

History as . . .

"When we build, let us think that we build forever."

John Ruskin

Gallant thoughts. But history – especially in this city – has shown us that even if we think we are building “forever,” there really is no such thing. Obvious monumental examples are the destruction of the World Trade Center and the demolition of Pennsylvania Station – never mind the swaths of neighborhoods bulldozed by one of this country’s most aggressive (some might even consider misanthropic) urban planners, Robert Moses.

An encouraging trend over the past decade or so has been a renewed appreciation of our historic structures and the communities they inhabit. The challenge today is not only to preserve pieces of our architectural heritage, but also to make them viable – and vital – parts of our urban fabric, and give them an entirely new *raison d’être*.

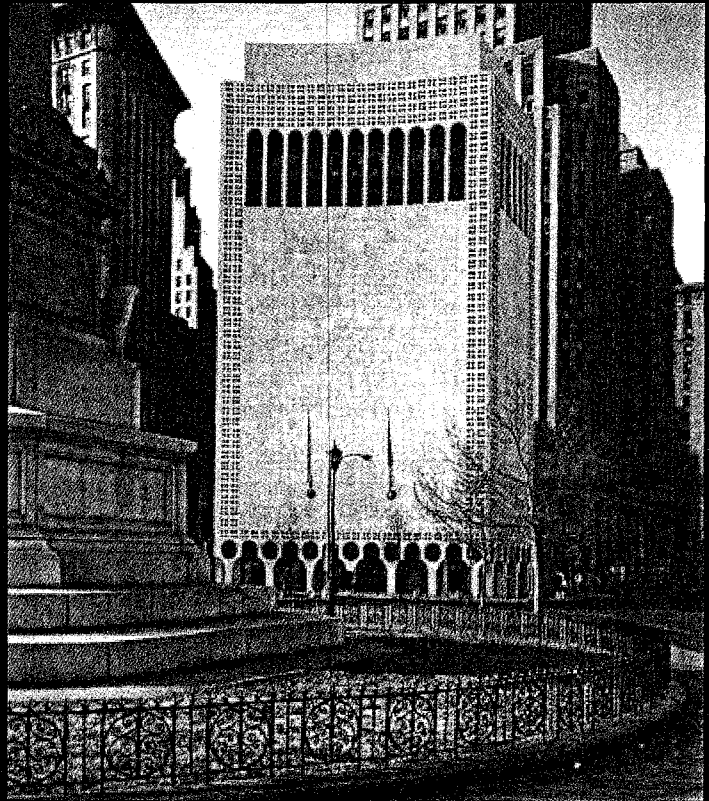
This first issue of *Oculus* focuses on that challenge, and the “sticky wickets” that arise when an historic building is adapted to modern use by adding a new structural element. Can the “new” stand out from the “old” without compromising the authenticity of the original? Will a modern intervention undermine the power of the historic?

More to the point: What is worthy of preservation? To what extent should alterations and additions be allowed, and will they, in time, warrant preservation themselves? And who is to judge?

In New York City, the fates of Eero Saarinen’s TWA Terminal at Kennedy Airport, the Gansevoort Market (Meatpacking) District, and the High Line elevated tracks, among others, are still in limbo at press time, as different city agencies weigh the merits of preserving these significant elements of our built environment.

The preservation of structures and districts like these often depends on their ability to be transformed by adaptive reuse, to gain a new life without losing those significant features that have made them iconic parts of our city. In this issue, architects and designers, historians and planners, present different perspectives on the questions that lie at the heart of historic preservation today, and examine the complexities of adapting historic buildings to present and future uses and delights.

