A VISUAL ARTS CENTER
for Harvard University

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

submitted: August 20, 1956

by:
Walter S. Newman, B. Arch

to:
Lawrence B. Anderson, Head
Department of Architecture
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ABSTRACT

The visual arts are an integral part of the humanities and as such must assume a role of prominence in the context of higher education. Perhaps at no moment in history since the invention of printing has man's communication with his fellow man been so largely taken over by visual media as today. Less and less is modern man swayed by the argument of the written word, and more and more by the photograph, the billboard, the cinema, the picture magazine, and now television. Until both sender and receiver of these visual messages are trained in the twin arts of perception and discrimination, the educated man may hardly claim to be the master of his own environment. It is the purpose of this thesis to provide the architectural framework for such a training program.

Submitted for the degree:
Master in Architecture
in the Department of Architecture
August 20, 1956
Pietro Belluschi, Dean
School of Architecture and Planning
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Dear Dean Belluschi:

The following thesis, "A Visual Arts Center for Harvard University" is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Architecture.

Respectfully yours,

Walter S. Newman
I wish to acknowledge the valuable assistance which the following people offered me during my thesis study.

Dean Pietro Belluschi
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my wife — without whose infinite patience this thesis would have never been completed.

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IV
forward
In the year 1869 a new era began at Harvard University—signalled by the installation of Charles W. Eliot as president of the University. Coming to Harvard at a time when America was suffering from the after-effects of the Classic and Gothic revivals, he instituted a new relationship of the undergraduate to what is now called the visual-plastic arts, by encouraging very close cooperation between a young instructor, Mr. Herbert Moore, who was teaching freehand drawing and water-color painting, and President Eliot's cousin, Charles Eliot Norton, lecturer on the History of the Fine Arts.

Harvard was ready to welcome Professor Norton's sound critical taste and his demand that art be "simple, refined and unpretending," rather than vulgar, showy, sentimental, sensational, and fantastic. By the end of the century undergraduate interest in fine arts at Harvard had reached large proportions. In 1895–96 Professor Norton's course in ancient art had enrolled 551 students, more than any other course in Harvard College at that time, and almost half again as many as the largest class in fine arts today. Professor Norton gave twenty-four brilliantly successful years to Harvard, and provided the foundation for the program which came to its fullest fruition by the building in 1927 of the new Fogg Art Museum, by the acquisition of the most important collection of original works of art in any university museum in existence, and by the assembling of a fine arts library of the first magnitude. Intangibly, the department reached an eminence unsurpassed anywhere in the world.

Likewise out of Professor Norton's inspiring teaching came a demand for instruction in the practice of the arts. Architecture was first taught at Harvard University in 1895. In 1900, a professional course in landscape
architecture was established and in 1912 a separate faculty was organized. The graduate schools of architecture, landscape architecture, and city planning evolved from this program. These were brought together in 1935 in the present Graduate School of Design, where developed during the late thirties what Mr. Conant once called "the leading school of modern architecture on this continent and perhaps the entire world".

However, the complications of World War II, plus severe financial pressures, have put new difficulties in the way of a well-integrated program. When Norton began, there was almost nothing with which Harvard's program might be compared. Today there are many institutions which are making greater strides than Harvard, in fact the relative strength of the fine arts at Harvard College has diminished. Therefore the Overseers' Committee to Visit the Department of Fine Arts proposed in 1952 that a careful study be made to help determine the future course of the arts at Harvard. To implement this proposal, President Pusey in June, 1954, formed a Committee on the Visual Arts at Harvard, with John Nicholas Brown as Chairman. The Committee spent over a year in drawing up the report which investigated almost every facet of the visual arts at Harvard. Financed partly by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, the group visited 58 schools and colleges, and spoke to over a hundred experts in the field.
report of the committee on the visual arts at harvard university
The committee emphasized that it felt Harvard needed most urgently a broadening of scope and a widening of interests in the whole field of the visual arts.

It gave as its major recommendation, from which all detailed recommendations emanated, the establishment of a new Division of the Visual Arts which would consist of four main subdivisions:

a) the Department of the History of Art (in substance, the present Department of Fine Arts).
b) the Department of Design (incorporating, but not identical to, the present Department of Architectural Sciences).
c) the complex of Harvard's Teaching Collections.
d) the Harvard Theater

This Division was to be housed in a new Visual Arts Center.

