



A COLLEGE OF ART
FOR BOSTON'S SOUTH COVE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree,
Bachelor in Architecture,
at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology,

June, 1963

Signature of Author _____

Josef Nathanson
Department of Architecture
April 2, 1963

Accepted by _____

Lawrence B. Anderson, Head
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ABSTRACT

The incentive to design new facilities for the Massachusetts College of Art stems from the present need of the school for new quarters, coupled with the sense that an institution of this type can make a significant contribution to much needed environmental improvement in an area on the fringe of Boston's downtown.

This report first explores the nature of the city's center and the patterns of activity in which the school will be situated. It further details the means by which the Park Square-South Cove area can evolve into a rich and rewarding environment. Finally, the nature of the professional art school is studied in order that the design allow it to perform its role - the training of professional artists for careers in commerce, industry, and the fine arts and for teaching in the visual arts.

12 Arnold Circle
Cambridge, Massachusetts

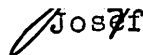
April 2, 1963

Pietro Belluschi, Dean
School of Architecture and Planning
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Dear Dean Belluschi:

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree,
Bachelor in Architecture, I herewith submit a thesis
entitled "A College of Art for Boston's South Cove".

Sincerely,

 Josef Nathanson

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the following individuals who have given me valuable suggestions and guidance during the development of this thesis;

The members of the Thesis Committee, Professors Beckwith, Brown, Halasz, and Newman, of the Department of Architecture at M. I. T.

Miss Maria Rupp of the Tufts-New England Medical Center Planning Office, who introduced me to the design concepts being considered for the South Cove.

Mr. Robert Hazen and his associates of the Boston Redevelopment Authority, who offered information regarding the location of the Massachusetts College of Art in the South Cove renewal area.

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Designing a dream city is easy;
rebuilding a living one takes
imagination...

Jane Jacobs
in "Downtown is for
People"

THE URBAN SETTING

Debate regarding the future of the city center has taken a significant new direction. Rather than questioning whether the urban core is to continue as the heart of activity for the entire metropolis, it is now being asked just how and with what means will it be possible for this center to retain the vibrant image that has traditionally been associated with it.

It is all too clear that the majority of the central areas of the older cities are still afflicted by the forces of decay. The inefficiencies created by obsolescent structures and inadequate street systems are still to be felt. The widespread preference of the private automobile to forms of public transportation continues to be harmful from two standpoints - first, in the congestion created at the center, and second, in the tendency to make the suburban center a rival of the metropolitan "downtown". With the suburban center competing for the shopper's patronage and the resulting loss in downtown retail sales, the process of deterioration is accelerated. The major center becomes a place given increasingly over to streets and parking spaces and to fewer and fewer buildings, all adding up to a deadening dulling environment.

With the future pattern within the range of public choice, rather than accepting the prospect of an unintensively developed core, from city to city the choice appears to be made in the direction of reinforcing the dominant role of the core. This choice recognizes the fact that the central business district still exists for very good reasons. In spite of the congestion and the inconveniences, it still offers certain efficiencies and scale economies. Many activities - the legitimate theatre, specialized business and technical services, high-style fashions, furniture, and jewelry - depend on a metropolitan-wide market area which only a CBD location affords. "It is no doubt also true that the face-to-face contacts, and especially the chance contacts, that proximity engenders still make the CBD an effective communications system; and it appears that decision makers still place the greatest trust in information that is compounded with the luncheon Martini."¹

But the decision to reinforce the values of an intensely developed core must go beyond a willingness to invest in new office and retail floor space and the provision of facilities to accommodate the increased traffic generated. The new investment will only be materialized if there are assurances that people will be willing to congregate at the core in increased numbers. The heart of the city must become alive and provide unique attractions that will assure the desired response of the public.

