

The Museum of Modern Art

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PLAN FOR A NEW CAMPUS FOR THE ARTS ON VIEW AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Architecture for the Arts: The State University of New York College at Purchase, an exhibition of scale models and drawings, will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art from May 13 through June 22. This new campus complex for the visual and performing arts, designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes and six other leading firms, not only produces a coherent, planned community as opposed to the kind of patchwork measures most cities face, but also offers a clear and perfectly straightforward solution to a problem that has defeated many comparable enterprises, according to Arthur Drexler, Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design.

"It brings together highly gifted and quite individual architects, encouraging them to work within a context that emphasizes and indeed exploits their individuality, but pre-determines the outcome in favor of a single, unifying idea, which is to give priority to those shared spaces which constitute the public realm."

The Purchase campus is one of five large State University campuses being developed by the State University Construction Fund, a public benefit corporation. Under the guidance of the late Dr. Anthony Adinolfi, Mr. Drexler says, the Fund's program which has completed 712 projects is the most conspicuously successful university building program in the country.

Barnes' master plan is organized around a paved mall 300 x 900 feet; its long dimension oriented east-west. The two long sides are enclosed by covered arcades, flanked by groves of trees on the mall; buildings are on the north and south sides. The mall, therefore, serves as a pedestal for those buildings which will have the greatest traffic and which, by their function, are areas of common use. Only the location of the buildings (on lots 130 feet wide

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and separated by 32-foot wide pedestrian streets leading away from the arcades out to open fields) and exterior finish (gray-brown brick, gray glass and gray metal trim) were specified; within these limits the independent architectural firms were free to develop their own design concepts. Barnes' master plan also allowed room for future expansion for each building at the back of the site which opens out into rural landscape. His own firm designed the Library, Great Court, Performing Arts Center, Student Activities Center and Gymnasium.

The six architects he nominated to design other campus buildings are: Philip Johnson (Art Gallery); Paul Rudolph (Natural Science); Gwathmey, Henderson & Siegel (Dormitories and Service buildings); Giovanni Pasanella (Dormitories); all from New York; Venturi and Rauch, Philadelphia (Visual Arts - Humanities Building, Social Science); The Architects Collaborative, Cambridge, Mass. (Visual Arts Instructional Facility); and Gunnar Birkerts, Birmingham, Mich. (Dance Instructional Facility). The landscape architect is Peter G. Rolland of Rye, New York. Construction of the Purchase campus started in the fall of 1969. Five buildings are partially completed now and all projected buildings are scheduled to open by 1976.

Campus circulation patterns completely separate pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Service connections and deliveries to all buildings will be handled through tunnels under the arcades flanking the Great Court. Through traffic is routed under the Court and parking lots, which are hidden in downhill locations on each side of the campus. This miniature new city in the middle of 500 acres of meadow and farm land also preserves historical areas, including a pre-Revolutionary cemetery, a tile silo, stone walls and as many trees and rolling meadow land as possible.

"Facades fronting on the arcades can never be seen either in their entirety or in isolation; they are tied to each other by the arcade and are further screened from view by the trees. It is in the side streets, and the oblique perspectives these produce, that the external character of the buildings will be best experienced....

"The arcades and the narrow sites reassert the primacy of the street, which is the dis-

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distinctive experience made possible by a community of buildings. That is why the arcades are an indispensable part of the composition: it is not enough simply to line up the buildings on either side of the mall and front them with rows of trees. The arcades are like the thread which makes it possible to string beads into a necklace. No thread, no necklace: only a handful of beads. The point is worth emphasizing not because it isn't sufficiently obvious, but because elements of an architectural concept that are not purely utilitarian tend to be eroded away by budgetary pressures. It is therefore to be hoped, and urged, that this particular plan will not be rendered inoperative by the last-minute omission of its most vital component....

"Barnes' insistence on the preeminence and stability of the public realm, as distinguished from those areas in which personal preference may be exercised more freely, is also a statement about the meaning of architectural form as it applies to the urban scene. Its separation of vehicular from pedestrian traffic, among other things, is the kind of decision one would expect in a newly planned community unhampered by pre-existing components. But of greater significance is that by avoiding the discredited practice of dispersing buildings all over the landscape, only to leave ill-defined residual spaces between them, Barnes makes an architectural point not yet understood by many urban planners. The Purchase campus, like Thomas Jefferson's University of Virginia, is, after all, the model for an ideal community," Mr. Drexler concludes.

Overall control and management of the planning, design and construction of the \$250-million campus is one of the responsibilities of the State University Construction Fund, which is handling the physical development of more than 30 major campuses and other installations (excluding community colleges) of the State University. The late Anthony G. Adolfini was Manager of Planning for the Fund for six years and General Manager from 1968 until his death in March, 1971. Other major State University campuses being developed by the Fund include the new Amherst campus of the State University of New York at Buffalo, the State University of New York at Stony Brook, the State University College at Old Westbury and a projected new

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college for the Utica-Rome area.

Overall, the Fund's current operations include 284 projects, valued at \$508 million under construction and 33 projects, valued at nearly \$1 billion, in the design stage. In addition are 284 projects already completed worth \$508 million. By 1974, the Fund will have handled a grand total of 2,000 projects valued at some \$4 billion.

The new Purchase college, scheduled to open next September with an initial enrollment of 200, by 1980 will accommodate a student body of 6,000. Some 80 per cent of its students will be enrolled in liberal arts programs at the College of Letters and Science and the remaining 20 per cent in professional programs at the School of the Arts.

Dr. Abbott Kaplan, the college's President and former Associate Dean of Fine Arts at UCLA, heads a distinguished administrator-faculty team currently completing the process of academic planning and faculty recruitment of the new institution. Among them are Gibson A. Danes, Dean of Visual Art, Norris Houghton, Dean of Theater Arts and Bryan Robertson, Director of the Roy R. Neuberger Museum of Visual Arts.

The exhibition at the Museum was installed by Wilson Wright, who also designed the accompanying catalogue.

Additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY 10019. Phone: (212) 956-7501, -7504.