working unbelievably well together. That is the fundamental quality of a successful collaboration. It's hard determining that in an interview with an artist because the artist's work is not necessarily about collaboration. Early in my law career, I did a lot of printmaking, so I know what joy and power is associated with the work of an individual artist. That's a very different enterprise than the collaboration of an architect.

The GSA Design Excellence Program is the federal government at its best. It has integrated creativity and invention into the bureaucratic system, not by fighting it, but by infiltrating the system. It's a remarkable accomplishment. It

would be sad to see GSA fall into a kind of single design mode as existed in this country during the Neo-classical period of the 1890s and early 1900s, or the New Deal era of the 1930s. I really applaud the Design Excellence Program's efforts to reach out and open the possibilities, not close them. The architecture of the federal government should be open to new ideas and new influences, just as the rest of government should be. So it's entirely appropriate that GSA take a leadership role in this respect. Architects and GSA, as a client of architects, have the wisdom to understand when a building is likely to be a trendy moment in architecture or have some deeper bones and deeper meaning. I want to believe that GSA can stand up to trendiness and not succumb to the latest fashion, because that would be a mistake. If you look at most of the architects who are getting GSA commissions, they have not succumbed to trends in their careers. When they've designed a building of a certain style, they've done it very well, and so the building has deeper meaning than just something that might be in last month's magazine. That's one of the tricky things about hiring young architects. Be careful that you don't get young architects just so you can have the kind of design that appeared two months ago in a magazine, because by the time that courthouse gets built, eight years later, its trendy design will have long been gone and the building will be incredibly dated. That's where the

balance of memory and invention comes back. A building should be inventive but also rooted in the life of a place and this country's civic culture. I like to think that when our courthouse gets built in Cedar Rapids, it will be rooted in Iowa and people will say, "this building responded to the life of our town."

Historically, courthouses are fundamentally important to towns in states like Iowa, Mississippi, and Georgia, and on the commons of New England. So architects and GSA have to keep reminding people of the importance of courthouses in our culture. They are not simply federal office buildings. They are something more than that and deserving of good sites. That takes extra money, so we have to keep reminding our public officials who, after all, both represent us as citizens and allocate federal money, that the courthouse plays a very fundamental, historic role in American democracy.

During my travels in Iowa, I remember visiting a courthouse built in 1844. Imagine what Iowa was like in 1844, and, yet, that courthouse was the one piece of the government in the presence of the farmers who came into town once a week to sell their goods. We are no different than that today. But I don't think that conversation about civic life is played out as much as it should. That's a wonderful challenge that we should think about over the next ten years of Design Excellence.

WILLIAM RAWN, PRINCIPAL OF WILLIAM RAWN ASSOCIATES ARCHITECTS INC. OF BOSTON, DESIGNED THE U.S. COURTHOUSE IN CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA. HIS OTHER COMMISSIONS INCLUDE THE CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, MAIN PUBLIC LIBRARY AND SEIJI OZAWA HALL AT TANGLEWOOD FOR THE BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA. AS A GSA PEER SINCE 1998, RAWN PARTICIPATED IN THE SECURITY CHARRETTE FOR THE JOHN F. KENNEDY FEDERAL BUILDING IN BOSTON. HE IS A MEMBER OF THE BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION AND A FELLOW OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS.

MAURICE COX

GSA's commitment to place federal buildings in urban centers as part of an economic revitalization strategy is quite compelling. But how effectively can GSA's goals work with local goals? How can the mayor, city council, and an office of economic development use a federal building as a catalyst for other activities that need to happen around the building in order to support it?

These are some of the questions that I raised at the peer review of a federal building located on the urban fringe of Parkersburg, a small city in West Virginia. Before the review, decisions over the building site had already been made. It was on the edge of the city's historic core between the historic courthouse and a river that backed up to the site. Had the peer reviewers been brought in earlier perhaps a different decision about the site would have been made.



Other sites within the city might have led to a building that filled out a block or some portion of a block and that would have generated a different kind of response at the street level.

The chosen site lent itself to creating an exquisite, free-standing object. Most of our advice had to do with reconnecting the building to the city, bridging the gap between the historic core and the site, even though the building didn't have pieces of a program that would make it interact with folks on a day-to-day basis. The building had no retail, daycare center, or other uses that would attract the larger public outside of those who worked in the building. They were not within the federal program. So it almost required a strategy of cooperation between the federal government and local entities to bring the programmatic pieces necessary to make this building a part of the city. That's where the choice of taking a city block versus a freestanding site would make all the difference in the world.

What we did to help this particular design team was to put some of the elements that were buried in the heart of the building, like a cafeteria, in places that interacted more with the public. We suggested that the experience of coming into the lobby could be a celebrated moment in the building. We thought exposing public parts of the building, such as a multi-story atrium, would allow people to see them. The strategic location of pieces within the sequence of public engagement could help the building to be more connected to its immediate surroundings.

With the heightened demands of security, some elements of the building were actually working against this

project. They included an excessive setback from the street to create a public plaza. It was similar to the failed public spaces that we attempted to make in the 1960s. So we were fighting some mandated strategies, which were anti-urban.

It will be a challenge for GSA to make truly engaged public buildings with today's security requirements. Courthouses have been in the hearts of cities for centuries. They have been visible symbols of government and therefore targets. But they don't have to be divorced from the urban realm to be safe. For example, in the Italian Renaissance tradition, the palazzo was an effectively fortified building right in the middle of the city. These large buildings had benches and loggias out front, explicit invitations for the public to interact with the building, yet they were fortified in many ways. Now, architectural elements such as glass are used to represent the transparency of our government, and they present a slightly different challenge. But there are ways to secure buildings while incorporating elements that engage the public.

A lot of the attempts to create blanket security regulations are antithetical to what's appropriate for a particular place.

ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL REGULATIONS MAKE POOR PUBLIC BUILDINGS. THE UNIQUENESS OF URBAN PLACES SHOULD DICTATE DIFFERENT SOLUTIONS TO SOLVING SECURITY PROBLEMS. WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE MORE CREATIVITY IN BALANCING OPENNESS AND SECURITY.

One way of beginning is to look more critically at the functions accommodated within a single building. A number of program pieces could be supplied by the private sector in partnership with the public sector. For example, instead of being internally located in a federal building, a cafeteria could be comprised of a number of restaurants within close proximity to the building, forcing federal workers out of the building and into the city and back.

POTENTIALLY, THOUSANDS OF WORKERS COULD INFUSE LIFE INTO AN URBAN PLACE, BUT YOU'VE GOT TO GET THEM OUT OF THE BUILDING. AND IN ORDER TO DO THAT, YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE TO ENGAGE THE IMMEDIATE SURROUNDINGS AND, THEREFORE, HAVE A CLEAR NOTION OF PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LOCALS WHEN THE PROJECT COMES INTO THE CITY.

The notion of one building versus many buildings requires an entirely different scale of intervention. It suggests that our building programs will be broken up into multiple buildings as opposed to a monolith. If you could conceive a way to make the movement from one building to another safe and secure, you could effectively create an urban campus. This all comes back to the issue of capitalizing on the critical mass of people that the federal government is infusing into urban places by supporting city-making and place-making.

The quality of design created under GSA has an enormous promotional value, meaning good buildings get noticed. They tend to create a climate of economic interest and investment opportunities. If you ask people what makes a good building, they may not be able to articulate the reasons. But they know it when they see it. So when you have good architecture, you have an opportunity to engage the public in recognizing its benefit. So it is vitally important that buildings continue to speak about ideas, even if they are controversial. That can set the stage for public discussion about the value of architecture and the making of more good buildings. When buildings are well designed and they get the public's attention, they get elected officials' attention too. You need designers strategically placed in a community in order to have that dialogue. They need to serve on architectural review boards and planning commissions.

It also would be helpful for the peer reviewers to mediate between the federal government and local political leaders. After giving an architectural critique of the building in West Virginia, I would have enjoyed sitting down with the mayor and his council and talking about some of their objectives for the precinct around the building, which unfortunately were not being fully realized. It would be extremely useful for GSA to help local entities fashion a larger strategy using a federal building as a catalyst so that the building doesn't become a white elephant sitting in the middle of an area that has not made urban connections.

It also helps to educate local officials as to the power of this investment and what it can mean in terms of revitalizing their cities. One model for this is The Mayor's Institute on City Design. Much like a peer review, it brings designers together with mayors. It's a little bit like a boot camp. For three or four days, mayors are sequestered with designers to talk about urban projects and how they might aspire to greater goals. The process seriously reevaluates the assumptions about redevelopment in urban areas. It speaks to finding a way to educate local officials.

At this point, GSA cannot be the single voice for good design nationally. It has to find a way to find partners in that discussion. The Design Excellence Program could inform state officials about how public buildings should be done. Public buildings constructed by state

governments run through the exact same set of problems as federal buildings in terms of achieving design excellence. To show state officials a successful model at the federal level is another way of translating a successful message about public buildings.

Based on its track record of success, GSA needs to get institutions that commission public works at the state and local levels to pursue design excellence and support its agenda. It needs to show by example, to go out and spread the word. It needs to convert the skeptics and hopefully make more beautiful and urbane places as a result of the mission.

It's unfortunate, but a lot of communities simply feel they can't afford to pursue quality. It's perceived to be a luxury. One of the wonderful things about the Design Excellence Program is that it is explicitly about the pursuit of quality. It sets the stage for localities to have a discussion about that. So GSA has set up a public debate, which is bound to be controversial.

It's healthy to have someone from the outside come in and champion design excellence because it's often very difficult for local officials to take a controversial position and suggest that the design of a courthouse be done in a contemporary vocabulary. It's much easier to have someone from the outside dictate that. Some people are challenged to allow a public building to be a product of our time because of nostalgia for democratic ideals at the time of their inception.

Personally, I feel that our democracy has survived for centuries and today's chapter has to be expressed. It would be very sad commentary on the state of our democracy if we decided to skip over this point in time and suggest through our architecture that we were not here. I'm a very strong advocate of GSA's assertion that architecture should be of its time. The time that we express is the time we live in. We leave a legacy through our buildings. When you do that, get ready for a fight. That fight may be healthy public debate. But it will be a fight.

MAURICE COX IS AN EDUCATOR, URBAN DESIGNER, AND CIVIC ACTIVIST. HE CURRENTLY TEACHES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA IN CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA, WHERE HE WAS ELECTED MAYOR OF CHARLOTTESVILLE IN 2002 AFTER SERVING ON THE CITY COUNCIL FOR SIX YEARS. HE ALSO CO-FOUNDED RBGC ARCHITECTURE/RESEARCH/URBANISM, BASED IN CHARLOTTESVILLE. PREVIOUSLY, COX TAUGHT FOR SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY'S ITALIAN PROGRAM IN FLORENCE, ITALY, WHERE HE LIVED FOR TEN YEARS. HE WAS APPOINTED A GSA PEER IN 2002.



Design concept for the U.S. Department of Transportation Headquarters, Washington, DC

GSA HAS A BOLD AGENDA IN ASKING PEER REVIEWERS TO BE FORWARD THINKING, OPTIMISTIC, AND ACCESSIBLE. IT WANTS US TO REPRESENT THE PUBLIC IN A WAY OUTSIDERS CAN DO....I LOOK FOR BEAUTY, CLARITY, ACCESSIBILITY, AND SAFETY...

– Elizabeth Ericson, GSA National Peer

VISION+VOICE

ROBERT **CAMPBELL**

ELIZABETH **ERICSON**

KAREN **VAN LENGEN**

DEBORAH **BERKE**

ROBERT **CAMPBELL**

I BRING THE OUTSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE TO THE PEER REVIEW, SOMEONE WHO IS NOT TOO DEEPLY INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAM, THE SITE, THE BUDGET, AND THE LOCAL POLITICS. IT IS SORT OF THE MAN-FROM-MARS SYNDROME—WHAT DOES THE PROJECT LOOK LIKE TO SOMEBODY WHO'S NOT ENMESHED IN ALL THE ISSUES?

SOMEONE LIKE ME HAS A BROAD SENSE OF WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD OF ARCHITECTURE AND WHAT ARCHITECTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY HAVE DONE, MORE THAN SOMEBODY WORKING IN AN OFFICE MIGHT.

Peer reviews can be embarrassing because they are set up very much like a jury in an architecture school, except the student who is presenting is a famous architect and, in some cases, the jurors are not. There's a little bit of tension.

In the case of Thom Mayne's federal building in San Francisco, I think it's going to be terrific. Thom is an extremely intuitive designer, a form-maker, who does not always respond to issues of climate, culture, and program as well as you might hope he would. But I think he's ready for this job. [In selecting him], I was also convinced that the client was going to be strong enough to tailor him to the practicalities of the job. This would be his chance to break through and become a significant architect doing significant programs, which seems to be the case now.

I think Thom felt that he drew strength from the reviews. He knows that he's a little bit of an oddball designer, and he knows that his wings can be cut. I think he drew strength from the fact that we were all demanding the best from him and being enthusiastic about it.



During our first review of the annex for the federal courthouse in Washington, DC, Michael Graves presented two or three schemes and we liked one. He came back and presented another scheme that had nothing to do with the one that we liked. But Michael knew what he was doing in working with his own familiar, very competent vocabulary. That was not a review where we had a lot of intervention.