In the words of Charles Abrams:

If the downtown is to live, it must be planned as a place to spend a day, not an hour, a place a suburban worker can spend an evening as well as his working time. There should be more tea rooms, sidewalk cafes, retreats both inside department stores and outside, more use of pleasant roofs, television corners, and benches... Nearby libraries and art galleries should have comfortable seats and should be accessible through the ground floor, rather than via the long climb past the monumental columns... Universities should become adjuncts of downtown, luring adults to pleasant leisure as well as to adult education.²

It is natural to think of the downtown area as a collection of several distinct functional districts - the retail core, the financial center, the entertainment district. But a far more important way of thinking about the city center is one which views the, sometimes casual, at other times critical, ties between these activities. The liveliest downtown, according to Jane Jacobs, will be found in the area with a rich mixture of basic activities. She cites New York's Fifty-seventh Street as an example.³ There the city is alive at night because of the nearby apartments and residential hotels and because of the cluster of music, dance, and drama studios and motion-picture theatres near Carnegie Hall. These activities, combined with the daytime office population, support a wide array of restaurants, shops, and service establishments.

It is in this spirit that the search for a new site for the Massachusetts College of Art has turned to Boston's downtown area. As an alternative to a contemplated move to suburban isolation, this new way of thinking holds the interest of the school's administration and is being encouraged by planners and designers of the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

Both the school and the public can benefit from a decision that will bring the school to the heart of the city. Art students in the fields of fashion, advertising, and product design would be in close contact with the merchandising and advertising activities around them. Students, some of whom already work part-time in commercial art studios, would be afforded increased opportunities to make use of their talents professionally. The proposed location, near the existing theatre district, should bolster that area and provide additional creative outlets in costume and stage designing.

The school, offering attractions in the form of indoor and outdoor exhibition areas, would be a bright spot in the pedestrian's downtown journey.

LAND USE



Retail Core

COURTESY OF M.I.T.



Entertainment District

Common



PRESENT ACTIVITIES



- COMMERCIAL
- INSTITUTIONAL AND HISTORIC
- PARKING GARAGE
- CONSTRUCTED SINCE 1955
- the college
- south cove renewal area



the central business district

THE PARK SQUARE - SOUTH COVE AREA

The area of Boston known as the South Cove exhibits today a great variety of seemingly unrelated activities. As an area under study for future urban renewal action it can be considered as being bounded on the north and west by Stuart and Kneeland Streets and on the south and east by the Boston and Albany Railroad (soon to be path of the Massachusetts Turnpike Extension) and the Central Artery. The land, for the most part situated on what was once part of Boston harbor (the South Cove), is generally level with only a slight slope towards the south.

Activities of the area range from the the garment industry in the northeast corner to the larger scale commercial structures approaching the Back Bay office area on the west. Residential areas include the turnpike-threatened Chinese community on the east and historically and architecturally valuable row houses between Arlington and Tremont Streets. Further adding to the variety are several legitimate theatres, night clubs, and a number of ethnic restaurants. Due to abrupt changes in building scale and an irregular street pattern a pedestrian must find it difficult to gain a coherent image of the district.

In the heart of the South Cove, in the Washington-Harrison Streets section, has grown a complex of hospitals, schools of medicine and dentistry, and clinics known collectively as the Tufts-New England Medical Center. With a wave of growth and expansion necessary to meet the increased demand for medical services, the Center is engaged in an active program of planning for its future physical needs. In addition to expanded space for hospital, teaching, and research functions, provisions are being made for the development of a new residential community serving the needs of single and married graduate students of the medical and dental school, relatives of patients in the various hospitals and clinics, and geriatric patients. As the Center expands to new city blocks and as the apartment community develops the area should begin to assume a clearer visual pattern.

While certain aspects of the environmental design of the South Cove will involve the introduction of new scales and the abandonment of old patterns, other areas will, with only selective changes, contribute greatly to the design. Conservation and rehabilitation techniques will be particularly applicable to the Bay Village residential group. Most of the structures in the area of Bay Village are of sound original construction, built in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The three- and four-storey brick houses were constructed on a non-speculative basis and the room sizes, design qualities and scale of the residences

are unobtainable in new housing at a comparable cost. There is evidence on the part of both owners and present tenants of a desire to support conservation activities. Several structures in the Bay Village area have recently been purchased for conversion into single family, owner-occupied dwellings. Tree plantings and an organized effort at upgrading exteriors (painting of wooden shutters, etc.) have become trends in the area. The Bay Village Association has maintained an active interest in the planning studies of the area, volunteering their services for survey and other functions basic to the planning process. Finally, the T-NEMC has expressed interest in conservation for the purpose of developing staff and professional housing, and possibly additional housing for students and other persons associated with the medical center.