Department of the History of Art
The committee recommended that the present Department of Fine Arts be renamed the Department of the History of Art. This new department would, in addition to its present courses, explore the following areas: Art and its relation to history, to literature, to archaeology, to social anthropology, to philosophy, to aesthetics, and to psychology. In this way it could fulfill its task of introducing several hundred undergraduates to the broad field of the history of art, and at the same time respond to their varied interests. The committee felt that these courses can be non-credit in nature so that students who have a general interest in a course may enroll without becoming a concentrator in the field, or necessarily use one course as a prerequisite for another. The committee also recommended that the present museum courses be strengthened in several respects. They felt that an architect who
was familiar with museum problems should become a consultant to the
department. Future museum curators or directors should know enough
architectural and freehand drawing to be able to sketch plans for
installation and designs for pedestals and cases. Questions of light-
ing, of flexible arrangement and of storage are essentially architect-
ural problems, and the course would gain from the professional know-
ledge of a trained architect.

Department of Design
The committee recommended the creation of a new department to be called
the Department of Design, which would group together all studies con-
cerned with the theory and practice of art, and which would be made
responsible for the following:

a) a basic course in theory of design - coordinated with studies
   in the technique of drawing, painting, and sculpture.
b) a basic course in contemporary design, conducted on a lecture
   - laboratory basis.
c) courses in drawing, painting, and two and three dimensional
design. These would be meant only on an undergraduate level
for students planning only one course in the Division of the
Visual Arts.
d) advanced practice courses in various branches of design,
stressing materials and processes of building, drawing, and
painting - plus sculpture, the graphic arts, and the decorative
and industrial arts. This includes undergraduate courses in
architecture, landscape architecture, and city planning now
offered by the Department of Architectural Sciences.
e) an undergraduate concentration in design, to include and extend
the present concentration in architectural sciences.

f) laboratory supplements to middle-group courses in the history of art.

g) facilities for practice of the visual arts on a non-credit basis.

In other words, the present undergraduate courses in the Department of Architectural Sciences should be incorporated into the more comprehensive proposed program of the new Department of Design. Under the present set up, these courses are available only to undergraduates who are concentrating in the department - they offer almost no service to Harvard College as a whole.

The committee recommended, in essence, that only the undergraduate courses currently offered in the Graduate School of Design, be given by the new Department of Design - all other courses at graduate level were to remain in Robinson Hall. The committee also felt, that considering the tremendous variety of subjects taught in the art departments of the various universities across the country, e.g.: ceramics, textiles, photography, art of the theater, etc., the study of fine arts at Harvard appears restricted, even limited. Few changes have taken place in its general purpose and scope during the last quarter-century.

The committee deliberately attempted to create a balance between the diverse views and interests of artists and of historians of art. Therefore the committee recommended that a Design Center be constructed to house the activities of the two departments. Here the student would become familiar with the characteristics and capabilities of materials
employed in design: metals, glass, paper, etc. All sorts of original objects would be freely exhibited here for students to observe, and when possible, to handle.

The new Design Center, then, would stand as Harvard's visible recognition of the importance of the living artist, just as the Fogg Museum symbolizes the importance of art in history.

The Teaching Collections

The collections of works of art owned by Harvard University and housed in its various museums are considered to be the finest among university collections in the world. The educational value of such holdings cannot be exaggerated. As Harvard's chief art museum, the Fogg needs a good reconstruction - not only does the building itself need renovations in that its galleries are in bad condition, skylights leak, lighting is either bad or very bad, walls are dingy, exhibition cases are ugly, the main lecture hall is a deplorable sight, and new facilities are needed, but the present building is very crowded and there isn't enough storage room or exhibition space. The class and study space is scarcely adequate now, and the library is overcrowded.

Therefore the committee recommended that certain moderate rearrangements be made to the Fogg museum itself - and that new facilities be offered in the new Design Center.

The fourth recommendation of the committee is concerned with the pressing need for a theater to handle dramatic interests at Harvard. This need extends as far back as 1912 when Professor Baker spoke in complete frustra-
tion about the lack of facilities to adequately teach his students the art of drama. In a rough draft for an article entitled: "A proposed Building for the Work at Harvard in Dramatic Technique" which was to be published in the Alumni Bulletin, he said:

"It is above all as a workshop, a laboratory, that the building is needed for the work in the history and technique of the drama. As early as possible in their study, students of dramatic technique should be able to learn thoroughly all the details of a well equipped modern stage, in order that they may not so write as to necessitate immediate changes when the play is considered by actor or manager because of its value as writing. To ward off and correct such slips resulting from lack of intimate knowledge with the stage, is a large part of my work. This effort is largely wasted because students must take my word for their ineffectiveness; did they understand the equipment of a regular stage well, such errors by them would become impossible. At present, I am, so far as Harvard is concerned, a chemist working without proper vials or retorts, yet held responsible for perfect experimentation."

The background of dramatic activity at Harvard centered almost exclusively around the finest of drama teachers, George Pierce Baker. A tremendously inspiring teacher, he fostered an intense interest and devotion among his students towards creative work in the theater.