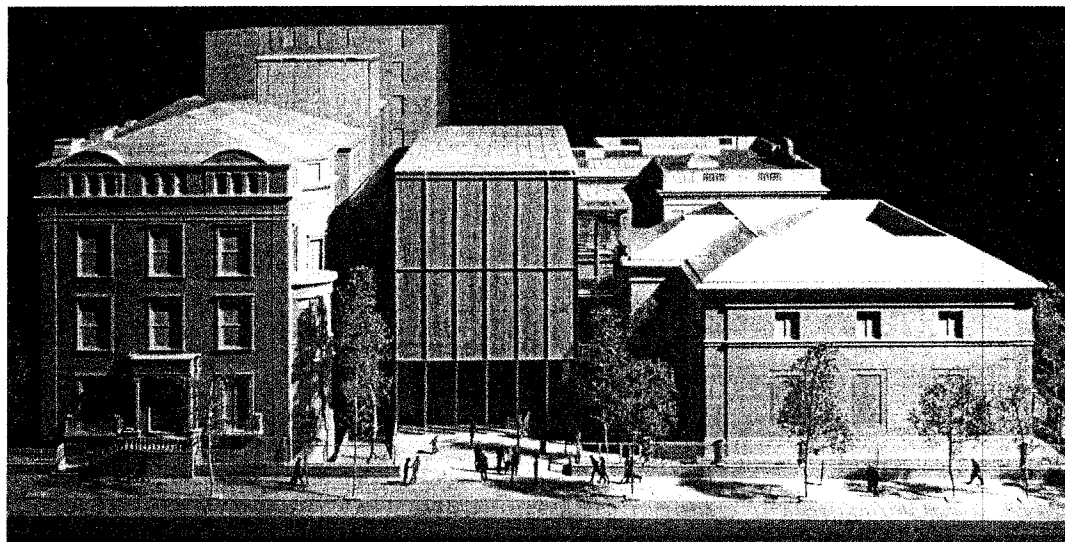
Kristen Richards



What will 2 Columbus Circle look like as the Museum of Arts and Design?

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Morgan Library expansion (new Madison Avenue entrance), Renzo Piano Building Workshop and Beyer Blinder Belle, 2005

...the first of a series of projects...

By Kristen Richards

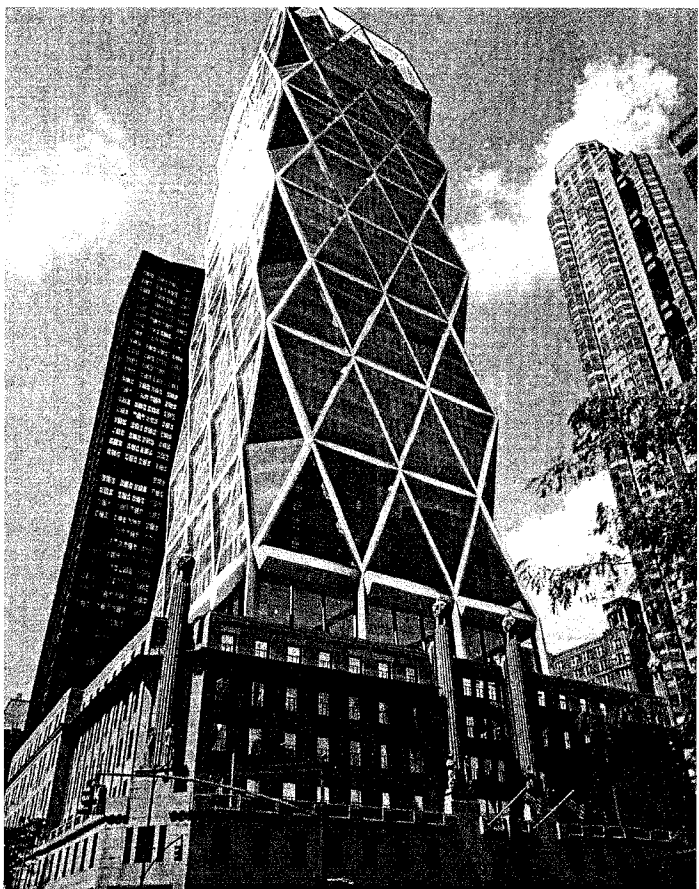
In February, the AIA New York Chapter, the Center for Architecture, and the James Marston Fitch Colloquium co-sponsored a two-part event that explored the appropriateness of modern

additions to historic buildings and communities. The first program, "History as Prelude: Modern Interventions in Historic Context," was held – most appropriately – at the landmarked Morgan Library.