An expansion of the Bay Village community would be desirable and can be accommodated by some modifications in the existing street pattern, including the vacating of Broadway and the extension of Charles Street to Tremont Street. The construction of new walk-up apartments will require the removal of some commercial structures and the relocation of the motion-picture distributors now gathered in the area, concentrating at the present intersection of Church and Winchester Streets. A key consideration will be the elimination of major traffic in this area of small scale houses and narrow streets.

The proposed site of the new college of art is between Winchester and Stuart Street on a $3\frac{1}{2}$ acre extent of land. Approaching the site from the Public Gardens, two blocks away to the north, one first walks past Park Square. Here, at the location of the Hotel Statler and the multi-level Motor Mart garage, is a strategic point in the structure of the downtown. This is the segment that should link the specialty shops and insurance institutions of the Back Bay with the retail shopping area of Tremont and Washington Streets. The fact that the disparate geometries of those two areas are never resolved at Park Square lends reason to the chaotic image now present. With the introduction of the Turnpike Extension it should be possible to eliminate Columbus Avenue in the vicinity of Park Square, while the under-used garage structure could be supplanted by the construction of underground parking facilities. These changes will make possible the creation of a paved and landscaped plaza framed by new seven-storey commercial space and two- to three-storey shops bordering along Stuart Street. Park Square will then be an open pedestrian quarter, an attractive area for the downtown visitor as well as a suitable setting for the college. The latter, with a tall classroom-studio block fronting Stuart Street and walk-up dormitory units relating to Bay Village on the south edge, should make it possible to negotiate the abrupt change in scale that now exists.

The desire to secure additional institutional uses in the South Cove has figured largely in the thinking of the Boston Redevelopment Authority for reasons of fiscal practicality as well as architectural potentiality. Since the task of restructuring the area will necessarily be undertaken through the urban renewal process, the participation of a public institution brings certain advantages. The Massachusetts College of Art, as a part of the Commonwealth's system of state teachers' colleges, could exercise the power of eminent domain, thus initiating a renewal program in its own right. Further advantages would arise when the school's efforts become part of the larger renewal plan. For, as provided in section 112 of the Housing Act of 1949, the expenditures that institutions of higher learning make within the area of an urban renewal project in the acquisition of land and structures, including costs of demolition and relocation, are allowed to form the basis of substantial federal credits to the local community.⁴ This provision recognizes that it is in the public interest to promote urban renewal in blighted areas around educational institutions and hospitals, thereby encouraging the expansion of the facilities of such institutions while at the same time developing more cohesive neighborhood environments.