Again, when such need of space and equipment threatened to destroy the existence of his famous productive group "47 Workshop", Professor Baker wrote in the Century:

"Cramped, overcrowded, bursting with energy which all this youth, working
cooperatively, insures, the workshop pleads for an adequately equipped building of its own. Without this it cannot do properly the work which it is called on to do; without it there can be no development of instruction for which there is a steady, insistent demand from people so competent that their needs should be met - needs in play-producing, lighting, and stage design."

He almost succeeded several times in convincing the "disinclined and reluctant" authorities that theater - a theater - was a proper and essential addition to the Harvard complex. But the theater was not for the "best interest" and in the ensuing decades various groups of enthusiastic alumni have attempted in vain to breach the wall of official apathy.

Besides the obvious inadequacy of physical facilities for presenting plays, Professor Baker felt that the absence of a theater center was hampering the proper relation of the theater arts in the academic curriculum. In 1922 he spoke to an alumni group in Sanders Theater:

"What we need, and need very badly, is a teaching of the Fine Arts in our colleges and universities with a view to creation; a far closer correlation of the different departments of the Fine Arts, so that a worker in any of them shall not feel himself isolated and independent, but shall understand and depend on the sister arts. Above all, there should be competent instruction for people who wish to prepare themselves to become masters in the several arts of the theater - its lighting, its scenery, its producing, and its plays."
Ironically, this failure by Harvard to provide the necessary theater center for a logical continuation of Professor Baker's efforts forced him to go to Yale where they provided him with both a department of drama and a theater. Upon his resignation from Harvard, George Pierce Baker stated his case clearly: "I could go on no longer without a theater."

Meantime, during these same forty years, over 400 theater departments, most of them offering degrees in drama, have found sanctuary in practically every important college and university in the United States.

One need not go far to discover the current needs and demands for theater space at Harvard. A quick glance through recent issues of the Harvard Crimson will reveal overwhelming activity and talent being exerted in the dramatic arts by numerous independent undergraduate groups about the college.
In the fall of 1953, interest in Harvard drama was at one of the lowest points in the long history of College theatrical activity. For whereas at one time or another in the past, drama had occupied a high position in the undergraduate's life, it was then one of the least participated in—and least regarded—of the many extra-curricular activities at the College. The Harvard Dramatic Club, the acknowledged leader of student drama since its inception in 1908, was in bad financial shape after a barren year in which *Othello* was its only production. There were other organizations to be sure—The Hasty Pudding was still attracting its certain audience; and two very localized House Groups, the Lowell House Opera Society and the Winthrop House Music Society.

**Revival of 'Dramatic Spirit'**

But even in this time of relative dramatic inactivity, there were those who cried for more interest in the art of drama at Harvard—a school that had known the famous Baker 47 Workshop, which had turned out the great Eugene O'Neill, the sensitive Robert Sherwood, and a number of other men who took prominent roles in the growth of the American Theatre in the 1920's and 30's. Behind their pleas for a revival of the "dramatic spirit" that was lacking at Harvard 1953, these advocates called for a Harvard Theatre, without which, they were sure, a revival was impossible. A *Crimson* editorial said "The need for a theatre has been a long-standing one, and undergraduate drama has suffered from lack of it. The facilities now available, Sanders Theatre, Fogg Court and the like, are pitiful and have had much to do with the recent decline of both undergraduate theatrical activity and student interest. The new building will provide a strong stimulus to both of these factors in the equation."

In the year 1956, however, these disturbed words have an ironical significance, for most theatre people still desire an actual Harvard Theatre, but whereas in 1953, there was virtually no interest in dramatic activities, some 12 different organizations are presently flourishing, possessing an exuberance and creative drive that was totally unforeseen then.

These groups not only use Sanders and Fogg Court to excellent advantage, but have taken over the House Dining Halls and antiquated Agassiz Theatre to produce drama that is not only exciting but also of an unusually high quality. Last weekend for instance, four different College groups put on shows of almost equal artistic merit, varying from the definitely "off-beat" Sartre to the imposing presentation of Sophocles in the original Greek.
Change in Attitude

Someone absent from the Harvard scene since 1953-54 would be astonished at the change in attitude toward drama. He would be compelled to ask “What caused this change?” In 1953 if he had been told that dramatics would hold a dominant position in the University in 1966, he would have said this would only be possible with a Harvard Theatre. The reasons for the turnabout in attitudes is not readily explainable. Walter Kerr of the New York Herald Tribune points to the recent surge of dramatic activity throughout the country as being based on a “removal of political suppression” and “economic prosperity,” but at Harvard, students who have been active in drama since 1953 have a more empirical reason.