Each scheme was explained by its lead architect(s) not just in terms of what the project entails programmatically, but also what the rationale is behind the architectural solution. It was apparent from the eloquent presentations that the architects are well aware that their projects represent much more than just "additions" to existing historic structures, but are themselves potential landmarks of the future.

Sherida Paulsen, FAIA, former Chair of the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission (NYCLPC), and Principal of Pasanella & Klein Stolzman & Berg, introduced the panel of four respondents who would "address the projects presented through various filters: the architect/professional, client, preservation advocate, academic/

History as Prelude: Modern Interventions in Historic Context



FOSTER & PARTNERS

The sold-out program was followed a few days later by the 4th Annual Fitch Colloquium, "Authenticity and Innovation: Ideals for Design with Old Buildings," at Columbia University.

The Morgan Library event offered an in-depth look at four high-profile projects currently on the boards in New York that involve bold additions to historic structures: the Morgan Library expansion by Renzo Piano Building Workshop and Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners; Hearst Headquarters by Foster & Partners; Castle Clinton restoration and adaptive reuse by Thomas Phifer and Partners and Beyer Blinder Belle; and the Jamaica AirTrain Terminal redevelopment by the Port Authority of NY & NJ.

theorist – in short – the critics."

As the "architect/professional," Enrique Norton, AIA, of TEN Arquitectos was exuberant in his analysis: "I am filled with optimism. Historic buildings need to be reinvented with a new vocabulary and new spirit – not with nostalgia. This is about community, not just architecture, and understanding that buildings are ephemeral and must change."

Laurie Beckelman, Hon. AIA, Director, New Building Program, Museum of Arts and Design (formerly American Craft Museum), and former chair of NYCLPC, as "client," expressed reserved optimism. She encouraged taking more chances, as long as "you know what is old and what is new." She was also the only panelist who mentioned the

Hearst Tower by Foster & Partners

Castle Clinton, today; future preservation and expansion by Thomas Phifer and Partners and Beyer Blinder Belle

Morgan Library's own Garden Court by Voorsanger & Mills – a 1992 addition that went through all the approval hoops to get built, and will soon be gone.

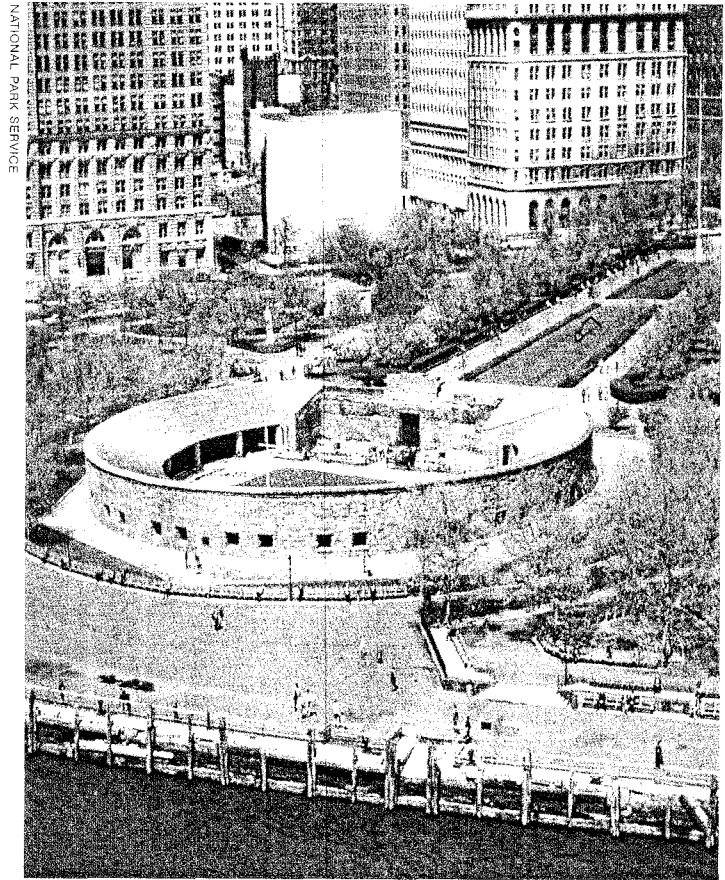
Françoise Bollack, AIA, Françoise Bollack Architects, enjoyed her “moment as a tiger... to speak as a voice for the buildings,” and said the logic of the new must be rooted in the historic. She was particularly taken by the Castle Clinton solution that “engages the life of the building” with an addition that has “an eloquent and light touch on the historic portions.”