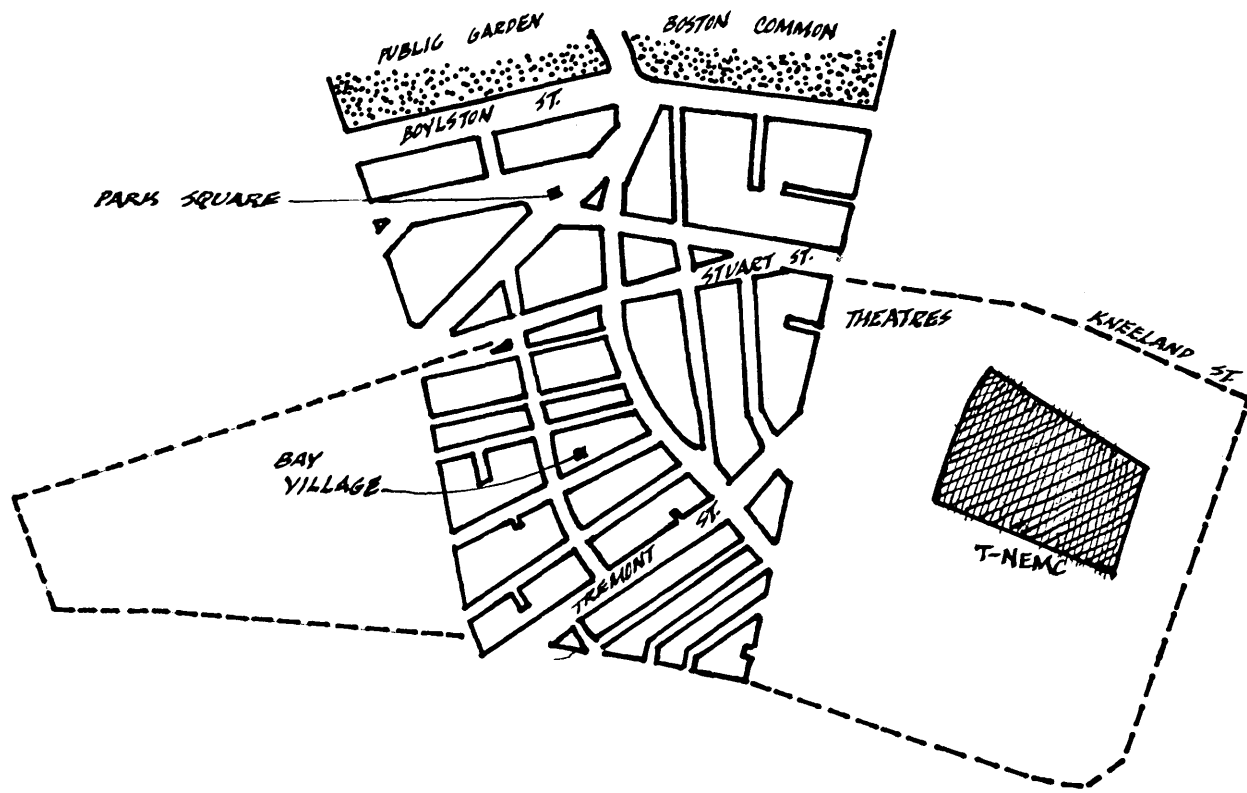
The creation of a "cohesive neighborhood environment" can be given explicit architectural expression. The connections of the revitalized South Cove to the downtown area can be

defined by paved pedestrian ways or "greenways" along such axes as Washington Street, connecting the department stores, the medical center, and its housing community, and "New Charles Street", leading from the Boston Common and Public Gardens past the college of art and Bay Village. Equally important would be the provision of east-west pedestrian paths, linking both the institutional and residential groups. One might then envision the South Cove as an active and inviting neighborhood, with its streets peopled at various times by members of the medical professions, medical students and nurses, theatre- and restaurant-goers, art students and fascinated "outsiders". The exploitation of such neighborhoods is another direction to take in downtown revitalization, the direction that Professor Abrams suggests when he says that

Downtown's surrounding area must be made interesting too. More people will come if there are also interesting sections in neighborhoods downtown. The availability of Greenwich Village and the off-Broadway movement, of Chinatown and the lower East Side, helps New York City as a whole as well as the downtown. 5