Up until 1955, the Lowell House group was a pleasant, conservative organization which produced Baroque operas and works of similar limited appeal. In 1954, for instance, the group produced King Arthur by John Dryden and Henry Purcell. The Society operated on a small budget, and was content to break even. In 1955, however, producer Fred Kimball ’55 wanted to go beyond the self-imposed limitations of Lowell productions. He picked “The Threepenny” because it had a modern appeal, but still could fit within the framework of “opera.” It is this same reasoning which has led the Society to produce The Golden Apple this weekend.

Needless to say, the “Threepenny” was a “smashing success” and sold out for five straight nights, the last one being a “removal of political suppression” and “economic prosperity,” but at Harvard, students who have been active in drama since 1953 have a more empirical reason.

Lowell’s Steel Girders

A Theatre would remedy the economic problems to a great extent by providing the dramatic groups with the necessary physical properties, and it would provide a center for student dramatics. It is indeed a ridiculous situation when the Lowell House Opera Society must hire a construction company to put up steel girders in the Lowell House Dining Hall so as to have a proscenium arch for The Golden Apple. A Theatre with a flexible stage could accommodate every and any type of drama.

The Rush Starts

This fall, the boon was on! Eliot House announced the formation of its Drama Group to produce plays meeting the demand for an “intimate theatre.” Adams House went beyond the traditional scope of House productions to present Alcestis in Sanders Theatre and its Music Society gave Virgil Thomson and Gertrude Stein’s opera The Mother of Us All. The Eliot group gave three productions this year, The Tempest, Richard II, and The Merchant of Venice, all of which were very favorably received.

Ingenuity

The success of the House productions has appealed to the romantic and creative natures of drama people here. They are quick to respond to the ingenuity that a stage designer must ovince every time a play is produced. Seats have been pulled from Sanders to make way for Alcestis and Willy Loman; the whole concept of leisurely dining has been disrupted by the energetic stage hands who work while the rest of the House eats. A producer must be a jack-of-all-trades at Harvard. He must know where he can rent lights for the cheapest rates, what printer will put out his program with the least delays, and he must be an architect, painter, and electrician to ready his show for an opening.

In past weeks it has become evident that the exuberance and pure number of organizations is dangerous. As almost all the producers will agree, the “economic waste” which results from the separate and competing groups has steadily increased. Each group must rent its own lights, for instance, and with no controlling body to handle scheduling of dates unhealthy conflicts have arisen. Last week’s absurd situation, where four different groups conflicted with each other, was an example of this “waste.” Not only was each group trying to outdo the other by buying more and bigger ads in the Crimson, but although each of the four received good reviews, two of them played to almost empty houses. The average student can only afford to spend one night a week at a show—and when four good plays arrive on the same weekend, all will not prosper. Not only does this harm the drama groups, but it also affects the students who would like to see different drama as part of his College education.
With the stacked trays of the Eliot House Dining Hall as a background, D. J. Sullivan '57 (on the floor) rehearses for last fall's production of The Tempest.

The HASTY PUDDING THEATRICALS announces the OPENING OF A COMPETITION for the Book, Music, and Lyrics Of its 109th Production

Those Interested Contact:
HENRY HOLMES AT KI 7-6360
The Lowell House Musical Society Presents

THE GOLDEN APPLE

In the Lowell House Dining Room, April 26, 27, 28 and 29. Tickets at 3.60, 2.40 and 1.80 available at the COOP, Lowell House or by calling UN 4-9887.

OPENS TOMORROW
Boost Drama Interest

Summer Classical Theatre
Planned for Sanders Stage

A foundation of Harvard graduates will produce a major series of classical plays this summer in Sanders Theatre with the hope that the program will stimulate the development of theatre at the University, William Morris Hunt '37, executive producer, revealed last night.

Morris said that "this can help draw into Cambridge the type of people who are interested in the theatre and act as a cohesive force in concentrating attention on the possibility of a Harvard theatre."

The trustees of the foundation are all graduates of the University, and Morris pointed out that the program "should be considered as an organization of Harvardmen in cooperation with Harvard."

The trustees include Mark DeWolfe Howe '28, professor of Law, Louis L. Jaffe, Byrne Professor of Administrative Law, Harry Levin '33, professor of English and Comparative Literature, Archibald MacLeish, Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory, Perry Rathbone '33, Elliot L. Richardson '41, and C. Rodgers Burgin '21.

The foundation will try to obtain several big name actors and directors in an attempt "to set up a series of high quality productions to illustrate the type of thing which might develop at Harvard," Morris added.

Attention to Drama

Jaffe stated that "most of the sponsors hope strongly for theatre at Harvard and this is one of the particular interests of the program." He said that the fact that this program will be done under the "Harvard name" should attract attention to the possibilities of the University as a dramatic center.