In the case of the Las Vegas courthouse, we really did. What is now a column that holds one corner of the building was initially a fire stair. It was maybe eight stories. There were issues that didn't get resolved so well in the courtyard. In Las Vegas, there are no pedestrians, and, in fact, there's never anybody in that courtyard. On the other hand, the building has turned out to be excellent. I think we were able to get more involved in changing the design because the project wasn't done by a celebrity architect.

I think it's a very good idea to have competitions. The best subject for a competition is a very simple program like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The more complicated the program becomes, the less appropriate competitions become. You wouldn't have a competition for a hospital because it's so program-driven; it's not something that the architect brings as much to.

We do fewer competitions in this country than any other civilized country in the world. In Europe, almost every public job is decided by competition. There are many advantages to that. The younger architects can push their careers ten years ahead because they win a competition and get moving. There is a kind of looseness about design and creativity; there isn't a sense that everything should be done by I.M. Pei. The [architecture] world is less dominated by a few powerful designers over there.

We do have a passion for design in this country, but it's much less homogenous than in other parts of the world. America is very excited about design, but it's 1,700 different



Lloyd D. George U.S. Courthouse, Las Vegas, NV

kinds of design. There's not much agreement here, but that's the nature of the country. There are a lot of different cultures with a lot of different ideas. A lot of the great stuff happens at the kind of populous level, and it doesn't immediately strike you as high-style architecture.

Even though a courthouse is a complicated building, there are basic issues that come up over and over again in the competition—circulation systems, how you get light into the courtroom or don't. The issue of the appropriate architectural expression of the American system of justice also comes up over and over again.

Today, there is no common language of architecture. You used to put columns and a pediment in front of your building, and we'd all know it's a federal building. We just don't live in that world anymore.

WE WOULD BE BETTER OFF IF WE UNDERSTOOD THAT BUILDINGS DO OUTLAST TRENDS IN DESIGN. IT'S NOT LIKE YOUR TIE THAT YOU CAN CHANGE EVERY YEAR. BUILDINGS ARE GOING TO BE AROUND FOR A WHILE. THEIR ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE SHOULD BE WIDELY UNDERSTOOD.

Every new federal building should, if at all possible, be the recycling of an older building, and, secondly, should incorporate retail or public uses on the ground floor. I don't believe in tearing buildings down. I have no problem with refacing buildings, reorganizing them, filling in their sites with other things if they are set back behind useless lawns. We ought to preserve what's good.

The federal government should also support a contemporary visual language of architecture that is fresh and original enough to adapt to a change in conditions but traditional enough to be recognizable and understandable by the public. The World War II Memorial, though not as inventive as a lot of us would like it to be, does try to bridge that gap.

GSA could use competitions more consciously to raise issues with the public that go beyond architecture. One recent example was the invited competition for the main branch of the public library in Chicago. All of the models were put on display and people voted. They did not vote for the one that won, by the way. That got people very excited. They begin thinking about architecture and how it works.

The Institute for Contemporary Art in Boston also tried to get the public involved in the architect selection process. They interviewed the four finalists in a public interview process held in a theatre. That was a great fundraising tool for them but also helpful in other ways too. And it's amazing how much interest there is in New York over the World Trade Center site.

GSA could also raise some larger issues with competitions. As the 21st century moves along, architects, urban designers, and those who determine our patterns of living will be under tremendous pressure from the loss of resources, the pollution of the atmosphere, and all the rest of the planetary issues. That pressure is going to make architects and urban designers more responsible and more prominent in our culture as they rethink appropriate patterns. We are ready to understand, once again, that people of different incomes, different ethnic groups, different work styles, different attitudes can come together in relatively compact places. GSA can certainly be alert to that.



World War II Memorial, Washington, DC

A PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING ARCHITECTURAL CRITIC FOR *THE BOSTON GLOBE*, **ROBERT CAMPBELL** HAS BEEN A GSA PEER SINCE 1994. HE SERVED AS A COMPETITION JUROR FOR THE WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL IN WASHINGTON, DC, AND THE U.S. COURTHOUSES IN BECKLEY, WEST VIRGINIA; NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE; AND SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS. HE IS A REGISTERED ARCHITECT AND A FELLOW OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS AND THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES.

ELIZABETH ERICSON

Volunteerism is a great resource for energy and creativity. It's a social value that is really the foundation of our country. By inviting peer professionals to be part of the Design Excellence process, GSA is tapping volunteerism to produce the kind of dialogue that architects rarely get under paid circumstances. Being a peer is something architects do out of a commitment to improving the quality of life in our cities. We get excited about it.

GSA's peer process has been an opportunity to meet with my colleagues and really think about significant

architectural issues. I have been lucky enough to be part of three reviews for federal courthouses in Springfield, Massachusetts; Gulfport, Mississippi; and Youngstown, Ohio; and two security design charrettes for existing courthouses. The process is not only valuable for the projects but the participants. GSA has a bold agenda in asking peer reviewers to be forward thinking, optimistic, and accessible. It wants us to represent the public in a way that outsiders can do. So I feel my role as a peer has been an advocate for the public. I look for beauty, clarity, accessibility, and safety for the citizen who enters the courthouse and becomes part of the justice system. A courthouse has a lot to do with how the public perceives what's going to happen to them and what justice is all about.

CONVERSATIONS DURING THE PEER REVIEW WERE VERY UP FRONT AND VERY CANDID. THERE WERE DISAGREEMENTS. THE PRACTICING ARCHITECT WAS SUBJECT TO MULTIPLE OPINIONS, AND WE HAD PLENTY OF THOSE. SOME OF THE PROJECTS WERE ELEGANT AND MARVELOUS, AND THE RESPONSE WAS "LET'S CLAP" AND THAT'S ALL WE NEEDED TO DO. OTHERS WERE MORE DIFFICULT, AND WE HAD TO HAVE SEVERAL REVIEWS BEYOND THE EXPECTED ONES.



Usually, the problem was the building entrance. Some of the entrances were quite convoluted. If you enter a building in a confused manner, it adds to the anxiety of the citizen. The entrance also has a symbolic dimension. I remember questioning whether entries should have one door, meaning one justice or truth, or multiple doors, meaning justice for all. So there was a conversation about that.

For the practicing architect, the person that's responsible for the project, it's not easy having your peers show up and then decide your design is terrible. You want a constructive conversation. If more than seven or eight reviewers are in the room, the process becomes more entertainment,

more show, more difficult to be honest and candid. So I have cherished the fact that the peer reviews have been small groups talking together. However, it's still difficult for the architect of the reviewed project to be confronted by three clients—GSA, federal judges, and this band of hooligans coming in, your peer professionals, who you've never really met. It's a very challenging mix. The goal of achieving great architecture is hard enough but when you have three clients, it becomes even harder. The peer review process is terrific in raising the bar for design excellence, but it adds time and energy to what the practicing architect has to do. So the architects whose projects are being reviewed need more compensation to meet GSA's in-depth, thorough standards, and requirements.

As a way of getting great ideas and new directions, GSA's design competitions are very valuable. Architects are paid to enter the competitions, which is important. The real test of the competitions is to actually build the winning designs. I think some mix between standard interview commissions and competitions is healthy. GSA is looking for very high quality work so its criteria for the Design Excellence Program are very strong and hard to meet. Maintaining those high standards and also allowing younger people to come into the program is a conundrum. To attract emerging talent, GSA would have to redefine those criteria so as not to scare off younger folks. It is usually looking for a design leader with a track record and a proven background, and a young person is not going to have that. Changing the criteria for project experience would be worthwhile to do.

I try to involve the artist and to incorporate the art into my work as early as possible so that the building and the art are integral, and the art isn't allocated to some place in the building. A good example of that approach within the Design Excellence Program is the glass ceiling in the

federal courthouse in Phoenix, Arizona, created by James Carpenter, an artist who works at an architectural scale. It is spectacular.

Federal architecture is very important for rehabilitating cities that are deteriorating and for creating a set of values in the community that might not be there otherwise. It needs to participate in the whole urban fabric of our cities. A federal courthouse is not an isolated element with a big wall around it. It is meant to be inviting and feel connected to its surroundings. The federal courthouse in Boston, for example, is beginning to revitalize the whole harbor area and changing urban patterns in the area. Moshe Safdie's federal courthouse in Springfield, Massachusetts, has a curved, glass room whose main purpose is for repose, for a moment of serenity, and it is next to a garden. The courthouse becomes a very beautiful backdrop to this park, which is something of value to the community.

The architecture of the desert courthouse is very different than the architecture of the New England courthouse, and it should be that way. In other words, you shouldn't be able to recognize a federal style and say, "Oh, that's the federal courthouse." You should say, "That's a beautiful courthouse." Federal architecture is not about style. It's about a real contribution to the urban environment.

Justice deserves her own building. I don't think you need to have a McDonald's in the basement to make a courthouse relate to its surroundings. Respect for the individual and an open justice system is really important and should stand by itself. I was recently in the Hart Senate Office Building in Washington, DC, where it's impressive to see all these senators working together. You wouldn't want to see a senator, a Gap store, and then another senator. There's a certain dignity about the functions that go on there that commercialism detracts from.

YOU NEED COMMITMENT AND PASSION TO ACHIEVE QUALITY DESIGN. SOMETIMES, YOU HAVE TO BE IRRATIONAL ABOUT IT IN ORDER TO MAKE THE POINT THAT YOU CAN DO GOOD DESIGN AND STILL BUILD THE BUILDING AND MEET THE FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS. YOU NEED SOMEONE WHO HAS A FIRE IN THE BELLY TO DO THAT. PEOPLE RESPOND VERY POSITIVELY TO QUALITY DESIGN IN ARCHITECTURE.

There's no question about it. They respond positively to a beautiful space filled with sunlight, well-crafted buildings, and exciting relationships of one function to another. But they aren't clamoring for them. If you are only used to commercialism, you may not know what you are missing. That's why I think it is very important that GSA get the word out about what good design looks and feels like so that people begin to be educated. Unfortunately, there's an educational component that has to be in place before you can say oh, yes, the American people really want quality architecture.

Word of the Design Excellence Program is getting out through the peers' participation because there's a large group now. It's also getting out through GSA's monographs on each of the new federal buildings that it has commissioned. I have all the books and they just disappear from my office because people are looking at them. The graphics are beautiful. So all in all, the program is a quality effort that is going to get more and more attention. I can imagine how hard it must have been to get this program going and to have such a positive result in the architecture.

Green, sustainable buildings that give back more than they take away are very important. Given all the buildings that GSA needs to build, it's a great opportunity to make sustainability part of its agenda. "Sustainability" is a huge word covering a huge series of environmental concerns, such as energy efficiency, recycled materials, or a small building footprint on the land. GSA is going in that direction but hasn't yet established criteria for sustainability,

such as requiring a federal building to only be so big because otherwise you would be using up too much of the land.

Security has become a big issue. The initial response by many people is to put up walls. The first thing that GSA says is “we don’t want walls.” We want federal buildings to be accessible and inviting. We want all their values to remain, but we also want to protect them. One of the security parameters is about the size and the speed of a vehicle and how you have to deal with that. One can approach that by looking at the urban fabric and the site, and using landscape, such as trees or rocks, to create the solution so you end up with a more pedestrian-friendly building. Security does not have to be a negative at all.

GSA has gone where no one else has gone before in the sense of taking on security in the name of art as well as safety. That’s an unusual combination, and GSA is succeeding in doing it within reasonable budgets.

THE PEER REVIEW PROGRAM HAS DONE EVERYTHING TO RAISE THE AMBITIONS OF THE PROJECT TO INCLUDE IMPORTANT CULTURAL VALUES, SUSTAINABILITY, AND OTHER GOALS THAT OTHER CLIENTS MAY NEVER ATTAIN. GSA HAS RAISED EXPECTATIONS FOR QUALITY DESIGN FAR HIGHER THAN ALMOST ANY CLIENT I KNOW.

So I am very enthusiastic about the program. As a result of 9/11, insecurities and fears permeate our thinking. Now is the time that we should support even more GSA’s positive, fearless approach to the future. This is a time for the GSA to continue doing what it’s doing and for us to support it even more.

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KAREN VAN LENGEN

The federal government plays an important role in shaping architecture because it represents a large constituency. When you represent the American people in their architecture, you have to represent who they are. So there have to be a lot of voices involved in giving that shape. GSA has so many distinguished architects involved in the Design Excellence Program that it already sets a certain standard for building design and performance. Unlike the private sector, which views buildings as having very short life spans, the federal government aims to create more permanent, lasting architecture.

A peer review is a moment when the client can reflect on the direction of the project. For example, I participated in the peer review for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration headquarters in Suitland, Maryland, halfway through the design, when the client wanted to clarify some of the ideas proposed by architect Thom Mayne. That was a particularly interesting project because it dealt so heavily with the landscape. A major portion of the program

is going underground, which is not what the client had initially expected. That was a superb idea because it was based on the program. It raised relevant ecological issues by suggesting you could save a neighborhood landscape by inserting at least a piece of the building into the earth. The client came to respect that. The building also had a very sculptural piece on the top.