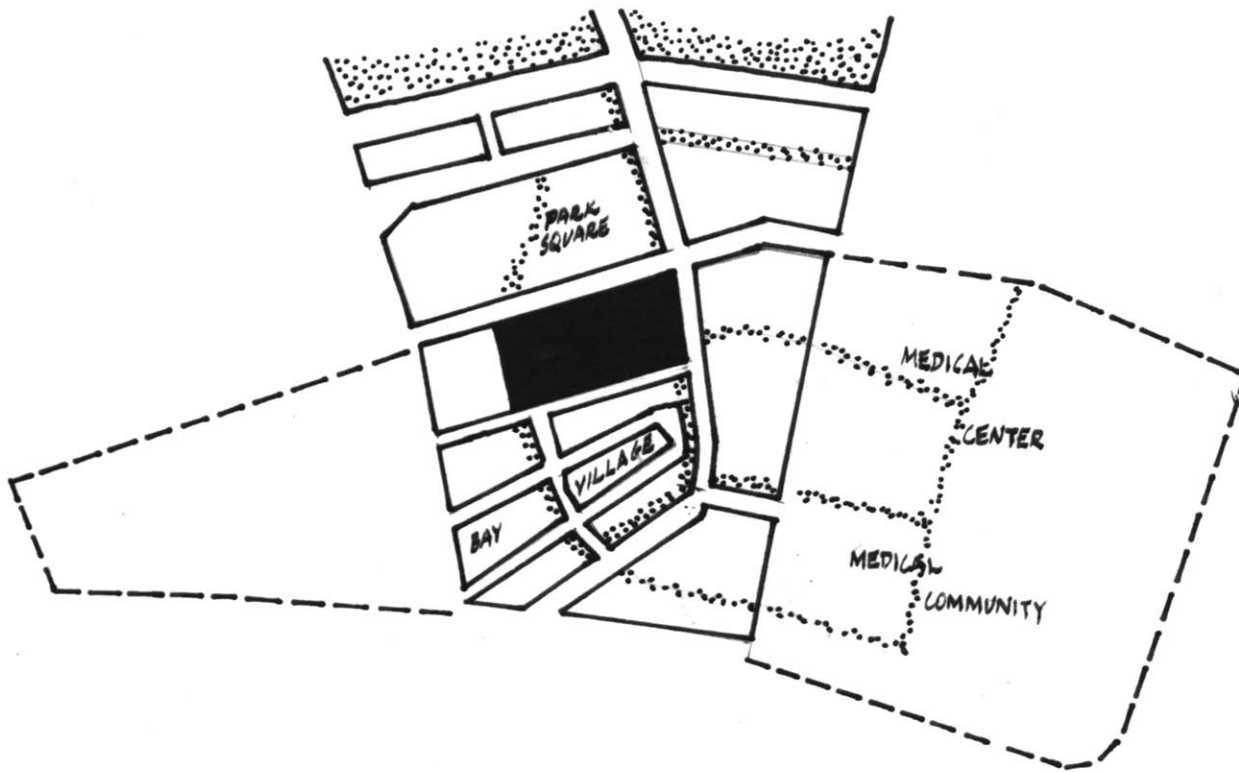


■ site of massachusetts college of art



PARK SQ. - SOUTH COVE

EXISTING PATTERN



- SOUTH COVE
- MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF ART
- PARKS, PEDESTRIANWAYS

PARK SQ. - SOUTH COVE
 PROPOSED PATTERN

THE COLLEGE OF ART

The Approach to Education

The Massachusetts College of Art, as a professional school of art, serves an educational role that would be appropriate to examine at this point. In the hope of defining the meaning of the term "professional school of art" a university dean made the following remarks at the annual meeting of the National Association of Schools of Design in 1955:

There is a need, clearly, for the professional art schools to identify themselves, both for our own benefit and for our public's. We are confused with the trade school on the one hand - and the college art departments with us, on the other. Probably this confusion is more current and widespread than we realize...And, unquestionably, this confusion is being fostered by many ambitious college departments which, trapped by the liberal arts institution of which they are a part, can only justify their own expansion by disavowing the professional as a condition to creative art practice. 6

Professionalism, however, is at the heart of the educational philosophy that guides a school such as the Massachusetts College of Art. And here "professionalism" is taken to mean a sincere devotion to the creative compulsion, a mastery of materials by hand and mind, and a development of the aware-

nesses and sensitivities which are essential to the artist's growth. The fundamental nature of the professional art school is such as to place it as the successor to the ancient apprentice system of the guilds and the ateliers of the masters, where not only were techniques taught, but a way of life practised.

The traditional role of leadership in educational and intellectual pursuits enjoyed by Massachusetts, combined with its early attainment of a high level of production of such commodities as textiles and leather goods, led to the founding of the Massachusetts College of Art. By 1870, the rapidly expanding economy of the state required workers with basic art skills. In response to a petition pointing out that need, the legislature made drawing a required subject in all public schools of the Commonwealth. To meet the subsequent demand for trained drawing teachers, the Massachusetts Normal Art School (the present-day Massachusetts College of Art) was established in 1873.