Winthrop House Music Society

Presents

The MIKADO

April 18-21
Winthrop Dining Hall - 8:30 P.M.

TICKETS: RES. $2.00, $1.50, GEN ADM. $1.00
ON SALE AT THE COOP, BRIGGS & BRIGGS, MINUTE MAN
the eliot dama group
announces
its 1956-57 season of

SOPHOCLES

oedipus rex
directed by
D. J. Sullivan

SHERIDAN

the critic

SHAKESPEARE

Henry IV.
parts 1 & 2
directed by
Roger Graef

SHAW

heatbreak house
directed by
Glenn Goldberg

SHAKESPEARE

Midsummer Night's Dream
directed by
Richard Smithies

Casting: open casting for the October production of Oedipus and the Critic — April 25-29 2:30-6:00; — Eliot House Junior Common Room
The ingenuity of undergraduate dramatic groups can be seen in the above series of pictures. (Top) The artistic setting of Fogg's Court was the "theatre" for the Classic Club's production of Oedipus at Colonus which was presented there last weekend. (Middle) In the fall, Adams House pulled out the front rows of Sander Theatre to present an ambitious production of Alcestis.
Only recently has the Harvard Theater Project emerged into the light of legitimacy. A proper site for the theater has been assured by the University and permission for soliciting funds for the building has been granted. The committee recommended that a theater program be inaugurated at Harvard and that it be housed in a proposed theater, attached to the Design Center.

The theater is concerned with the harmonious union of the arts of time— which includes writing, speech, acting, music, and lighting— and the arts of space— which include architecture, painting, sculpture, and the applied arts. The theater at Harvard should exist for the Harvard community and its primary function should be to fulfill the needs of the undergraduate. Although several basic courses should be offered, essentially it should be of an extracurricula character.

The theater should accommodate the productions of all undergraduate organizations, including the Hasty Pudding and Pi Eta musicals, the Harvard Dramatic Club, and other theater organizations. In addition, it should present special motion picture programs; accommodate certain University concerts and musical programs; provide space for meetings, lectures and conferences related to the visual arts; and offer its lobby as a changing exhibition area for theatrical exhibitions derived from drawings, prints, programs, posters, and photographs in Houghton Library and the incomparable Shaw Theater Collections. This area could also serve the needs of the Fogg when not required by the theater.

The Department of Design should be brought into the theater, and the theater into the Department of Design. The drama faculty should attract and stimulate the interest of undergraduates in creative writing courses to write
plays for the theater. They should seek collaboration with the college band, the orchestra, the glee club, and the Music Department to promote collaboration on productions, modern musical theater compositions, etc.

The Harvard Theater should be a magnetic center for attracting varied and combined manifestations of creative effort now existing in numerous undergraduate and graduate activities of the university.
The proposed Site

The committee recommended that the new Visual Arts Center be located in an area immediately south of the Fogg Museum. This would entail the removal of Farlow House - a Gothic revival wooden house, used as offices by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

As indicated in the sketch, the theater would be placed on an east-west axis, with the Design Center facing Prescott Street. A small sculpture court would be formed by this complex.
My preliminary study plans and model immediately indicated that the volume of new buildings required was too great for the area available.

Most important, the Harvard Yard is a magnificent example of a rich and varied spatial experience; I felt that a sequence of enclosed and open spaces was a major design requirement - and this would be impossible to obtain on the proposed site.
A study of the Harvard complex shows that any expansion of its physical plant must be either eastwards or northwards. To the west the area is all commercial - to the south is the river. The Graduate School of Business Administration, the Schools of Medicine, Dentistry, Public Health, etc., being across the river, can expand southwards - but the liberal arts located in the Harvard Yard can expand only in an easterly direction.

It is a well known fact that Harvard has been purchasing parcels of real estate whenever possible - and one of her most recent has been three apartment houses between Prescott Street and Ware Street - across the street from the Harvard Union. These are currently being renovated and will be used for student housing. Inasmuch as the rest of this block is in the path of any future logical expansion, I propose that it be purchased, cleared of its remaining apartment houses and old wooden dwellings, and the new Visual Arts Center be located here.