The clients felt a little reticent about the underground aspect and the sculptural piece because these elements were expressed in an architectural language that was less familiar than in other kinds of public architecture. However, they were comforted by the fact that several of us on the peer review felt that the design was very innovative and would serve their purposes very well, both from a symbolic as well as a functional point of view.

I also participated in a security charrette for the John Joseph Moakley U.S. Courthouse in Boston designed by Harry Cobb. I came in at the end of that project, at a time when security issues became important for courthouses. We were called together to have an all-day charrette to discuss methods for creating a more secure environment within the existing building. It's something that I've dealt with as a consultant to the U.S. Supreme Court. It is a big issue for the future. All the judges were there, as well as Harry Cobb. We were asked to come up with some interesting ideas about a security layer around the building that didn't look like security. After a lot of discussion, we came up with a very creative solution in a day. It was a real design charrette with a lot of energy and cooperation. GSA had real results. I felt that it was very successful.



On the issue of security, I go back to Senator Moynihan's many words on it being a risk to democratic culture. To barricade every public building, every public space, works against the ideology of a democratic culture. We have to put up some barriers but how many? What they look like and how they are structured are very important. We dealt with those issues in the Boston federal courthouse and came up with some very interesting ideas that would block certain kinds of aggressive acts but also invite the public to be there. That's a creative process that needs to be investigated in more depth.

You can have mixed-use spaces in public buildings, but you have to be careful how you include them. Important to civic buildings are dignity and authority, values that differentiate them from other kinds of buildings. Certain mixed-use agendas don't necessarily have the same criteria. So one has to be very careful about adding commercial and other uses to a public space. They have to be placed in such a way that the civic nature of the spaces continues to resonate.

At the University of Virginia's architecture school last year, we had a conversation between architect Thom Mayne and Judge Michael Hogan, who are collaborating on a new U.S. courthouse in Eugene, Oregon. It was part of our lecture series. The students loved it. One of the reasons was its very informal quality. The two have become very good friends, so they enjoy talking and it's almost entertainment at some point. They were really great. They share a rapport with one another in explaining how they had to transform their own prejudices about the project. This is a really key issue as we develop designers for the future. Young architects need to understand that they have to have ideas, but that those ideas need to be shaped by other people. That's also true with clients. A client may go into a project with a pre-existing idea of what, in this case,

the courthouse was going to look like. Then an architect such as Thom Mayne may say, well, no. I'd like it to look like this. But neither of their ideas reigned. It was the collaboration between the judge and the architect who have spent an enormous amount of time together. I don't know whether it's realistic to think that every architect and every client can do what they did, to go off in the woods and bond, but the outcome was so important because it raised difficult questions about architectural language. How does one convey a sense of dignity, a sense of power, without using classical language? How do you give shape and form to the stature that must be in a public building, like a courthouse? Thom's building is not done yet, so the jury is still out on that. But the investigation is a very interesting one. The process, to me, was very convincing. Bringing that to the school has been a very interesting part of introducing students to how architects and clients really work together.

GSA can be in the vanguard up to a point with certain kinds of buildings. I go back to a comment that Judge Hogan made about the courthouse. He said his ideal courthouse was the U.S. Supreme Court and that was not what Thom Mayne was going to design for him. Hogan said he wanted architecture to speak about the values and the authority of the court. And so, if Thom wasn't going to use that language, he needed something that would do that. The avant-garde can do it, if it's given that mandate, but architects can't just go freely into these projects, commenting, for example, about the instability of government. One has to be very cautious about what you use to represent the federal government and the people of this nation. In terms of the vanguard, GSA should look at cutting-edge technologies and cutting edge design strategies in the context of creating a dignified piece of architecture that has authority, presence, and speaks about the cultural values of our time.

ONE OF GSA'S BIGGEST CHALLENGES IS HOW TO BUILD WITHIN THE FABRIC OF THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE PUBLIC BEGINS TO UNDERSTAND HOW THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT SHAPES WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY THINK. I DON'T THINK AN AVERAGE AMERICAN KNOWS THAT ARCHITECTURE EXPRESSES VALUES. TO CHANGE THAT INVOLVES COLLABORATIONS WITH PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND MORE OUTREACH IN TERMS OF THE MEDIA. IT REQUIRES SENDING A MESSAGE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF ARCHITECTURE, URBAN DESIGN, AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE IN THE PUBLIC REALM.

I say this in part because I did work in Germany where I won a competition in the late 1980s. Germans have a system in which the public is incredibly involved in every decision about public architecture. They hold big press conferences after every major competition. The project is on the front page of every newspaper. For Americans to be involved in their physical environment is going to take a much more proactive stance from the media.

I believe in competitions, but they are hard to do because of the economics. Architects often lose money doing them and that's why a lot of architects decide after a certain point that they can't do them anymore. On the other hand, a competition can be the mechanism by which a young architect can enter into doing public and institutional work. I saw this situation occurring in Germany where the government would use competitions for certain types of smaller projects and would limit the number of entrants to, say, five. They would have to be young architects, architects that have small offices of one, two, three, or four people, that you would not normally associate with being able to do a federal project here.

Because of that situation, it gave enormous opportunity to a whole group of young architects. After you get invited to maybe three or four competitions, chances are you could win one. The expense that goes into doing a competition eventually gets made up by the fact that you win one, and

you get the work to do it. GSA could actually sponsor some smaller competitions that are limited to smaller firms or younger architects as an opportunity to get them involved in the design of the public realm. It's a really important issue to the country right now.

Younger architects don't have as much experience as older architects to serve as peer reviewers, but as observers, they could learn a tremendous amount. It could be like a tutorial for them. The younger generation needs to be involved in the Design Excellence Program, or GSA won't get them interested in the system. There's great fear among architects in general about working on federal and state projects, which involve large bureaucracies that one has to work through. Some architecture offices have a small infrastructure, and they immediately have the fearful idea that they can't work with a government agency. GSA has done a lot of work to overcome that by trying to reduce the paperwork involved and making the procedure simpler. It has to keep getting architects to understand that applying for federal projects isn't as hard as it may seem.

One of the areas of real growth in terms of the federal presence and civic space is in suburban environments, which have not typically included civic architecture. Working in a university that has an enormous population of kids from suburban areas, I've noticed that there is a lack of understanding about civility. Not because there's anything wrong with these students, but they haven't had the experience of being in civic spaces. They go to shopping centers, they go

to malls, they go to school, and they go home. A lot of students don't have any background in how to negotiate public space. I think that sense of civility is a very important part of an American citizen. We teach that at the University of Virginia through Jefferson's Lawn, but not everybody gets to have that. So it would be enormously effective if the federal government could begin to use areas in the suburban landscape to define civic spaces.

We need to encourage a sense of civic responsibility in the profession. We could begin to infiltrate some of the institutions that train political leaders to talk about how political life can shape the physical environment. That might be a way to begin. It's up to the architectural profession to get out of the ivory tower. It's more possible in smaller communities. You can get architects to participate on architectural review boards and planning boards, and they can actually see the results of what they've done. It's harder in larger urban areas because they're by nature more political.

The success of the Design Excellence Program points to the fact that the federal government can make an impact on the architecture and the built environment of this nation. I had the opportunity to drive along the highway near Islip, New York, and in the distance, see the big white courthouse designed by Richard Meier. I went to visit the courthouse, and I saw how people really loved that new design. It was both powerful and respectful, and filled with light. It's a wonderful tradition that GSA is beginning.

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DEBORAH **BERKE**

When I participated on the jury for the 2002 GSA Design Awards, I arrived to find an extraordinary group of interesting colleagues. Not only were they from my immediate world of architecture but the broader world of design in the United States, from construction to graphic design to art restoration. It was a phenomenal group of people, and we spent hours upon hours in a room looking at great work and talking about it. Not only was the group of people impressive, but the quality of the work was too. It surprised me.

One of the shared aspects of the projects was an effort to be good. That isn't to say that they all were good, but they were trying to be the best response for the circumstances. This country, after all, has unbelievable variations in climate, vernacular expression, and program interests.



I had no idea that's what I would find if I went to look at the kind of work that the federal government was building, promoting, paying for. It was wonderful. I left high on our government.

I have not yet done a building for GSA, so I was a bit more of an objective outsider during the peer review for the federal courthouse being built in Jackson, Mississippi. I felt a closer kinship to the judge. The judge and I were both coming at this for the first time. And I'm a teacher, so I found the process of the peer review to be reassuringly like the review system in architecture school, when your teacher, people from within the school, and outsiders all sit in a row and watch you present your work. It was a vehicle all architects are familiar with. Because all architects have been through this process, it's okay to suggest improvements to an august architect like Hugh Hardy. I'm not denigrating his work by telling him how he could make the site strategy better. We are, for that brief moment, collaborating in the discipline of architecture, toward the goal of making better buildings.

What's so great to me about GSA's Design Excellence Program is that its goal is not to build the most space at the least cost. Part of GSA's mission of going forward should be to have the public understand that the Design Excellence Program should not be slashed the next time there is major budget-cutting. You should explain to American citizens, why, in fact, building buildings that express the lofty goals of this country is the right thing to do. You have enough of a track record of building great stuff that you can use to promote the argument.

DESIGN EXCELLENCE DOESN'T TRANSLATE TO GOLD FAUCETS AND MARBLE WALLS. IT MEANS THAT EVEN THE MOST MODEST PROJECT SHOULD BE TOTALLY THOUGHT THROUGH WITH THE BEST TALENT AND BEST MINDS THE PROFESSION HAS TO OFFER. DESIGN EXCELLENCE SHOULD A PART OF EVERYTHING, NOT JUST COURTHOUSES AND BORDER CROSSINGS, BUT WAREHOUSES AND RENTAL OFFICES.

I'm certainly not alone in my interest that leased buildings can be made good, compelling, thought-provoking, still serviceable and functional, without them costing anymore. You just need to think differently about whom you hire to do them.

If your smallest and most modest project was done by young design talent, then they could be eased into the process and could learn the system as they go forward so that your first job for the federal government isn't a courthouse that you do after age 50.

I don't see investing in young talent as risk. I actually see it as protection. Building takes an enormous amount of capital, whether you do it wrong or do it right. And doing it wrong isn't necessarily cheaper. So having the best young talents participate in Design Excellence is protecting your investment.

During the design development process, there are all kinds of cost analysis and value engineering measures. Why wouldn't you want someone who is young and just starting out to learn how value engineering impacts a project as opposed to hitting that for the first time when you are older or as your practice has matured. The educational process itself would benefit GSA and the architecture of the country.

There needs to be enough of a shared philosophy between the architect and landscape architect, architect and artist, so that the project doesn't become a turf war. The interest in the outcome is more important than who is more or less represented in the physical product.

A friend of mine once compared the relationship of landscape architecture and building architecture to that of parsley around the pig, little decorative bushes around the foundation of a building. Art has a similar problem of being like candles on top of the birthday cake. The way to avoid that is to involve landscape architects and artists as early in the process as possible so that what they do isn't viewed as decorative but as integral. Historic preservation, sustainability, urban design and planning are also at their best when they are fully integrated. So the effort should be towards integration of different disciplines.

Historic preservation projects are so much of what GSA does. In your portfolio of properties, there are some extraordinary masterpieces. During the 2002 GSA Design Awards jury, we got into a serious discussion about how could we award prizes to architects who had carefully engineered the fixing up of those buildings. We found good examples where some great effort was taken to bring in

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contemporary technology without totally mutilating the old space.

It dawned on me that what GSA is doing today is generating that same level of design as represented in the past. In 100 years, people will be so impressed by what was created in 2003 that they will debate how to make those buildings contemporary without losing the spirit of their time.

In renovating some of the buildings in your portfolio, you should think carefully before you make them unrecognizable because they are witnesses to a particular time. Federal buildings from the 1960s and 70s are unnecessarily maligned. Efforts towards improving them shouldn't be to make them something other than what they are, but to bring out the character of that era. Changes to them should acknowledge that moment in history and celebrate that moment.

Should the federal government be exploring the vanguard of design? In some ways architecture has become less about a vanguard of design than a group of different dialects, as if from church Latin you have French, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish. That's different than the previous way of thinking about federal buildings, the Neo-classical

buildings of two centuries ago. We have descended happily to a much more real version of a Bob Stern building, a Thom Mayne building, a Richard Meier building. Those are all different languages, each with their own merits and each with their own masters. GSA should think less about vanguard and non-vanguard and more about being sure that the architects chosen are the masters of their own tongue.

Security is another area that requires a good push towards inventive thinking. When we go to Europe and visit castles with moats and crenellations, we say "wow," "cool," "beautiful." I'm not saying that federal buildings should have moats or crenellations or little slots out of which you can dump hot oil, but the same creative attitude is entirely possible. And GSA has built some great courthouses that meet those requirements.

The better the buildings built by GSA around the country, the higher the expectations. People will also begin to expect good architecture from state and local governments, which is perhaps more important because, over the national landscape, there are many more of those than there are federal buildings.

