

Harvard Landscape Institute

Fast track fit-out of former hotel ballroom



The Landscape Institute of Arnold Arboretum provides professional education in landscape design, history, and preservation. Formerly sited in borrowed university space, the Institute built a new home in the lower floors of the newly renovated graduate student housing complex, which was designed by JLA. The housing complex was converted from a former hotel whose grand two story ballroom was the raw space to be converted to the Institute.

Program

The client program called for three classrooms of varying sizes, a library, a large lecture classroom, exhibit space and administrative offices. Primary considerations were the lack of natural light, very tight budget and short design and construction schedule – four months from project inception to completion.

Recognition

- 2008 Award for Design Excellence – Citation, AIA/Boston Society of Architects



Design Solution

The project solution called for leaving open clerestory space at the building perimeter in order to allow as much light as possible to penetrate to the glass enclosed interior classrooms at the second level. The glass partitions were arranged in a continuous curve which forms the varying dimensions needed for the classrooms while, at the same time, widening the access balcony to create a lobby/reception area.

The organic curve of the glass partition is the signature element of the space giving a clear identity to the Institute. Its sawtooth plan detail arose out of the integration of horizontally bracing glass fins (normally separate perpendicular elements) with the overall line of the wall. To further highlight the crystalline quality of the glass, the fins were specified in a contrasting green tint with the main vision panels in plain clear glass.

At the ceiling, the existing building's concrete girders, carrying the weight of the housing above, penetrate the glass wall to form the locations of classroom entrances. Between the beams, low-cost wire mesh ceiling panels screen mechanical services while allowing relief from the low second level ceiling heights. The mesh theme was also extended to the enclosure of existing non-code compliant railings.

At the lower level the main lecture classroom takes advantage of the double volume ceiling height and clerestory windows and an exhibit wall runs the length of the blank demising partition. The institute library and study area occupies the remaining lower level space with a renovated free standing stair forming its centerpiece.

In acknowledgement of the limited project budget, mass market Ikea furnishings and light fixtures were used throughout. Library tables were salvaged and refinished.

JLA Role
Design Architect, Architect of Record

Personnel Jonathan Levi FAIA,
Project Designer/Principal-in-Charge; Matthew LaRue AIA,
Project Architect/Manager

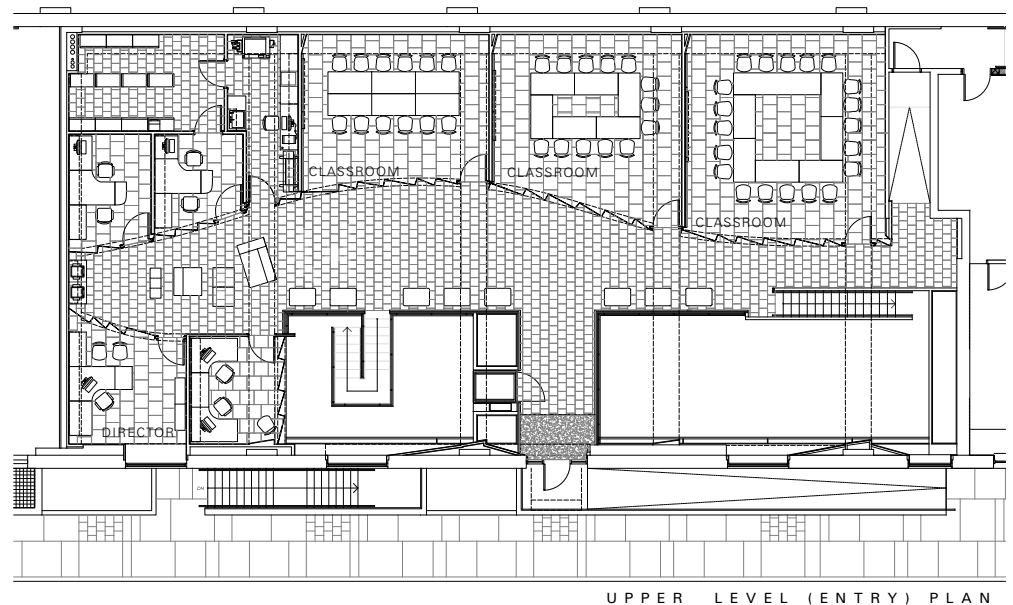
Client The President and Fellows
of Harvard College

Location Cambridge, MA

Size 7,000 sf

Construction Cost \$1,200,000

Fast-track Design & Construction
Complete 4 months project
inception through move-in, 2006



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