Prescott Street - which separates this new site from the Fogg Museum, and which is only 3 blocks in total length, can be easily eliminated where necessary. I recommend that it exist only from Harvard Street northward to the Faculty Club and then end with a convenient turn around. Because it will serve only Harvard buildings - it will not become a problem for the local residents. A check with the Cambridge Fire Department confirmed the fact they too are expecting this street to disappear in time. Because it is not a through street, and has an awkward sharp turn when it reaches Harvard Street, the Fire Department doesn't route its trucks along it in answer to a fire alarm. Just recently, with the building of the new Graduate Center at Harvard, Jarvis Street was entirely eliminated.
recent real-estate purchases
by harvard university
apartment houses recently purchased and renovated for student quarters

proposed site - and some of the houses which are to be removed.
plan of site to be cleared - figures are the latest assessed evaluations of the building and its lot.
total site available for the proposed visual arts center
The Program

Department of the History of Art
The main need of this department is for a new, large lecture hall. Last year 550 students applied for the Survey of Art History course - but the present lecture hall in the Fogg Museum, with a capacity of only 400, forced 150 students to wait until the course was again offered the following year. There is a big demand for courses of this type by people who are interested in the subject, but not desirous of majoring in the Fine Arts. There is need for several small classrooms - but in general, the teaching facilities in the Fogg are adequate. General classrooms situated in the new Design Center can be used as needed by this department.

Department of Design
This department plus the Department of the History of Art are to be housed in a new Design Center. It should be orientated north - south so that as many studios and drafting rooms will have north light. The need is for drafting rooms, painting and sculpture studios, classrooms and workshop space for painting, drawing, graphic arts, etc. It should have its own entrance so that access in the evening could be had without the necessity of entering the museum proper. The Design Center should provide display space for study collections and for changing exhibitions. It should provide protected circulation to the Fogg Museum. The attitude of this new department is: If Harvard can give coaching in rowing and boxing just by payment of a $4.00 locker fee - now, students can get coaching in sculpture, painting, ceramics, photography etc. just as easily. Facilities for these activities are to be provided in the new Design Center.
The Sculpture Court

A large enclosed court for the display of large sculpture which does not require protection from the weather, is badly needed. For example, John Flannagan's stone group of the Mother and Child, intended primarily to be seen from above, as its subtitle indicates: "Design for a Skyscraper Court." This fine piece, installed many years ago in the garden behind the Fogg Museum, is too little known and enjoyed.

Library

From the standpoint of renovation and new construction, the chief needs of the library are: additional book storage, a study area for graduate students, and increased space for the photographs and slide collection. The library currently has 225,000 photographs, 75,000 slides, and 35,000 books. Because of the lack of space, additional fine arts books are filed in the Widener Library. These should be incorporated into one collection and be conveniently located so as to be available to all the students of the Design Center. Some arrangement is to be made whereby the library can be kept open in the evening without disturbing the Fogg Museum, which for security reasons closes at 5 PM.

The Teaching Collections:

The Fogg Museum was built just before the new emphasis on flexibility had been given expression in architectural form. Not only does the present building not lend itself to new uses, but it is very crowded. Valuable and interesting works of art have completely filled up the storerooms - and there is need for more gallery space. Two top studios
are currently used for furniture storage. There is an urgent need for general storage space. Perhaps it can be supplied under the sculpture court or in the sub-basements of the new buildings. There is also need for a well-defined area, preferably on the ground floor, to be assigned to frequently changing temporary exhibitions. Another area is needed to exhibit permanent collections.

The 400 seat lecture hall in the sub-basement of the Fogg museum needs another means of egress. As it is now, the exits from this large lecture room are very steep and lack in both utility and aesthetic character.

The Theaters

There are more performances of plays in colleges and universities in a year than there are in any other single type of theater. Such auditoriums vary widely in size and equipment. Many times audience comfort is less than in the standard commercial theater. Seats are hard and cramped, floors are flat. Sight lines are often bad and booming echoes lurk in nests of architectural gingerbread. The school ventilation system is often shut off at night when the play takes place. The stage, called the platform, merits the title. It lacks wing space, depth, flying facilities, and has a hardwood floor. If there are shops, access to them is difficult. A single box set with no upstage windows is all that can be gotten on the stage. Designers of these auditoriums have apparently worked under the illusions that professional theaters are good theaters; amateurs can do with poorer facilities than professionals need.

The college theater usually costs as much to build as does a good theater of the same seating capacity - often more. But this is not the only respect
in which a badly planned theater proves costly to the community. The educational program is vitiated; half a theater is as bad pedagogically as half a play. Plays produced under limitations are shabby, and invite a patronizing attitude on the part of the audience.

The theater building must have optimum flexibility to perform a variety of theatrical activities within the scope of educational and experimental productions. Such a theater would create a physical means to coordinate the visual and theatrical arts and architecture.

The problem is to design a theater providing all the facilities necessary for any type of dramatic production, including small operas, pageants, guest companies etc. The building would also be used for concerts, lectures, and motion pictures.

The Theater Program

I The theater should seat approximately 650 people - this number being a recommended limit for the best sound and sight lines and large enough to pay its own way with the added expense entailed in productions having scenery. Small theaters are generally conceded today to be the most desirable, and this is especially true in a college where the experience gained from a long run is far more valuable than the income from a large house.