WITHIN THE PAST TEN YEARS, GSA HAS HELPED CREATE SOME GREAT BUILDINGS. OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS, ITS AIM SHOULD BE TO GO BEYOND GREAT BUILDINGS TO MAKING GREAT PLACES.

– Alan Ward, GSA National Peer

VISION+VOICE

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THOMAS **BALSLEY**

I WAS TRAINED TO BELIEVE THAT THE PLACEMENT OF A BUILDING ON A SITE SHOULD INVOLVE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE ARCHITECT AND THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT. CLEARLY, THE ARCHITECT SHOULD PLAY THE MAJOR ROLE. BUT THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT CAN CONTRIBUTE AN IMPORTANT PERSPECTIVE ON THE BUILDING'S IMPACT ON EXTERIOR SPACES, STREETS, AND NEIGHBORHOODS. IT'S A VALUABLE VOICE THAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE DISCUSSION.

So I advocate the very early involvement of a landscape architect in the project. From the very beginning, the architectural team should include a landscape architecture component and the selection of the entire team should be judged on the merits of both.

Without a landscape architect, a lot of landscape solutions end up looking like afterthoughts without synergy between the site and the building. I'm not sure the man in the street senses that as much as design professionals, who certainly see it. The inclusion of a landscape architect in the process opens up tremendous doors of opportunity, not only in terms of how the entire facility will be secured, but

also in how outdoor and indoor space can enhance each other. In effect, the public space of the building can be expanded outside if the building and the landscape are conceived of as a single project. Throughout my career, I've had many opportunities to work on projects with architects that have resulted in a wonderful experience. Landscape architects are more used to the collaborative process than architects because architects typically take the lead on a project and some of them take the word "lead" too far. So it's usually more of a challenge for the architect to invite the landscape architect to the table as a peer in that collaborative process. When it happens, you can see the results.

One of the great misconceptions of our profession is that landscape architecture and urban settings don't go hand in hand. But think about the grandfather of landscape architecture, Frederick Law Olmsted, and his Central Park in the middle of New York City. Yet, landscape architecture is often thought of as a suburban pursuit. Nothing is more important than the open spaces of our cities, starting with the streetscapes right down to the small plazas and the great destination parks. I've been a great proponent of the small urban park and plaza in the city and the role it plays in our daily lives. If you think about big destination parks like Central Park or a waterfront park in a city, we don't go to them every day. In fact, we may only go to them once a



month. But a small, urban park, a hybrid of a park and a plaza, that's within three or four blocks of your home or office is where you might have coffee or lunch with friends or co-workers. It's the kind of open space that can actually touch our daily lives and improve the quality of urban life. So I have always seen those spaces as being in the realm of landscape architecture. That's the role our profession should play in the city.

In security charrettes, my mission is to serve GSA by removing all the bollards that we can from federal buildings. That's an overstatement, of course. In many cases, there is no alternative. But I believe we've just begun to scratch the surface on ways of dealing with landscape around public buildings in a creative way and in a way that continues to express our open society in these public spaces. I'm confident that there are ways to do that. We're doing it at the Jacob Javits Federal Building in New York City, even though an entire system of bollards was installed as an immediate security solution. Hopefully, when we're all finished with the new security design, someone will have enough courage to remove the bollards that are no longer relevant. It would be the ultimate pat on the back if a bollard removal program followed our work.

GSA'S FIRST IMPRESSIONS AND DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROGRAMS ARE GREAT BEGINNINGS FOR OPENING PEOPLE'S EYES ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SECURITY AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE. THEY OFFER US HOPE IN THE PROFESSION. WITH THE RIGHT FUNDING, THERE'S A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO REASSESS LOBBIES, ATRIUMS, AND OTHER FRONT-DOOR ENVIRONMENTS, MANY OF THEM FROM THE 1950S AND 1960S, AND TO CREATE A SECOND GENERATION OF PUBLIC SPACES THAT IS VALUABLE AND EMBRACED BY THE CITY.

When you think about the way we see these spaces, they really are the front door. That's why we should reprioritize the funding and make sure that we have enough money at our front door. It requires a shift in how we understand the importance of a lobby and an atrium because that's

where the first impression of a federal building is made in most cases.

Typically in the 1950s and 1960s, architects saw the landscape as a foreground to their federal buildings, and that was pretty much it. If there's a failing the federal government made in the years back then, it was to allow architecture to dominate the entire site as opposed to seeing the value in the landscape architecture on the site. A lot of federal buildings are the result of that mindset. Now I see those landscapes as being a blank slate ready for a new look. GSA has come a long way in understanding the real value in those spaces, that they're not just foregrounds for buildings.

For historic public buildings, I've seen landscapes successfully accomplished in both extremes, from a very historical perspective to an attitude that says this new landscape is no longer part of that old architecture and the two will have an interesting dialogue between one century and another. There shouldn't be tight, rigid rules about how to approach a situation. A lot of it has to do with the preservationists involved with the project and how willing and open-minded they are about exploring something beyond pure preservation.

GSA should be thoughtful and careful about the kind of landscape it's commissioning, weighing capital costs and maintenance costs. For example, building with stainless steel and stone is going to cost more initially, but if done with intelligence, it will reduce maintenance costs in the long run. This issue is worthy of consideration when landscape architecture gets into the garden-y territory of plants because that type of design generates higher maintenance costs than people are used to. GSA should determine whether the landscape should be a garden that requires

intense care or a public landscape, more civic in nature and less like a botanical garden or someone's back yard. It's a matter of using good sense.

If people ask me a question about a tree or a shrub at a cocktail party, I'll say I don't know anything about them to make the point that landscape architecture doesn't necessarily have to involve plant material. It can involve paving, sculpture, walls, steps, and elements that we're familiar with in our urban environment. It's not always about trees and shrubs.

As GSA begins to do this more with sustainability in buildings, it should also impose the same standards on the landscape architecture. Siting the building so as to conserve energy is important and that's another reason why a landscape architect should be at the table during the design process. But there's a point of diminishing returns with sustainability. Some people interpret it as a weeds-and-seeds approach: wetlands, soggy storm water collection basins. As a profession, we haven't figured out how to translate its goals into real urban settings. I'd like to stretch the definition of sustainability to embrace the ways in which the landscape sustains the community around it.

Promoting the value of landscape architecture should be the next goal for GSA. It's as much of a learning process for architects to understand the value of landscape architecture as it is for the general public. GSA should certainly promote those landscapes that you're proud of and that have been the result of your success with the Design Excellence Program. GSA also has a great peer review program, and one obvious way to find talented landscape architects is to have peers suggest names. Having a landscape architect on staff as part of your program would also help you reach out to the profession.

Landscape should be treated as preciously as a building. It's a functioning, organic element. Art should find a place in the landscape, but the artist shouldn't shape it. The landscape should be treated just as if it was the architecture, and the art program should work within it. Landscape should be the right thing for a public space no matter how large or small it may be because it's supposed to serve the public, and it has to hold to certain standards in that regard.

THERE ARE ALWAYS GOING TO BE BLURRED LINES BETWEEN ART AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE, BETWEEN ART AND ARCHITECTURE, AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND ARCHITECTURE, NO MATTER HOW HARD WE TRY TO ERASE THEM. THAT'S GOOD FOR EVERYONE. WE DRAW OUR INSPIRATION AND OUR COURAGE FROM SEEING THE BROADER DESIGN PROFESSIONS.

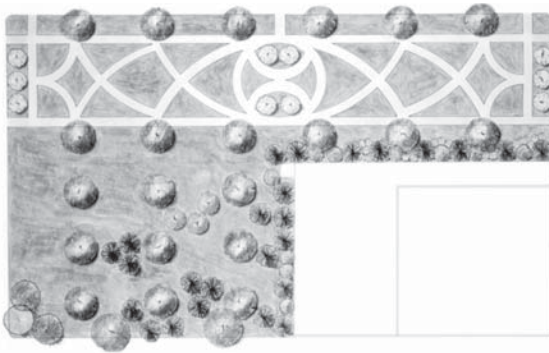
My interest goes beyond landscape architecture to graphic design, industrial design—all the design fields. I draw ideas from them that I bring to my work. So my heroes extend beyond the conventional disciplines. I often work closely with a graphic designer, and we often go on interviews together. It's that cross-fertilization of ideas and perspectives that enriches each profession and brings a better product and result to the public and to our clients.

In St. Louis, the open space across the street from the federal courthouse started out as an art program. A certain amount of money was set aside for the landscaping of the park and another amount was set aside for the art that would take place in it. As a juror for the selection of the artist, I found that the artist should have been selected as part of a team with a landscape architect. Given all the requirements, it should have been a landscape architectural project with an art component. There should have been collaboration from the beginning. But none of the four artists had brought in a landscape architect to do the work. It was very frustrating for me as a juror, as a landscape architect, and for other jurors to see the artist struggling with landscape architectural issues in terms of the site

and the land, as well as public open space and all that goes with it, from safety to security. These are not concerns that artists are used to thinking about on a daily basis.

The St. Louis courthouse park is such an important public space that I felt that the best artist would be one that would stand up and say, “I’m over my head, this is beyond me, I really need landscape architectural help.” So we selected the artist that stood there before us and said, quite honestly, “I’ve been thinking about the site, I can share my thoughts with you, but I actually haven’t produced a piece of art for you to judge me by. It’s just an idea. It hasn’t been refined because I feel I need landscape architectural input.” The artist has since brought in landscape architects to help her, and I think she’s on her way to a much better solution. So that’s a good example of how the art program needs to distinguish between a pure art program and one that begins to get into the landscape. At some point, the program should be able to tap landscape architectural design expertise in a meaningful way as opposed to just technically supporting the artist’s ideas. Some situations are better served if the landscape architect has the commission and an artist is on the team from the very beginning so the artistic idea begins to evolve with the landscape idea. I think the landscape architect is better prepared to lead that collaboration because artists are not used to collaborating with people; they’re used to working alone in their studios.

As a rule, the landscape architecture profession is a very conservative profession. You’re not usually rewarded for taking risks, especially as they relate to public spaces. The reason is the consensus building that’s involved, working with various local, state, or federal agencies. There are very few people who have the courage to be patrons of cutting-edge design. So the Design Excellence Program is a breath of fresh air that has just blown in. It’s just wonderful that GSA is taking on that role as a patron of high-quality design. Just as it’s been a patron of a very contemporary



Design concept for the park at Thomas F. Eagleton
U.S. Courthouse, St. Louis, MO

architectural language, GSA could do the same in landscape architecture.

There are landscape architects that play a role as pioneers. Martha Schwartz certainly is one with whom GSA has had experience. But there needs to be a very delicate balance between pioneering design and maintaining the public's trust. I have seen examples of public spaces that were so experimental that one wondered whether the public's interest was served. Public open space is a rare commodity and when a design is finished, we need to stand back and ask whether it's working as a successful public space. As long as GSA is doing that, it should continue to promote a contemporary design language.

When GSA hasn't kept its eye on that broader goal, the landscape may be embraced by the high-design community but not necessarily embraced by the public. Then people begin to say, "We're going to do another project and I'll tell you right now, we're not going to do it like that." So the innovative design can work against us as designers, because when we're facing a public or a bureaucracy that has been burned and stung by an experiment, we can have the pencil taken out of our hands. Then we're asked to do something very conservative. So as long as the public is served and the result is well loved and well used, GSA should keep pushing forward with the experiments.

I WOULD ENCOURAGE GSA TO REACH OUT TO NEW AND OLD TALENTS IN OUR PROFESSION, TO SEE HOW FAR WE CAN TAKE PUBLIC LANDSCAPES. SUBJECT LANDSCAPES TO A REAL RIGOROUS DESIGN APPROACH, AS RIGOROUS AS YOU ALLOW YOUR ARCHITECTS TO APPROACH YOUR BUILDINGS. THAT'S WHAT I HOPE FOR THE FUTURE AND THAT'S WHAT I HOPE YOU'LL CONTINUE TO DO.

THOMAS BALSLEY IS THE FOUNDER AND PRINCIPAL DESIGNER OF THOMAS BALSLEY ASSOCIATES, A NEW YORK CITY-BASED DESIGN FIRM SPECIALIZING IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE, URBAN DESIGN, AND SITE PLANNING. BALSLEY DESIGNED THE RENOVATION OF THE MAIN ENTRANCE LANDSCAPE FOR THE JACOB JAVITS FEDERAL BUILDING IN NEW YORK. AS A GSA PEER SINCE 2002, HE PARTICIPATED IN SECURITY CHARRETTEs FOR THE U.S. COURTHOUSES IN ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA; AND BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS. BALSLEY IS A FELLOW OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS.

PETER LINDSAY **SCHAUDT**

THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN NEW BUILDINGS RIGHT AT THE BEGINNING. IF YOU LOOK BACK IN HISTORY TO GREAT LANDSCAPES AND GREAT BUILDINGS, THEY'VE ALWAYS INVOLVED THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PROJECT. THE ROLE OF A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT IS TO LOOK AT THE WHOLE SITE AND NOT FOCUS ON THE MINUTIA OF DETAIL. THE URBAN STRENGTH OF LANDSCAPE DESIGN IS

ABOUT CONNECTING A BUILDING TO COMMUNITIES, ROADS, AND VISTAS—EXTENDING OUT INTO THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND INTO THE REGION.