Although the original purpose of the institution was to train future art teachers and supervisors for the state school system, other art needs within Massachusetts were soon recognized and the curriculum was enlarged and broadened to include several areas of specialization. The fact that trained designers were needed in the industries

of the state and the growing interest in the profitable use of advertising by these industries led directly to expanded offerings in the applied art fields of advertising and product design. Over the course of the past ninety years, each change in the curriculum has reflected the needs of the time.

Today, through a balance of subjects in the liberal and technical arts, the school aims to provide a professional environment within which each student's capacities for understanding and expression can be well developed. All students, in their freshman and sophomore years, take a common program devoted to art fundamentals - courses in the theory of color, drawing and painting, pictorial composition, two- and three-dimensional design - as well as general studies in art history, English, sociology and psychology. In the junior year the student begins work in a chosen field of specialization. Students may choose between the course in Teacher Education leading to a degree of Bachelor of Science in Education and the courses in Advertising Design, Product Design, Painting and Illustration, Fashion Design, and Ceramics all leading to the degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts.

Whichever course the student follows, the majority of his or her time will be spent in the design workrooms, shops, or studios where, in the process of actual production, theories make way for the realization of the possibilities of material. Thus, while an education

major may be taking a subject designated as Education, she may well be involved in exploring the possibilities of various craft methods and materials suitable for use in elementary and secondary schools. In the last two years, while there is some interchange between students in the various fields of concentration, as when they engage in certain common disciplines (silk screen, life drawing) or when they study required courses in the humanities, the extent of specialization is quite pronounced.

Physical Facilities - Present and Future

Having started with an initial student body of "thirty-nine gentlemen and sixty-eight ladies", the school, faced with an ever-increasing enrollment, was forced to move from its original quarters in Pemberton Square, Boston. Following two moves and a fifty year period of sustained growth, the school moved to its present location at Brookline and Longwood Avenues in 1930. In its present home, near a vast complex of hospitals and the Harvard medical schools, it occupies land that would logically be suited for the expansion of these other institutions. Aside from these external pressures, the growth of the school itself makes the provision of new facilities necessary. In the words of a 1960 engineering survey, "The existing facilities of the college will not accommodate the projected academic, administrative, faculty, and other area requirements. An intensive study of the

building was made to determine if modifications of space could satisfy these requirements. Modification will not prove feasible. Furthermore, the site will not support any additional construction. In view of these facts, it is recommended that the Commonwealth dispose of the existing plant and seek a new site and new facilities to house the college." 7

The increased space requirements are based upon the following projected enrollments:

<u>Total Enrollment by Curricula</u>	<u>1959</u>	<u>1963</u>	<u>1971</u>
General Art (Fr.-Soph. Years)	253	340	425
BFA	153	216	270
BS/ED	<u>76</u>	<u>94</u>	<u>115</u>
	482	650	810

It is assumed that the programs as presently offered will continue, with the product design course expanded somewhat. The offering of full time Master of Fine Arts and Master of Science in Education curricula is also anticipated and should bring an additional 50 to 60 students by 1971.

Program of Space Requirements

The following recommended space requirements for the school follow guidelines set by Becker and Becker Associates, consultants to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, in their Space Utilization Report, Massachusetts College of Art.

Their study during the academic year 1959-60 reflected the needs of the school at that time and anticipated requirements through the year 1971. The area requirements incorporate suggestions contained in the Becker and Becker report, supplemented by additional estimates.

<u>Academic Facilities</u>	<u>Student Rooms/Stations</u>	<u>Unit Area sq. ft.</u>	<u>Total sq. ft.</u>
General Classrooms	13 @35	670	<u>8,700</u>
Special Classrooms:			
Design-Drafting	13 @24	1000	13,000
Painting-Sketching	17 @24	1000	17,000
Ceramics	2 @20	850	1,700
Sculpture	3 @20	850	2,550
Photography	1 @20	850	850
Graphics	3 @20	850	2,550
Crafts	2 @20	850	<u>1,700</u>
			<u>39,350</u>
Studios:			
Painting	7 @28	1400	9,800
Design	4 @28	1400	5,600
Fashion	2 @18	900	1,800
Ceramics	2 @18	900	1,800
Masters'	3 @18	900	<u>2,700</u>
			<u>21,700</u>
Laboratories (Shops):			
Wood	1		1,600
Metals	1		1,600
Plastics	1		1,600
Ceramics Kiln	1		1,600
Photography-Dark Rooms	2		<u>2,400</u>
			<u>7,200</u>
Library, shelves and stacks for 25,000 volumes, seating for 75, office space for librarian and 4 assistants, audio-visual facility			<u>6,000</u>