II General space conditions to be considered involve:

a) public circulation into and out of auditorium.
b) relationship of people to space and people to production
c) effect of auditorium area upon desired effect of stage and production.
III The ratio of backstage workshop area to seating space is greater in a college theater than for a professional theater because of:
   a) the need for rehearsal space
   b) requirements for experimental work
   c) an overabundance of manpower (encouragement of active participation by many).
   d) future need for storage space.

IV Planning facilities for classroom and rehearsal space involve:
   a) future planning for extensive drama education.
   b) a recent suggestion to use the theater in the summer school - indeed to make it the core of the summer school activity.
   c) the desire to include all phases of theater activity:
      ballet, modern dance, music, art, etc.

V Exhibition space for changing display of material from the theater arts collection, and other, relating to dramatic activity.

The requirements:
I Entrances, offices, coatrooms, theater collection, gallery, toilets.

II Stage: proscenium opening: 38 feet.
   Apron - to first row: 12 feet to 15 feet.
   Depth of stage: 35 feet to 40 feet.

III Technical Control Center:
   projection booth, radio control room, radio seminar room, TV.

IV Workshop area:
   scenery construction, painting, costume sewing and dyeing, offices, scenery-costume-props and general storage, green room.

V Dressing Rooms and rehearsal area.
Alongside this theater seating about 650, there should be built a small experimental theater for approximately 200 - 250 people, which could also serve as an auxiliary lecture room, taking the place of the outmoded small lecture room on the third floor of Fogg. It should have a stage area similar to the large theater stage, for duplicate rehearsal facilities.

The theater building should serve as a laboratory or workshop where the undergraduate may discover and exercise his special talent, be it playwriting, directing, acting, designing, or technical work. Courses in scene and costume design, technical direction, and lighting will be offered, and facilities must be provided for these. Classrooms for an undergraduate seminar in playwriting under the auspices of the Department of English are to be provided.

No seat should be placed so that more than 10 degrees of the stage is not visible to a person sitting in the auditorium. Nor should any seat be placed so high that the sight line of a person sitting in it with respect to the top of the proscenium opening is cut off less than 6 feet above the floor on a backwall 20 feet behind the proscenium line.

To be comfortable, seats should not be placed closer than 3 feet on centers front to back and 18 inches side to side on centers. The pitch of the auditorium floor should be sufficient to allow persons to see over the heads of those in front and not force them to try to look around the person in front of them.

Orchestra pit should be no less than six feet wide and extend the width of
the stage.

The stage should have an unobstructed area at least 3 times the width of the proscenium opening and 38 feet in depth. In any event, on at least one side of the stage there must be an unobstructed area the width of the proscenium opening by 30 feet in depth. Pin rails and fly racks are to be located outside this area. The gridiron must be at least two and one half times the distance from the stage floor as the height of the proscenium opening. There should be sufficient room above the gridiron for persons to walk about on it without having to stoop over.

Projection booth should accommodate at least two arc projectors and contain space for all functions of the operators including cutting and splicing equipment and space, rewinding space, and storage area.

Adequate storage must be provided for props, lights, sets, costumes, wardrobe, scenes, crates, etc.

In approximately 20 per cent of the productions in one theater over a 20 years period, traps in the floor have been opened to provide entrances and exits of actors, or of heavy pieces of equipment which can't be flown in. Actors can also disappear this way.

The acting area is not to be a single level of stage floor - the use of raised levels for emphasis is a stage director's axiom. This is achieved by elevating sections of the stage floor on understage machinery.

Rolling straight path traverse wagons are to be provided. With this
method full stage settings are assembled on fullstage wagons and propelled from the scenery space to storage spaces at each side of the stage. Scenery may be shifted on one wagon while a scene is being played on the other. This process may be aided by the installation of flying equipment over the storage spaces, so that pieces of scenery may be flown off the wagons. The fastest possible change from one full-stage setting to another where both wagons move simultaneously takes 10 seconds. Elaborate background setups behind the wagons are not disturbed by the movement of the wagons. Because of the advantages cited this method is strongly recommended for both of the new theaters. It requires generous allowance of space backstage, but the returns in efficient handling, variety of scenery, and speed of changes warrant it.
Comments on the Theater

The theater is a three dimensional space where ideas, moods, realities, emotions, both historic and immediate, are acted and interpreted for a seeing and listening audience.

Here then is a logical tool to help in the current efforts to integrate the arts. Here is space with human scale, color, light, motion, and words and sound to provide a communication so necessary for this integration.