It's looking outward to boulevards, street trees, and open spaces so there's a sense of connection between the building and its environment. We should be bold and not create a castle-and-moat scenario, but work beyond the immediate building site.

High quality landscape architecture doesn't necessarily have to be high cost. However, any landscape needs maintenance. GSA can't design a project then cut the maintenance costs. That's being done in public landscapes all over the country. There has to be a commitment. The sustainable concepts of landscape design should be embraced in recycling storm water and putting it to good use for irrigation, for example. I don't believe that you need a lot of money up front. I do believe, however, there needs to be maintenance at the end of the project because a landscape is a living thing. There's no such thing as a maintenance-free landscape.

Security is a new phenomenon in American design. Of course in other countries, like Israel, they've been doing it for years. In most security design charrettes for courthouses, the primary concern is the protection of the judge and the jurors. Keeping that in mind, we want to expand the protection in terms of the quality of environment. The



idea is to create accessible spaces representing our democracy while also providing security. Often, the judiciary can't imagine that we can make a good environment, while still satisfying security concerns. Essentially after 9/11, the reaction has been to install Jersey barriers and bollards. We need to be more creative with walls, grading, and planting trees to create the illusion that we are not putting up physical barriers but that security measures are part of the design landscape. The new designs for GSA are blank canvases for making security almost invisible. When you are working on existing facilities, it's much more difficult to do that and you have to rely on more obvious kinds of solutions.

The main topic for government building design now is security, but the main topic ten years ago was the Americans with Disabilities Act. ADA is now part of the design fabric and security will be, too. I predict that in two or three years, we will be making good design that is accessible and secure, and people won't feel afraid to enter a public building. Security will be invisible. It won't scream out that this is an unsafe place, and we have to barricade it.

I was on a peer review for improving security at the Federal Center in Chicago, and we agreed that we couldn't stick our head in the sand just because the original architect, Mies van der Rohe, is dead. We had to solve the problem in the spirit of Mies. That applies for any other historic building. Buildings and landscapes have to take on a life of their own, and they have to evolve. I have no problem revising historic buildings as long as the changes are carried out in a way sympathetic to the spirit of the original designer.

Landscape architecture shouldn't necessarily change a whole context unless there is good reason to. In some projects, landscape architecture should be bold and make a statement. And in other cases, it should be subtle and fit in. It all has to do with the surrounding area. When you are dealing with a historic building, there is no reason to always do a historical landscape.



Federal Center, Chicago, IL

I BELIEVE BUILDINGS AND LANDSCAPE ARE A MOSAIC THAT'S CONSTANTLY EVOLVING. A CONTEMPORARY, FRESH LANDSCAPE IN FRONT OF A HISTORICAL BUILDING TALKS ABOUT OUR TIME, OUR AGE. THAT MAY BE THE RIGHT THING TO DO RATHER THAN TO ALWAYS GO BACK TO NOSTALGIC TIMES WHEN LIFE WAS SUPPOSEDLY BETTER. WE HAVE TO DO WHAT'S NOW AND LOOK TO THE FUTURE.

Over the next five to ten years, GSA's design goals in regard to landscape should be sustainability and building models for the future. There's no reason why we can't do that. One of the ways GSA might expand its program is to decentralize massive federal buildings. In many cases, government buildings are used from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and then they sleep at night. Washington is a prime example. It would be interesting if GSA started to fragment certain components of the government building programs into smaller community projects. People could have evening and weekend events in these government buildings to enliven them and change the 9-to-5 stereotypes.

Landscape architecture and art are made for each other. The best way to create a collaborative project is to have the landscape architect work with an artist with whom he or she feels comfortable. I think it should be the design team's prerogative to choose an artist because I think that the design has to be in place before you bring an artist on board. The artist needs to focus on a theme or a concept, and I think it's very difficult to do that when the project isn't developed. We've done projects before where we've involved a sculptor pretty much after we have an idea, and they are able to really grab onto it and design it. Not every architect is easy to deal with. You have the ego and that's why the artist has to be just as much a collaborator as the architect. Too often we finish the project and then plunk down something and it doesn't seem natural. I know many architects have brought on artists to create glass elements

and other parts of their building. Where art is part of the architecture, rather than a decoration, it is very successful. The integration of landscape architecture is also very important to the design process. Landscape architects experience the same thing as artists being brought on too late in the project. Essentially, we end up being decorators. We need to avoid that.

I've had a wonderful experience with the peer review process. I feel like I'm back at school. I get energized. It's very invigorating. The people who are invited are nationally known. For example, when I went to Eugene, Oregon, I did not know that I'd be reviewing Rich Haag's work for the new federal courthouse. He's a famous landscape architect who worked for Dan Kiley years ago, and I had to review his work. It didn't take long to realize that I had to put his fame aside and ask him some tough critical questions. He respected our comments and agreed on many. As a citizen, I feel that I'm giving back in a way that I was trained to do, and I'm very pleased to do it.

Peers are involved in project reviews a little bit later than I would prefer. I know that many of the consultants have already worked a long time and when we come in the room, there's a sense of ambivalence of being too critical because of their investment. So the design peer review should be during the schematic phase of a project rather than during the design development. The strength of the peer review is giving very honest, straightforward opinions and having a better project as a result of the process.

ANOTHER IMPROVEMENT WOULD BE TO BRING IN AN EXPERT IN THE LOCAL HISTORY OF THE AREA AT THE BEGINNING OF A PEER REVIEW SESSION. THIS HISTORIAN COULD PRESENT THE CULTURE AND HISTORY OF THE CITY, HIGHLIGHTING CERTAIN ASPECTS THAT ARE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE PROJECT DESIGN.

The competition winner or the selected architect has already done that research. The peers, however, are flying in from other locations and don't have much information on, for example, the history of Albuquerque or the road connecting the courthouse to different cities along the route. We often don't realize those facts until halfway through the day. Had we had a local historian talk to us earlier, our focus would have been much sharper.

The design community is starting to catch up to what GSA is doing with the Design Excellence Program. Now the greater community needs to know that story. GSA has done an excellent job in marketing through brochures and printed materials. Commissions to a lot of star architects have also given the program a lot of exposure. Of course, the ultimate way of educating the public is to continue to build good buildings. The building and its environment should be your marketing piece. I also think the process needs to be better marketed because the public doesn't really know what goes into a project like a courthouse or an office building. It would benefit GSA to have the architects talk about the process of designing and building these projects. That process needs to be more exposed because it would be a good way to express just how serious GSA is about design quality. It just doesn't happen. It's a process.

PETER LINDSAY SCHAUDT, PRESIDENT OF PETER LINDSAY SCHAUDT LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE OF CHICAGO, HAS BEEN A GSA PEER SINCE 2002. HE PARTICIPATED IN SECURITY CHARRETTES FOR THE FEDERAL CENTER IN CHICAGO; THE DELUGO U.S. COURTHOUSE IN ST. THOMAS, VIRGIN ISLANDS; AND THE U.S. COURTHOUSE IN ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO. SCHAUDT WORKED ON THE SOLDIER FIELD/NORTH BURNHAM PARK REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT AND IS THE CAMPUS LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT FOR THE ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY IN CHICAGO.

ALAN **WARD** STUART **DAWSON**

WARD: I've participated as a peer in reviewing the border crossing in Oroville, Washington, designed by architect James Cutler, and the federal courthouse in Springfield, Massachusetts, by architect Moshe Safdie. I've also participated in a couple of security design charrettes. One was for the John F. Kennedy Federal Building, on a highly prominent site adjacent to the Boston City Hall Plaza. The other was for the Ron DeLugo Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse on the harbor of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands looking right over the Caribbean.

I've also been on the other side of the table as a designer presenting to peer reviewers. We are the landscape architects for the federal courthouse in Little Rock, Arkansas, which is being designed by RTKL, and responsible for the landscape master plan for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in White Oak, Maryland, which occupies quite a large campus setting. So that's given me the perspective of dealing with peer input and incorporating it into our designs. I have a pretty good familiarity with the process.



DAWSON: I, too, have had a wonderful range of experiences with GSA. My first experience as a peer was reviewing architect Carol Ross Barney's new federal building in Oklahoma City. The review was held in Fort Worth, Texas, and was rather extensive. Then I participated in a couple of security design charrettes for federal courthouses in Concord, New Hampshire; and Providence, Rhode Island. The results were very good, considering the charrettes were one-day efforts. I served as a peer in selecting the architect

for the Chapman border station on the boundary between Maine and Canada and will review the preliminary designs for that border crossing.

WARD: Having participated in a few security charrettes over the past few years, I've seen an interesting evolution in security design. Initially, security was to ensure safety from all the possibilities [of terrorism] that were brought forward. It is now seen as an opportunity to make other enhancements to the site. Bollards, planters, and a whole range of tactics can be used in a positive way to make federal building sites more inviting and attractive. Some of these sites haven't seen improvements for decades, so by going in and solving a security issue, you can make a better defined entry. The real challenge now is to use security to your advantage and improve the site.

DAWSON: Because of all of the security requirements, you learn hard and fast that you don't really have as much space as you'd like in an urban situation. In Providence, for example, it was so tight around the old federal courthouse that you probably ought to have closed the roadways. But that really isn't possible without doing serious damage to downtown Providence.

In other urban settings, setbacks for security can become so substantial that the building no longer fronts the street. That's the real challenge. When you walk away from a security charrette, you don't want the solution to be seen as a negative but as a positive extension of the existing building. The beauty of a charrette is that the participants become believers in a solution that may not have occurred to them in the first place. The conversion happens through the collaborative process.

WARD: Security is forefront in the minds of the individuals responsible for federal facilities. They're sometimes obsessed with the largest range of possible threats and may invent

threats that probably are never going to happen. As a result, they expect a charrette to be exclusively focused on meeting potential physical threats. But we're designers of the built environment and want to enhance the site and make it more attractive. So as we listen to security concerns, we start to bring in other enhancements to accomplish so much more. If you're successful in getting a good dialogue going, those folks responsible for security will also see the opportunity to make a better facility as well as to have enhanced security.

For example, quite a profound change in thinking happened during the charrette for the federal building and courthouse in St. Thomas. In that case, the power of doing an attractive, illustrative drawing to show how security enhancements would work with the building helped convert the judges and the facilities people into believing that the security could be done in a very positive way. An existing street had been closed because it was so close to the building. This street was transformed into a pedestrian way with large-scale planters acting as security devices. It's quite an interesting walkway adjacent to the building that leads to the waterfront. So by drawing quite an evocative picture of it, that plan had staying power with the group.

DAWSON: One thing I've found during the charrettes and presentations is that a lot of people don't read drawings really well. Judges are brilliant people, but they sometimes don't know where north is and a lot of designers don't know either. Even though we draw sections and perspectives, there is a language barrier to what we're talking about.

WARD: The peer review process for our projects has been an interesting one. For example, our landscape is such an integral part of the FDA campus, which encompasses three million square feet in multiple buildings, that we had a measure of respect from the peer reviewers. That was important because on other GSA projects, such as federal

courthouses, the landscape architect has not been an important part of the design team. It almost seemed as though the public art program was second and the landscape architect came in third in terms of the significance devoted to various players. So what was satisfying in the FDA project, and this was probably due to the urging of the architects, was that the peers recognized how important the site was to the FDA campus.

MOST ARCHITECTS TEND TO BE FORM-GIVERS TO BUILDINGS, WHEREAS LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS TEND TO MAKE PLACES, AND BY MAKING PLACES, ENGAGE THE BUILDING WITH THE SITE AND THE LANDSCAPE.

If you look at the buildings that are most admired by the American Institute of Architects as the best of American architectural history, they've been the University of Virginia and Fallingwater, which engage the landscape. So, I'm surprised there hasn't really been more emphasis by GSA on the role of the landscape architect in the Design Excellence process.

DAWSON: Thomas Jefferson and Frank Lloyd Wright really cared a lot about the site, but some architects in the past haven't cared so much. My experience with the campus for the new federal building in Oklahoma City showed the importance of the landscape and how much time architect Carol Ross Barney spent working with Sasaki and others to come up with the best solution for the site. I think the building ended up being a lot better for it. For us, landscape is not cosmetic but really practical stuff. And to have the architect enthused about the importance of the landscape is something that doesn't always happen.

WARD: GSA's Design Excellence Program should embrace landscape architecture as part of the architect selection process. All too often, there has been a great process to pick the lead architect based on the design portfolio. GSA should have an equivalent process for engaging a landscape architect in the process. That landscape architect might be

contracted directly with an owner or client, just like the architect. And that client should expect an intelligent dialogue to take place between the architect and the landscape architect so there's a more equivalent footing. There should be mutual respect between the architect and the landscape architect because in their interaction, the landscape architect will bring ideas to the architecture as well.