In his introductory remarks, Paul Byard, FAIA, of Platt Byard Dovell White Architects, and Director of the Columbia Univer-

Fox & Fowle Architects, and AIA New York Chapter Vice President for Public Outreach. “I can't tell you how many times I have heard that new buildings must fit into the local community, which is often synonymous with ‘make it look old,’” he said. “It is very gratifying that the pendulum is swinging and that there is considerably more public appreciation for modern interventions in such contexts.”

Morgan Library

Giorgio Bianchi, Partner/Project Architect, Renzo Piano Building Workshop, and Richard Southwick, AIA, Partner, Beyer Blinder Belle, outlined the scope of the \$100



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

sity Preservation Program, condemned 25 years of zoning rules that “have mandated a fat, squat, boring city, and reduced architecture to a thin coat of decoration.” He called for a revolution to “take back our art” that has been reduced by “the abusive tyranny of NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) and BANANA (Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anybody).” As the “academic” respondent, he took a more theoretical tack to the modern architectural interventions presented, saying “The important issue is not what it looks like, but what does it mean. Giving it meaning gives it the freedom to be different.”

The discussion concluded (much too quickly!) on a high note with closing remarks by the mastermind behind the evening, Mark Strauss, AIA, Principal,

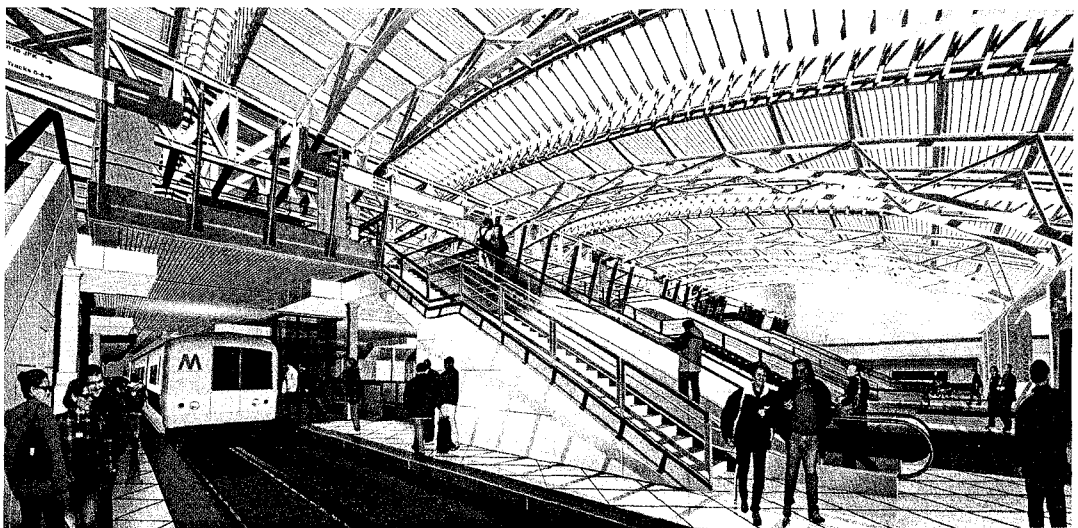
million Morgan Library expansion. This includes adding exhibition galleries, collection storage facilities, and an auditorium. It also involves demolishing the glass-and-steel Garden Court, along with five other additions constructed since 1928.

Bianchi said that the challenge was to be sure that the new design respected the scale of the site. The design team took the approach that the library complex was a small historical village consisting of the original Morgan Library (McKim, Mead

and White, 1906); Morgan Library Annex Building (Benjamin Wistar Morris, 1928); and Morgan House (architect unknown, 1852, expanded 1888 by R.H. Robertson).