In 1927 Oskar Schlemmer, artist, painter, and director of the Bauhaus Stage Workshop, spoke to students and friends of the visual significance of the stage:

"We are interested in interior space treated as part of the whole composition of the building. Stagecraft is an art concerned with space and will become more so in the future. A theater including both stage and auditorium demands above all an architectonic handling of space; everything that happens in it is conditioned by space and related to it. Form (two-dimensional and three-dimensional) is an element of space; color and light are elements of form. Light is of great importance. We are predominantly visual beings and therefore purely visual experience can give us considerable satisfaction. If forms in motion provide mysterious and surprising effects through invisible mechanical devices, if space is transformed with the help of changing forms, colors, lights, then all the requirements of spectacle, a noble "feast for the eyes", will be fulfilled."

The tremendous variety of drama which is available for theater production, combined with the conflict of opinions among actors, directors, producers,
playwrites, etc., concerning the "approach" or "style" in which a certain play is to be given, creates no end of problems for the architect who is honestly trying to fulfill the requirements of a contemporary theater. And the various activities that may take place in the theater of an educational complex creates special demands not usually associated with a commercial theater.

Such demands automatically suggest the magic word that arises in contemporary architecture - "flexibility". Flexibility as used in this sense refers to the relation between performers and the audience or the stage and the auditorium. During the history of the theater this relationship, and resulting physical form, has varied considerably, and most of the drama written for this changing, evolving form still remains as a living part of dramatic art today.
Hellenistic playhouse at Epidaurus, built in the 4th century BC, with seats surrounding more than half the orchestral circle, passageways (parados) between stage building and audience area, and ramps approaching the raised stage.
The plan at the top is of the Teatro Olimpico, built between 1580 and 1584, the first permanent "classic" theater, with flat orchestra floor for the chorus and a raised stage backed by a long wall with 3-dimensional vistas in diminishing perspective; it seats 1,000.

In the center is the 250 seat theater in Sabbioneta. The smallness of the stage forced the architect to provide only one vista that began at the very sides of the stage, a first step towards the modern theater and its single proscenium opening.
PLANS OF THREE ITALIAN THEATERS. The plan at the top is of the Teatro Olimpico; the one at the bottom of the page, of the Farnese in Parma. Between them is the 250-seat theater in Sabbioneta. The smallness of the stage seems to have forced the architect to provide only one proscenium. Nearby Parma may have been influenced by this when the Teatro Farnese was built. (From Moritz, Das Antike Theater, and Cheney, The Theatre.)
The English Pageant Wagon. A two story wagon, the lower floor a curtained dressing room - has come to rest in an English square to show the first episode of a mystery as it was done in other parts of the town. Other wagons will follow, presenting other scenes. People used their windows for what we would call boxes.
Garden Theaters: During the late renaissance, Italian noblemen had outdoor theaters in the gardens of their estates. Hedges surrounded the spectators and formed wings and backing.
The "Tea House" Theater. 1200 years ago the Chinese called their theaters "tea houses". In this plan of the lower floor, "S" marks the stage, with its projecting roof supported by two posts, "O" is the place for the orchestra. Wealthy spectators sat at tables drinking tea; the others sat on benches. A second floor had boxes for women, benches behind. The stage was backed by an embroidered curtain, with entrance at the left and exit at the right - each covered by a curtain.
A Bird's Eye View of the Globe Theater
Thus the contemporary theater must be a reasonably flexible space for a variety of drama from the past, and for experimentation and adaptation of modern productions.

In an article "The Theater and the University" for the February 1925 Theater Arts Magazine, George Pierce Baker told of some general objectives for the design of a college theater:

"Such a theater must be both conservative and flexible. Most of its students will later, in one way or another, live and work in the regular theater world. Therefore it is important that they be trained under theater conditions not more exacting than those ordinarily found in the commercial theater. At the same time, they must not be trained so steadily with special devices for settings, lightings, etc., that they will find themselves at a loss when they become partners in productions touring the country.

Here lies the danger in the training given by some experimental theaters. Students should be taught so that they can give the best production possible under the physical conditions of the stage on which they may work. On the other hand, the theater in which they work should be sufficiently flexible to permit all kinds of experimentation."
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Maggowan, P. T., The Living Stage, Prentice Hall, 1955


In addition many reviews in architectural magazines (Architectural Forum, Architectural Record, Architectural Review, Progressive Architecture etc).

Data also gathered on the following Theater centers:

Kirby Memorial Theater - Amherst College, Amherst, Mass.
Bennington College - Bennington, Vermont
Dartmouth College - Hanover, New Hampshire
University Theater - University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia
Stanford University - Stanford, California
Williams College - Williamstown, Massachusetts
Univ. of Wisconsin - Madison, Wisconsin