DAWSON: I second the motion and hope that relationship could be articulated in a more formal way. An excellent example was the architect selection process for the border station in Jackman, Maine. I was one of those who reviewed the five different architects who were short-listed. The team that walked off with the blue ribbon had a landscape architect on the team. This firm had visited the site and prepared numerous diagrams about how you might handle traffic and siting. It was a unanimous decision to select that team because the architect was sharp enough to understand that site planning and landscape architecture are important parts of solving the puzzle. You would hope that other architects would be wise enough to choose a landscape architect as part of the team. GSA's projects might be better if there were a more forceful way of being certain that the site was given attention equal to the building. The architect and landscape architect could be commissioned separately, but you'd like the architect to be comfortable with a landscape architect of their choice.

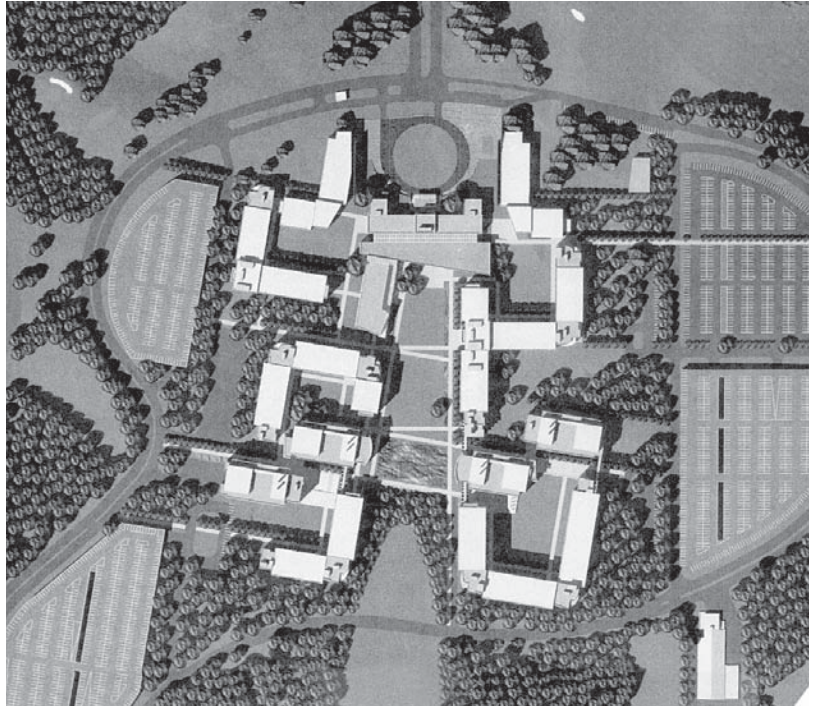
WARD: Not all landscapes work out with respect to the process. For the federal courthouse in Little Rock, Arkansas, the architect was first engaged and we, as landscape architects, did a site plan. Then the artist selection process was started and the selected artist was interested in a larger environmental setting. So basically, the landscape design in relationship to the courthouse was thrown out and replaced by an art piece, which extended to the larger environment of the site. It was quite a frustrating process.

The architect and the landscape architect need to start the project. They're so many practical concerns about where to build and limitations in the zoning and so forth. When you start to frame the problem, you learn enough to be able to define some of the opportunities for the artist. Sometimes with GSA, the public art process goes along almost separately from the building and site design process. Or sometimes the artist becomes a substitute for the landscape architect.

DAWSON: In an ideal world, the artist should become a third party to the architect and landscape architect.

WARD: I'm not sure that maintenance factors are really woven into GSA's Design Excellence process in a really meaningful way. That once again requires a degree of sophistication in terms of understanding the site and its future. When a building is done and built, you photograph it and that's it for a while. But when are landscapes done? Are they done when the trees are planted? When the trees are mature, five to eight years later? In many ways, landscapes are never done. They are always in process—they're dynamic. So there isn't such a clear separation between what a landscape costs to build and what it costs to be maintained because landscapes are always in a dynamic and a fluid state.

DAWSON: I've never ever seen enough maintenance on almost any public work. But my sense is GSA has done a good job over the years. If the dollar has to be squeezed too much for construction of the original design, chances are that maintenance costs will be higher over the years. It would be good if GSA could build in a more substantial budget for landscape like it does for architecture. The better you detail the plumbing, the less maintenance the plumbing is going to require. And the same is true with landscape—the detailing of pavements, fences, walls, topsoil, irrigation,



Site plan for the Food and Drug Administration Campus, White Oak, MD

and drainage—all of those things. If you've got the proper budget up front, it's going to make life a lot easier for people over the next 20 or 30 years as that landscape matures.

WARD: Sustainability should start at the site-planning phase of a project and should be done in collaboration with the landscape architect. I was impressed with the receptivity by GSA to proposals related to sustainability on the FDA campus. It's a large site that's adjacent to some sensitive river corridors in Maryland, which has rather stringent environmental regulations. We've reused material on the site, native plants on thin roof decks over the underground structure, and drained water off the building roofs into bio-retention swells. GSA was very receptive to those initiatives, and I think the project has a good chance for certification by EPA's LEED [Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design] Program. It did take the scale of project over many, many acres to affect some of the most interesting opportunities for sustainability. From the landscape architect's point of view, there are probably fewer opportunities for sustainability on smaller urban sites.

WARD: Within the past ten years, GSA has helped create some great buildings. Over the next ten years, its aim should be to go beyond great buildings to making great places. That means striving to look beyond the structure of the building to the outdoor spaces and the landscape as part of the site.

GSA should aspire to make landscapes that are as significant as works of architecture. The landscape archi-

tecture profession is now producing some really great work that is recognized internationally as being as significant as some important architectural works. So there are opportunities for the Design Excellence Program to make profoundly important landscapes as well as buildings.

DAWSON: I agree with Alan completely. The more these landscapes appeal to the public and become memorable places, the more they will benefit the image of the federal government. The more you can do with public open spaces, the happier everyone will be with your mission.

WARD: The time is right to put landscape architecture more in the forefront of design excellence. There's a greater environmental consciousness and the issues of sustainability are increasing important to the public. Landscape architects have always had a social dimension to their practices. Frederick Law Olmsted, for example, worked in creating our great public parks. Our public buildings should have a measure of public accessibility and be part of the public realm. So I think its time to add that dimension to the Design Excellence Program.

For GSA's landmark projects all across the country, certainly the architectural community knows the selection process very well. It's highly visible. If there were an equivalent process for the selection of landscape architects, that community would be aware of it, too. It would focus attention on GSA's concern for sites and landscape architecture. The key lies in how GSA approaches the process of planning and designing these very important sites.

STUART DAWSON AND **ALAN WARD** ARE PRINCIPALS OF SASAKI ASSOCIATES IN WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS. AS LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS AND URBAN DESIGNERS, DAWSON AND WARD HAVE WORKED ON THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS SITE EXPANSION IN WASHINGTON, THE U.S. CAPITOL VISITORS CENTER, AND THE GATEWAY SPORTS DISTRICT IN CLEVELAND, OHIO. DAWSON WAS APPOINTED A GSA PEER IN 1996 AND HAS PARTICIPATED IN SEVERAL SECURITY CHARRETTES. WARD WAS THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT FOR THE U.S. COURTHOUSE IN LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS; AND THE FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION BUILDING IN WHITE OAK, MARYLAND. HE WAS APPOINTED A GSA PEER IN 1998 AND HAS SERVED ON SEVERAL SECURITY CHARRETTES AND PEER REVIEWS.

KENNETH GRUNLEY

Construction documents become our bible for building over a period of years. The better the construction documents are, the less change orders, and the more expeditious the project. By not removing items that have already been installed, by getting prompt answers to construction questions, and allowing the building trades to continue their work, we end up with a much higher quality product.

Since starting the Design Excellence Program, GSA has done an excellent job in obtaining the best architects in the country to work for the federal government. But it still has some problems in properly reviewing construction documents. My father, who is 87 years old and still works at Grunley Construction, has complained about the government's construction documents for years. He always says that if somebody just spent the time to review the documents prior to being released for bid, you'd have a much

better job. Now the Construction Excellence Program is examining construction issues and helping GSA find problem areas in the documents so that the government can put out a much finer set of documents.

I have really enjoyed the peer review process for projects such as the new U.S. Courthouse and the Post Office renovation in Brooklyn, New York. I've also been working on the new Oklahoma City Federal Building and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Building in Atlanta, which is a 1930s GSA building ready to undergo a renovation under a GCCM [general contractor as construction manager] procedure. The peer review process has been wonderful for me because I have never worked for another construction company. I know how to do things one way, the Grunley way, right or wrong, and we're not perfect. So as I go to the other projects, I find out about safety and quality control programs. I also leave often feeling very good because I see things that we do that are exceptional compared to other contractors.

The project that I enjoyed the most is the Thurgood Marshall U.S. Courthouse in Manhattan. It's a skyscraper with 30 or 40 courtrooms. The judges are concerned about noise, dust, and disturbance to the court system. They are concerned about how to procure the project and are trying to decide whether it should be built according to a GCCM, design/build, or a traditional design-bid-build process. After two days of review, we recommended a process and a schedule that they were very happy with.



THE CONSTRUCTION EXCELLENCE REVIEW PROCESS SHOULD BE DIFFERENT ACCORDING TO WHETHER THE PROJECT IS A RENOVATION OR A NEW BUILDING. ON A RENOVATION PROJECT THERE ARE ALWAYS ISSUES OVER WHETHER THE BUILDING SHOULD REMAIN OCCUPIED AND WHETHER THE WORK SHOULD BE PERFORMED DURING THE DAY OR AT NIGHT.

I have worked in many historic buildings where tenants do not want to move out of the building because of the historic significance of the building. Occupied buildings are a problem in their own right. You have to think about air-conditioning the space, fire egress, fire alarms, etc. There's also the question as to when the demolition should be done to uncover all the hidden conditions and unforeseen conditions that will plague the project as it moves forward. Having that process start very early is very critical to the project. The Construction Excellence review process should start approximately at the time GSA hires the architect.

Although every project is different, you find common issues when you do peer reviews. For a project at the 15 percent construction completion level, for example, we interviewed the architect, engineers, construction manager, GSA, and contractor in five different meetings. At each one of the meetings, one of the questions was: Is the project on schedule? The answer was the same from all five groups. The project was approximately a week behind schedule. At the end of the day we brought the entire group back together. On the wall of the trailer was a schedule that was marked "preliminary." I asked as to whether there was a current schedule on the project. Everybody looked at each other and said, well, we never really completed the schedule. We were a little bit surprised. The reality was, the project probably was a week behind schedule. However, there was no document for that. Immediately after the peer review, the team completed a schedule, and the project is finishing up next month.

Communication is certainly the biggest issue of any construction project. It's all about building trust among the team members. When I was asked to be a construction peer, one of the first documents we received was a questionnaire. I read it and realized that these are all the problems that plague the industry. When you go through these questions, which are multiple choice, they lead to dialogue. You feel like you are part psychiatrist, part parent, part construction peer, and you hear about issues all day long that always have an essential theme. On some projects you'll find that everybody sugarcoats their relationships with everybody, while on other projects you'll find that nobody can stand each other and typically they are fighting over a very small item.

One of the issues on the Oklahoma City Federal Building project was the exposed concrete exterior. The architect didn't want smooth concrete. She wanted the building to look like it came out of the earth. The contractor was stripping concrete on a daily basis, but the architect was in Chicago. There was a problem that 20-30 percent of the building had been poured and finished and no approval had been given. GSA suggested the architect fly down from Chicago to Oklahoma City so that she could inspect on a regular basis. They did that and the project is going very well.

At both the Thurgood Marshall U.S. Courthouse in New York City and the Martin Luther King, Jr. project in Atlanta, the architects and construction managers were struggling with the best process for renovating the windows and restoring the stone on the outside of the building, which are both problematic to the project. After spending a day with them, I was able to head them in a correct direction. Maybe I was outside the box enough that I was able to look at the project in a global manner.

I have also been on the other side of the peer review process. Three of my projects in Washington, DC—the World War II Memorial, Internal Revenue Service headquarters, and Department of Interior—have been reviewed. You always feel like you want to make a good showing to GSA. So there's always a little bit of tension. As the day progresses, you hear things that the contractor needs to improve on, and you can take that well when you've heard something that you are also doing extremely well.

GSA needs to continue to look for architects that put out wonderful designs. At the same time, they need to be architects who don't defend their documents. None of us is perfect. The architects have a very difficult task of putting out an entire set of construction documents in a short period of time. There are going to be errors. When there's a problem, when an RFI [Request for Information] is written, a good architect won't get defensive and tell you something is in the documents when it isn't. Instead, the architect will work with you to find a construction solution and move the project. That is what I look for in a good architect. One way of ensuring that during the architect selection process is to get references from the owners of the buildings that the architect has designed or possibly even asking the contractors about their working relationship with the architect. The source selection on the design side should also include an architect's ability to work with the contractor and the construction manager. However, I don't believe you need contractors in on the review. Past performance indicators, phone calls or questionnaires can certainly resolve some issues. Being a contractor, I'm opposed to having private sector partners being on the decision-making end of the selection process.