Program of Space Requirements (continued)

		Unit Area	Total
<u>Administration</u>			
President's Office	1		300
Conference Room	1		500
Private Offices	4	225	900
Semi-Private Offices	1		200
General Office Spaces	10	110	1,100
Placement Office			350
Nurses Office, Dispensary			<u>500</u>
			3,850
<u>Faculty</u>			
Offices, Department Chairmen	6	225	1,350
Shared Offices, 52 Faculty Members	26	140	3,640
Lounge			500
Studio Workroom			<u>1,400</u>
			6,890
<u>Exhibition Gallery</u>			
			3,000
<u>Student Supply Lockers</u>	675	10	6,750
<u>Total Net Area</u>			103,440
Allowance of 50% of Net Area (33% Of Gross Area)			
Circulation, Mechanical Spaces, and Toilet Facilities			45,000
<u>Total Gross Area (Rounded)</u>			148,000

Additional College Facilities

With the growth of the college, it will be expected to offer an increased range of facilities, not only to its students, but also to the neighboring community. While it may be assumed that the building program will proceed in stages, beginning with the studio-classroom and administrative facilities, the relationship of this functional grouping to the communal facilities will be of great importance in establishing an image for the school.

The following additional requirements can be anticipated:

Dormitory for 100 women	24,000 sq. ft.
Dormitory for 100 men	24,000
Dining and related areas for 200	8,000
Student activities center and Cafeteria for 350	15,000
Auditorium, 800 seat capacity combined college and community use	15,000
Gymnasium, minimal basketball size	10,000
Staff Parking, 25 cars	7,500

It is expected that on-campus student parking will not be provided. New parking garages are to be constructed a few blocks away, along the route of the turnpike extension. However, the school is a few minutes away from both the Arlington and Boylston subway stations and it will be assumed that most commuting students will find it convenient to use public transportation rather than to pay for parking space.

Towards a Design

The design solution will necessarily first satisfy the relationships, in terms of access, linkages, service, and control of space, between the various elements of the school- the teaching accommodation, the student housing, the communal facilities. It should be possible to arrange them so that an enclosed exterior space - of urban, rather than suburban proportions - may be formed and used for open-air exhibitions, outdoor painting and sketching, and as a generally available space for informal meetings between students and faculty members. This space will also be accessible to visitors attending exhibitions or open house and care will have to be given to matters of proper definition of public and semi-public areas.

While these considerations will be dealt with on the site planning scale, the design of the classrooms and studios will receive more detailed study. Here it is expected that architectural order will arise from the disposition of a hierarchy of spaces - ranging from the relatively small academic classroom, to the larger design and painting workroom equipped with desks and worktables, to, finally, the largest oil-painting, life drawing, or design-drafting studio. In all cases consideration of the conditions of natural and artificial lighting will be reflected in the solution. An organization that recognizes departmental requirements would be appropriate and would

find design workrooms, student supply lockers, and the faculty offices of that department in a single area of the building - usually an entire floor.

In what promises to be a multi-level structure, recognizing the character of the newly-created Park Square plaza, as well as conforming to the space available to the college, the ground floor area can be given over to those aspects of the school of most immediate interest to the general public - an indoor gallery connecting to an outdoor sculpture garden, a clear connection to the school's library, an information desk associated with the general office space.

The final successful solution will be one which organizes the school's activities so as to make it a rewarding environment, conducive to creative efforts, while forming an institution that makes a contribution to the life of the city center and its neighboring community.

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4. See Application for Survey and Planning, South Cove Urban Renewal Project, Boston Redevelopment Authority, 1962.
5. Abrams, Charles, op. cit. p.8
6. Hudson, K.E., "Nature and function of a professional school of art", College Art Journal 15 no. 4, 1956, p. 352.
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