The plan adds almost 70,000 square feet, but only 26,000 square feet is above grade. Like

Jamaica AirTrain Terminal by the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, 2003



PORT AUTHORITY OF NEW YORK & NEW JERSEY

a village, the visible portion of the addition will act as a central, light-filled "piazza" with three glass-and-painted-steel "pavilions" fronting Madison Avenue (planned as the new public entrance), 36th Street, and 37th Street. The new pavilions and historic structures will be linked by a central glass roofed atrium. At the points where the new building touches the existing buildings, there will be recessed walls of glass marking a clear distinction between old and new. Side and rear facades of the original buildings, obscured for years by earlier additions, will be exposed and restored.

Three-quarters of the construction is being carved out of four stories worth of Manhattan bedrock – an ideal location for safe storage of the library's treasures, and a 230-seat performance hall. Construction is scheduled to begin this May and be completed in late 2005.

Historic Jamaica Station / AirTrain JFK Rail Link Terminal

Located in downtown Jamaica, Queens, Jamaica Station has served as the major transfer station for the Long Island Rail Road through most of the 20th century. Before construction of the AirTrain JFK Rail Link Terminal began in 2001, the National Register-eligible station stood much as it did on the day it opened in 1913.

Robert Davidson, FAIA, Chief Architect of the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, gave an animated presentation of the

AirTrain Terminal development, which is scheduled for completion this year. It is an inter-agency project to completely rebuild the existing intermodal Jamaica Complex that links the Long Island Rail Road, New York City Transit E, J, Z, and W trains, Metropolitan Transit Authority bus lines, and the new JFK AirTrain airport access system.

The project has taken into consideration the historic and aesthetic character of the station's administration building and platform zones. New structures crossing over the platforms are designed as graceful counterpoints to the historic compo-

nents, without competing with them. Details of the new construction (rolled steel sections, painted metal, and concrete) reflect the historic vocabulary and materials. Finally, the historic canopy structures will be retained, and the materials restored and/or upgraded. In addition to expanding Jamaica Station's role as a major transportation hub, the project is also seen as a catalyst that will generate a rebirth of economic activity in downtown Jamaica.

Hearst Tower

Foster & Partners' design for the 42-story Hearst Tower at the corner of West 57th Street and Eighth Avenue received rather speedy approval from the Landmarks Preservation Commission in late 2001.

Joseph Urban, who also designed the New School for Social Research in New York,

Mar-a-Lago mansion in Palm Beach, and numerous stage and film sets, designed the 1928 International Magazine Building for William Randolph Hearst. Brandon Haw, a Foster & Partners Director, called the existing six-story Art Deco building "entirely theatrical," and points out that it was always intended "to have a tower rising above its exuberant façade."

A four-story-high "grand internal plaza" – a major gathering space, with cafés, restaurants, and exhibition and landscaped meeting areas – surrounded by the inside façades of the original building, will be topped by a

glass ceiling. The new beveled, glass-and-steel tower will be lifted clear of its historic base, linked on the outside only by columns and glazing set well back from the edges of the site. This transparent connection will flood the interior plaza below with natural light, and enhance the impression of the new floating above the old. Adamson Associates is the Associate Architect for the project.

Castle Clinton

Though not at liberty to release images until the public announcement of the design expected later this year, Thomas Phifer, AIA, presented renderings of what promises to be a breathtaking restoration and adaptive reuse of Castle Clinton. The castle's new architectural signature will "float" above the fort's original walls – a rooftop performance

space will be encircled with transparent petal-like panels, making the skyline and harbor views the backdrops for shows and events. Inside the castle, to be restored by Beyer Blinder Belle, will be expanded visitors services and ticket office for the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island ferries, and educational and interpretive exhibits.

Located in Battery Park at the southern tip of Manhattan, Castle Clinton is considered by Phifer to be "the most adaptively reused building in the United States." The castle was built in anticipation of the War of 1812 (but never saw battle). Later

uses included the country's largest entertainment hall, a processing center for eight million immigrants before Ellis Island was built, and home of the New York Aquarium. Following its near-total demolition in 1941 (thank you, Robert Moses), the original fort walls were declared a National Monument in 1946.