I recently went to a two-day seminar for GSA's Construction Excellence peers. One of our major concerns was the construction manager's role, which is different on

every project. As contractors bidding to GSA, the process has worked well for us for years. We bid to GSA. We know the contracting officers, and what the contract documents really mean. Then all of a sudden, we are put into a situation where there is an unknown entity on the project, the construction manager. As GSA reduced its own work force, it hired outside construction managers. Construction managers certainly serve a purpose, and they are very dedicated, well-educated people. However, often you'll find that some construction managers have never worked on GSA projects before. They are unaware of an SF24 [Bid Bond] or standard GSA forms that we've been using for years. So there's a disconnect. The problem is that most of the construction managers come from large national firms. Many of these large firms are excellent, but anybody that is employing 5,000 or 10,000 employees is going to have an A team and a C team. I believe it's very important that GSA understand the key personnel in those firms.

GSA is the prominent landlord in the United States. For years, it had one system of operating, which was the design-bid-build process. I believe that's been opened up now, that GSA contracting officers and project managers are looking at design/build as well as GCCM at-risk projects. These are all good systems. The pendulum typically swings back and forth. I still believe that a large percentage

of GSA's work should be done according to the traditional design-bid-build system. However, certain projects lend themselves to design/build and GCCMs.

Recently, I've been hearing about budget busts on GSA projects. I believe that only a few of those have been on traditional design-bid-build projects. Most have been on GCCM projects and design/build projects where four or five budgets are drawn up during the course of the job. When there's finally a full set of documents, they go out to subcontractors, and they're having budget busts. I believe this is due to what I call the blank check phenomenon. I've seen GMPs, which is supposed to stand for Guaranteed Maximum Price, turn out to be only a Guaranteed Minimum Price.

Building commissioning to ensure that all facility systems perform interactively in accordance with the design documentation and intent—and the owner's operational needs—has to start at the beginning of the project. Engineers, contractors, mechanical/electrical/plumbing coordinators, and other team members have to start at the very beginning of the job, looking at the end of these systems. Tenants and facility managers should also be involved from the get-go or they are going to be unhappy at the end. Putting together an entire program as well as value engineering of certain mechanical and electrical systems are all very important to the process.

A GSA PEER SINCE 2000, **KENNETH GRUNLEY** IS PRESIDENT OF GRUNLEY CONSTRUCTION COMPANY IN ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND. GRUNLEY CONSTRUCTION WAS PART OF A JOINT VENTURE TO CONSTRUCT THE NATIONAL WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL AND WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RENOVATIONS OF THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE BUILDING, ARIEL RIOS BUILDING, NATIONAL ARCHIVES, AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR HEADQUARTERS, ALL LOCATED IN WASHINGTON, DC. GRUNLEY HAS PARTICIPATED IN CONSTRUCTION PEER REVIEWS FOR THE THURGOOD MARSHALL U.S. COURTHOUSE IN NEW YORK CITY; THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. FEDERAL BUILDING IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA; AND THE FEDERAL BUILDING IN OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA.

RALPH W. JOHNSON

BEFORE YOU CAN HAVE A QUALITY CONSTRUCTION PROJECT, YOU MUST START WITH A QUALITY DESIGN CONCEPT THAT BUILDING OWNERS AND USERS CAN EMBRACE. QUALITY CONSTRUCTION IS NOT JUST USING EXPENSIVE MATERIALS AND INSTALLING THEM TO VERY EXACT STANDARDS. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRELIMINARY DESIGN CONCEPT SHOULD INCLUDE, AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE, THE CONSTRUCTION PLAYERS TO

PROVIDE SOME GUIDANCE ON WHAT IS REASONABLY ATTAINABLE AND WHAT IS NOT. ONE DOESN'T WANT TO SET EXPECTATIONS IN A WRONG DIRECTION SO THEY CAN'T BE MET.

Teamwork is certainly important. Historically, it's been that way in our industry, and there's no reason why it should be any different with federal government projects.

I retired after 43 years with the Turner Construction Company, so I've seen a few GSA projects and a few evolutions of delivery processes, teambuilding, and so forth. Following World War II, private industry began to see the need for a new way to work together on building construction projects, to do them quicker, more economically, through a less adversarial process as well. So the building owners and the construction industry developed a guaranteed maximum price approach that gradually evolved over 20 years into a system commonly used today in the private sector. GSA saw this evolution occurring and embraced it. A number of contractors, of which Turner was one, developed the construction management concept, which was utilized by GSA in the early 1970s to manage the construction process. Individual contracts were left to the trade contractors. So early on, GSA tried to adapt some private industry practices that were being used successfully by the private sector. That evolution continues today.



State and local governments have followed GSA's lead and adapted some of these alternative approaches to the contracting process. That has enhanced team building, no doubt about it. GSA saw a need to enhance the process further through a better recognition of the design process. So it developed the Design Excellence Program and focused on signature architectural firms and designers to add excellence to the quality and usefulness of government buildings. That's been very successful. It's really enhanced GSA's programs and enhanced the projects that the public is now enjoying and using.

About a decade ago, right after the Design Excellence Program was introduced and began to take hold, contractors began questioning their relationship with GSA and asked, in essence, "what are we, chopped liver?" They offered to help GSA develop a Construction Excellence Program as well. To its credit, GSA said, "that's a great idea," and the idea evolved into the Construction Excellence Program that I've been fortunate enough to participate in as a peer over the past few years.

As a peer, I was involved with the new federal courthouse in Greeneville, Tennessee. GSA developed that project on a Construction Manager at Risk basis in which the construction manager guaranteed the construction cost. The general contractor was selected and proceeded with the construction. The Design Construction Program was incorporated into the project. GSA interviewed all the players on the project individually and asked some key questions with regard to schedule, costs, change-order processes, quality issues, and general management concerns. The peers met with the architect, the users, GSA's project management team, and parties representing the courts. We met with the mechanical, electrical, and structural engineers as well. We put together comments as to where there might be some rough spots, if you will, and how things were going. We pointed out what might be some disappointments with

regard to the designers' return of shop drawings and their response to questions on the project, and some disappointments with the contractors' reaction to corrective work items. We tried to share those trouble spots with everybody, develop a game plan to respond to them, and commit each of the players to do their part accordingly. These comments were recorded in a set of minutes that was distributed to everybody. Then we stepped back from the project and visited it again after a number of months to reassess it at a different stage. We went over the points that were covered the first time and also pursued some other avenues that may have been a little rough. We tried to coach and critique, suggesting how folks ought to conduct themselves and so forth. Some of the suggestions were made very candidly to urge folks to do things a little differently than they were doing or even contracted to do. I think that was helpful. The suggestions were taken to heart. The project was very successful, and it won a 2002 GSA Construction Excellence Honor Award.

A more unique project was the federal courthouse in Columbia, South Carolina. It took some extra effort on the part of the peers. Due to funding limitations, the project was stopped after the foundations were well along, the steel frame was up, and even the exterior wall started in some areas. After additional funding was obtained, the project underwent a partial redesign. To increase the building's capacity, more courtrooms and other spaces were added. That significantly changed the project by adding 30 or 40 percent of the original budget to the cost. It was a big change that had to be done in stride with minimal impact on the completion of the project because, right or wrong, everybody expected the project to be done in the same period of time. That was going to be a challenge.

So the peers had a number of review sessions, similar to those held for the federal courthouse in Greeneville but a little more detailed. The peer team was helpful in keeping



James H. Quillen U.S. Courthouse, Greenville, TN

a focus on what was important and encouraging a resolution of problems. It helped the decision-making and the actions taken by various parties with regard to shop drawing approvals and deliveries. So we contributed to a lot of improvements. I don't know if this courthouse is going to rise to the level of success of the Greeneville one, but it certainly could have been a lot worse, in my view, if the peers hadn't been involved.

Common to the courthouses in Greeneville and Columbia was the impact that the designer selection process had on the execution of the design and the construction. GSA's Design Excellence Program, in my view, has been very successful. It has brought a few problems with it, however. Perhaps the model might be looked at again for some adjustments. In both courthouse projects, for example, the cooperation between the signature architects and the construction document architects was strained at best. There was a feeling that there weren't enough funds left to execute the final design, complete the mechanical and electrical portions of the project in a successful way, and administer them during the construction process. One of our missions on both projects was to try to get over some of those hurdles, which often start with the overemphasis on the signature architect in the business deal. So it might be appropriate to do some tweaking of the Design Excellence model to develop a better balance in the business deal between the signature architect and the team that executes the design, construction documents, mechanical and electrical work,

and so forth. There has to be an assurance that there are adequate funds to complete the design process and project administration.

Rather than being on the cutting edge of construction delivery systems, GSA has picked up the best practices of the private sector. I think that's good. Government regulations and contracting don't always permit the literal translation from the private sector to the public sector. So some tempering has to occur, and it may impact the effectiveness of the original private-sector practice. That's always a challenge. But I don't think GSA should be experimenting with delivery processes. I think they should learn from the private sector and see how that evolves and keep pace with it, promptly, but not get too far out in front.

For example, a number of years ago, GSA decided to venture into the area of design/build. GSA wasn't sure its culture was ready for that and felt that it had to bring in a whole new class of managers. Since then, GSA has done some design/build projects. It followed a model of what I call developer/design/builder in which the developer is selected and then that developer selects the contractor and the designer. That team is already formed at the time GSA makes their selection. In my view, that model has not been successful because the developer is interested in taking the development fee and running, leaving the conclusion of the project design and construction to the other guys. That's not in the best interest of any of the players, except the developer.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF MASON-JOHNSON LLC OF WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA, **RALPH W. JOHNSON** HAS BEEN A GSA CONSTRUCTION EXCELLENCE PEER SINCE 2000. PRIOR TO STARTING HIS OWN FIRM IN 2002, JOHNSON WAS WITH TURNER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY FOR 43 YEARS. JOHNSON HAS PARTICIPATED IN CONSTRUCTION PEER REVIEWS FOR THE U.S. COURTHOUSES IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK; COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA; AND GREENEVILLE, TENNESSEE.

JAMES CARPENTER + THOMAS PHIFER

CARPENTER: Light is a critical interest to me. Glass is the material that embodies light. It gives you the opportunity to really hold onto light and manipulate it. Glassmaking on an architectural scale is of interest to me. Looking back at buildings like the Crystal Palace and other early conservatories where handmade glass was used on large scale showed me a way of doing that. I've always tried to work with people who share a similar interest in the exploration of light, materials, and detailing, and a degree of technology in the building construction. That allows my projects to become more fully integrated in the building. When I met Tom Phifer in the 1990s, we had discussions about the pragmatic application of glass systems to some of his buildings. We share a mutual interest in how light informs architecture. The first chance we had to do something that was fully integrated was in the Sandra Day O'Connor U.S. Courthouse in Phoenix, Arizona.



PHIFER: We collaborated on a ceiling in the Phoenix courthouse. Now we're working together on a courthouse in Salt Lake City from scratch. The difference is that Jamie came on much later in the Phoenix project than the one in Salt Lake City, where he's been involved from the absolute beginning. We shared values in Phoenix because the courthouse was a lot about glass and the changing atmosphere of light in the desert. We knew that it would be extraordinary to get Jamie involved in interpreting that light in the Special Proceedings courtroom where the swearing-in of new Americans happens. The embodiment of light and its

changing character throughout the day was a very appropriate thing to do for that room and building.

CARPENTER: We talked about the space as an opportunity to create a sense of being outdoors and under the sky. You'd have a sense of connection to the space and the sky beyond the building itself. That's what triggered our collaboration because it was an opportunity to create a very delicate, very transparent ceiling for that courtroom.

PHIFER: We wanted that courtroom to be where we put our stake in the ground. That is, if you were a new American, you wanted to swear allegiance in a space that was symbolically part of the city and the country. You wanted it to have a sense of openness. Jamie's work there perfectly translated the notion of openness and being a part of the bigger realm.

CARPENTER: We focused on that courtroom fairly quickly, went through a few design alternatives, and developed the idea that was ultimately built. After we first presented the idea, one of the judges got very enthusiastic about it at that point.

PHIFER: Now we are discovering the opportunities within the new courthouse in Salt Lake City. The city is set within the landscape in an extraordinary way with the Wasatch Mountain range in the background. The morning and afternoon light is extraordinary, and the views of the mountains are extraordinary. We're building behind the city's landmark 1920s federal courthouse. Our building has a tower that, again, puts our stake in the ground as a memorable moment in the city, as towers have done throughout

the history of architecture. So Jamie and I are working on that tower together to use the memory of the landscape and the light to make a very special place in Salt Lake City.

CARPENTER: Tom and I share an agenda that has to do with low energy use, issues of sustainability, and day lighting in courtrooms and judges' chambers. We are interested in how the building can be fully engaged in its own environment and express that environment in a very clear way. The tower focuses attention on a new approach to energy issues within a large-scale federal building. It's also a public space that you can ascend to view the landscape, so it operates on both an urban level and then on a very personal level for the occupant.

PHIFER: When we talk about light, it's important to go back and talk about the humanistic values that are involved in architecture. Expressing light that changes and enriches the lives of a building's inhabitants also enriches the humanistic approach to architecture. That's an understanding that Jamie and I share in our work.

Architecture is very difficult. As an architect, you try to come into every project without any preconceptions and learn something. It's easy to go back and do what you've done before. The hard quest with every project is to reach a little bit further. Jamie and his office help us reach a bit with every project.

CARPENTER: Ideas are constantly refined and it's a process in which the work actually gets stronger and stronger as the process goes forward. The way that ideas are overlapped, reworked, and replayed is really outstanding.

PHIFER: The process has also been interesting because the project in Salt Lake City is the third courthouse that I've worked on. Most courthouses never really allow for much natural light to penetrate the interior. The courtrooms are cloaked with the prisoner spaces, attorney-conference waiting rooms, judges' chambers, and other functions. In Salt Lake City, we spent most of our time trying to uncloak the building and, by making it slimmer, repositioning the program. The judges have been very open to exploring a new planning strategy that works to allow people to engage with the views and with light in that city. You can't do it alone.

OUR COLLABORATION ENRICHED THE PLANNING PROCESS, WHICH HAS TO BE OVERLAID WITH ALL OF THE COMPLEXITIES OF MAKING A COURTHOUSE. HAD JAMIE COME IN AT THE END OF THE DESIGN, IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN THIS WAY. FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, GLASS AND NATURAL LIGHT HAVE BEEN PART OF THE CHOREOGRAPHY OF HOW PEOPLE GET FROM THE MAIN STREET TO THE COURTROOM.



Lens Ceiling at Sandra Day O'Connor U.S. Courthouse, Phoenix, AZ

The corridor for the judges, which is always the back of the house, is now completely open to views of the landscape with natural light that's coming into the courtroom.

CARPENTER: Coming into a project at such an early stage is unusual, and it's something that I've always hoped for. Tom's use of the word "choreography" is quite appropriate because so many of the elements that we're working with in the building address how you activate spaces and have people experience the richness of the environment. We've been able to open up the program and let events begin to happen. It's quite intriguing.

My partner David Norris works very closely with me on issues of day lighting. David has the analytical ability to understand how the light is behaving, where it is falling,

what the intensities are, how to rationally distribute the light through the entire building. Tom does some really extraordinary models, which very clearly demonstrate how those principles work. Those are the tools that are used to explain abstract ideas to people at a very early stage.

PHIFER: There needs to be more of a focus on the entire collaborative team. Not only the architect and the artist, but also the structural and the environmental engineers. We need to ask how the whole team is going to work together to make an extraordinary building.

CARPENTER: When you draw on great levels of expertise, you really produce remarkable architecture and remarkable opportunities for art in a building. At the same time, we should be looking toward changing the definition of art and how art is being integrated into buildings because so much of the history of the art has really relied on the formality of the gallery and museum world. There's a much broader intermediate zone between art and architecture today. People are working in different media, including lighting and video, which engage the environment in a more animated way. I'm not sure that they have found their way into GSA's Art in Architecture Program. New forms of

art certainly present risks in terms of techniques and technologies, but some could enrich buildings in ways that we haven't quite explored yet. GSA needs to take the initiative to find a project where an architect and an artist could push something that hasn't been tried before.

PHIFER: Artists need some assurance from GSA that it's going to be progressive. I think there's a sense that GSA is very conservative and they're not going to have the freedom to develop and express themselves. We can entice the art world only if the selection process begins to open up and there are more finished projects that are interesting. Then there'll be more of an engagement.

CARPENTER: Our collaboration in Salt Lake City will have an impact on every artist that works there. It will show that extraordinary things can happen in a place and architecture and art can become a singular experience. Once that happens, it will inspire a whole generation of artists to get involved in federal projects.

PHIFER: Ultimately, it comes down to risk-taking. How much risk are we willing to take on in doing a public building today? The more risk with the kinds of architects and artists that are selected, the greater the rewards.

ARTIST **JAMES CARPENTER** AND ARCHITECT **TOM PHIFER** HAVE COLLABORATED ON TWO GSA PROJECTS, THE SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR U.S. COURTHOUSE IN PHOENIX, ARIZONA; AND THE U.S. COURTHOUSE IN SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH; CURRENTLY IN DESIGN. CARPENTER'S WORK FOCUSES ON THE EXPLORATION OF LIGHT AS A MEANS TO BRING FORM TO STRUCTURE. HE FOUNDED JAMES CARPENTER DESIGN ASSOCIATES IN NEW YORK CITY. PRIOR TO SERVING AS PRINCIPAL OF THOMAS PHIFER AND PARTNERS IN NEW YORK CITY, PHIFER WAS DESIGN PARTNER OF RICHARD MEIER & PARTNERS, WHERE HE WORKED ON THE SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR COURTHOUSE IN PHOENIX, ARIZONA. PHIFER IS A FELLOW OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY IN ROME AND HAS BEEN A GSA PEER SINCE 1998.

J. MAX BOND, JR.

A BUILDING OR AN URBAN PROJECT REPRESENTS A SYNTHESIS OF MANY FORCES AND A RESPONSE TO PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES. SO WE NEED TO LOOK AT DESIGN NOT ONLY IN TERMS OF ITS AESTHETICS BUT ALSO THE SOCIAL AND THE ECONOMIC FORCES THAT REALLY SHAPE IT. AS ARCHITECTS, WE LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT YOU CAN UNDERSTAND SOCIETY AS MUCH BY ITS BUILDINGS AS BY ITS BOOKS.

Therefore, a building should reflect the particular culture of a society at a particular time. Urban design is more like literature than a book because it's a complicated record of previous designs and new designs being superimposed on those. It's a much richer representation of society because you can see the reality of the moment and the sense of history at the same time. We try to think about that as we start working on a design.

I found it positive to be a peer reviewer on such projects as the federal courthouse in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and studies for security around the White House and open spaces around the Federal Triangle in Washington, DC. With my background as a teacher and design critic, being a peer is a natural thing for me to do. During a peer review, I try to examine the project's fundamental issues rather than its stylistic aspects. So in looking at the federal courthouse

in Scranton, I focused on the organization of the building, its relationship to its environs, the formation of urban space, and so forth. It's important that the peer reviewer not try to be the designer and tell the architect what to do, but rather talk about the building as a critic.

GSA's Design Excellence Program has been very good in terms of improving the quality of design for public architecture. It's also good that GSA has been willing to deal with a range of styles, including modern and contemporary designs. At the same time, the Design Excellence Program should try to embrace a broader range of architects and be a vehicle for bringing forth new talent. As an African American, I would like to see more work going to African American architects. I don't know of any substantial projects under the Design Excellence Program that have actually gone to African American architects. That's a serious problem because if you really look at the built environment in this country, even projects by the best architects, it is not of the highest quality. So I don't think we could do any worse than has been done by other architects, and we ought to be given a chance. It is really very important. I am often used by various government agencies as a role model of an African American architect, but if a role model can't get any work from the federal government, what's the point? In a larger sense, GSA's Design Excellence Program should not only be about aesthetic issues but about the general improvement of the built environment, which means giving



more opportunity to more people to contribute to that environment. Establishing more communication with minority firms and changing the requirements for project experience would help. In some of the Request for Proposals that come out, there are so many constraints about previous experience that the process eliminates not only young architects but also a lot of African American architects. So let's look beyond the specific experience in the building type to the quality of the work, even if it's small. That would not only open the field to younger architects but also a broader range of architects.

Partnering arrangements are a mixed bag. It would be good if GSA were to select the young firm, small firm, minority firm, or woman-owned firm, and then, if it wanted that firm to partner, let the firm select the partner. What often happens is that partnership arrangements are made first and then the big firm always says, "Look, you wouldn't have gotten the job without me." So, therefore, the big firm takes the lead. But if the smaller or minority firm was selected first and allowed to make the partnership, it would put that firm in the driver's seat and in a position of some control.

Competitions have their pluses and minuses. It's more likely that smaller, younger, and minority firms are better able to compete when a competition is held within a condensed period of time. One of the problems of longer competitions is that, more often than not, firms lose money. So the smaller, less affluent firms can't afford to participate in competitions and certainly can't put in the effort that some of the larger, more affluent firms put into

the competitions. Competitions play a very good role and need to be structured to give more opportunity to more firms. GSA really has to make sure that the competition criteria are broad and inclusive.

I'm very much in favor of including art as part of architecture. In our work, we've tried not to determine and limit what the artist should do. One of the keys to successful public art is to let the artist respond to the situation and not try to control it. I have had some very good experiences doing that in which the artists come up with solutions that are much more original and wonderful than if we had said, "we want your piece to go on this wall." It's important to approach the artist for a building project just as the architect expects to be approached, that is, to provide our sense of the world and our sense of creativity. In rare instances, artists have changed the whole aspect of a building. They can provide new perceptions about the building and make one see the space in a different way. My view is different from those architects who say artists should be involved at the beginning of a building design. I think that the architect should design a space and then let the artist respond to that space. We've had more success having the artist respond to an existing building just as we as architects respond to an existing built environment.

The federal government should be in the vanguard of design. I know there are a lot of risks in doing that, particularly with the kind of scrutiny that the arts have gotten from Congress recently. And the architectural community has not been as helpful as it might be in supporting that effort. We need to advocate in public ways about the

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importance of better public architecture and public art. It's too easy to put the responsibility on those working in the federal government. It really requires a much broader social effort and a stronger lobby on the part of architects to improve the quality of public architecture and design. My experience in working with architects and planners in government is that they are really concerned about the quality of the environment. They often struggle and try hard to create good, responsive, and sensitive design. They are heroes. That's why I feel that architects in private practice should be advocates for government efforts, because I don't think architects and planners in the public sector get the support that they need.

There should also be much more education in the public schools about the visual world to raise public consciousness about architecture and design. Visual literacy should be seen as important as skills in math and reading. There is a positive trend toward that as the population becomes more visually literate because of media and technology. In so many ways, newspapers, television, and computers have become more graphic in the way they are designed and highlighted. People expect graphics to be better generally so they are more sensitive to design than they have been in the past.

Due to the unfortunate circumstances of September 11th, there's a real public debate about architecture and urbanism in terms of the World Trade Center site. When

you have people coming from all over the country to that site, you realize that its future is really a national concern, even an international one. So there is a moment now when you can talk to people about how the rebuilding of this site affects a larger urban environment and city life. We could use that as a vehicle to begin to talk about issues of security and design, ways of creating security other than with walls.

We always associate Paris with great monuments, but if you look at the city's everyday architecture—schools, day-care centers, housing, there is as much emphasis on design. So one of the things that our government could do is to apply design excellence to everyday buildings as well as exceptional ones, such as courthouses. A real push to improve the quality of the environment could focus on the ordinary buildings that make up the fabric of the city, such as housing and schools, and to build an ethic that relates to reconstruction of the city fabric. GSA deserves to be complimented because it has included border stations, office buildings, and other structures in the Design Excellence Program. It has set the tone for public buildings by saying all public buildings should be of excellent quality in terms of design as well as construction. That is an important step.

IN THE FUTURE, GSA MUST PROVIDE MORE OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOT HAD AS MUCH OPPORTUNITY IN THE PAST TO BUILD AND SHAPE THEIR ENVIRONMENT. ONE WAY OF DOING THAT IS TO RECOGNIZE ARCHITECTS WHO ARE EXPLORING AMERICAN CULTURE IN DIFFERENT WAYS. A BROADER AND DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE DIVERSITY AND RICHNESS OF AMERICAN CULTURE WOULD HELP IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF DESIGN WHILE PROVIDING MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MORE PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROGRAM.

DESIGN EXCELLENCE IS A HOLISTIC PROCESS THAT TRIES TO MELD EVERY FACET OF A PROJECT FROM THE SELECTION OF THE BEST LEAD DESIGNER AND CONTRACTOR FOR THE PARTICULAR PROJECT TO ENSURING THAT THE DESIGN IS BOTH INSPIRING AND EFFICIENT, AND CAN BE DELIVERED WITHIN BUDGET.

– Edward Feiner, Chief Architect, U.S. General Services Administration

U.S. GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION AND THE DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

PUBLIC BUILDINGS ARE PART OF A NATION'S LEGACY. THEY ARE SYMBOLIC OF WHAT GOVERNMENT IS ABOUT, NOT JUST PLACES WHERE PUBLIC BUSINESS IS CONDUCTED.

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is responsible for providing work environments and all the products and services necessary to make these environments healthy and productive for Federal employees and cost-effective for the American taxpayers. As builder for the Federal civilian Government and steward of many of our nation's most valued architectural treasures that house Federal employees, GSA is committed to preserving and adding to America's architectural and artistic legacy.

GSA established the Design Excellence Program in 1994 to change the course of public architecture in the Federal Government. Under this program, administered by the Office of the Chief Architect, GSA has engaged many of the finest architects, designers, engineers, and artists working in America today to design the future landmarks of our nation. Through collaborative partnerships, GSA is implementing the goals of the 1962 Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture. In this effort, each building is to be both an individual expression of design excellence and part of a larger body of work representing the best that America's designers and artists can leave to later generations.

To find the best, most creative talent, the Design Excellence Program has simplified the way GSA selects architects and engineers for construction and major renovation projects and opened up opportunities for emerging talent, small, small disadvantaged, and women-owned businesses. The program recognizes and celebrates the creativity and diversity of the American people.

The Design Excellence Program is the recipient of a 2003 National Design Award, Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, and the 2004 Keystone Award, American Architectural Foundation.

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