

The Arnhold Hall project is the final stage in the conversion of a 19th century former department store to academic use. The building is part of the urban campus of the New School University, and renovations encompass the redesign of the first, mezzanine and second floors. The new spaces will accommodate a cultural center, administrative offices and high visibility student oriented areas.

The new cultural center provides a venue for academic and performing arts events serving the University's culturally diverse student population. The program includes a flexible main hall seating 200 people for lectures, performances and banquets; the university president's meeting room, and gallery space for display of the University's extensive art collection. A focal point of the gallery is a large wall mural by the artist Sol LeWitt adding color and reinforcing the geometry of the spaces.

In keeping with the vision of a center serving all of the schools that make up the University, the building lobby has been renovated and expanded. The enlarged scale and quality of materials used emphasize this building as an important part of the campus. The street level includes a ceremonial staircase leading to the second floor, as well as a second Sol LeWitt mural, making a powerful visual connection between the lobby and the public spaces above.

Renovation of the existing building facade is another important aspect of the project. The original turn of the century stone and cast iron details have been cleaned and restored, and former loading dock bays were transformed into large glazed openings revealing the lobby and student activities within. The new facade also includes an entrance marquee, banners and lighting. In addition to highlighting the presence of the building on the street, these new elements serve as a modern counterpoint to the existing building and provide a strong connection to the newly created public spaces within.



ADDITIONAL TEXT

Vision: The New School seized upon the opportunity to create a new academic center at 55 West 13 Street. Over time, as floors became vacant, we worked with the University to find compatible and synergistic uses to occupy the sturdy loft building. Inspired by the idea of moving toward light as a metaphor for learning and expanding one's horizons, the lower two floors of the building set the tone for new gathering spaces that create energy and excitement. The stairwell that connects the two floors is a light-filled volume of space that elevates and embraces you. The gallery quality spaces you encounter at the upper level speak to the important role of art in the life of the New School University.

That illumination is the culmination of the other spaces developed for New School academic programs including the Jazz program on the fifth floor and the Knowledge Union, two floors above. The multimedia possibilities that computers, film, and music now embody influence new forms of creative experiences for the New School students. Inspired by the requirements to mitigate air and structure borne noise transmission, acoustically isolated spaces occupy the narrow portion of the building footprint while a public performance venue is the heart of the heart of the space. This gathering space is central to the academic program and the social life of the music students, it serves many functions including as a place for master class teaching, rehearsal, performance and broadcast. The palette of neutral tones and warm hues are welcoming to all.

Process: Respectful of the existing structure and core elements, the design was a rigorous examination of fit and function. This extended to each project within the building. As is often the case the space programs included more area than could be accommodated within the existing building footprint. We diligently worked with the various departments to understand the functional requirements, scheduling constraints and furniture layouts to maximize flexibility and multi-use sharing.

Results: The inviting spaces create formal and informal learning activities make these floors a destination for many New School students. We successfully sculpted and organizing the spaces to maximize the functionality of the teaching and gathering spaces. We balanced the code and specialty spaces requirements, with the specialized mechanical, life safety and technology systems to create state of the art learning and teaching spaces. Some of the highlights are:

- Technology enriched work spaces to create multi-media content
- Informal spaces for collaboration
- Technologically enriched teaching spaces
- Acoustically isolated practice rooms
- Acoustically isolate performance space
- New building entrance and lobby
- New executive meeting spaces for University leaders and conferences
- Flexible gallery space for events and display

Arnhold Hall Cultural Center

New York, NY

The New School

Completion 2003

27,000 GSF / 2,500 GSM

Sylvia Smith acted as Partner-in-Charge and Design Partner

Select Publications

Dixon, John Morris. *Urban Spaces, No. 4: The Design of Public Places*. New York: Visual Reference Publications. 2006.

Sommerhoff, Emilie W., "University Hall Cultural Center, New York City." *Architectural Lighting*. September 1, 2004.

Yee, Roger. *Educational Environments No. 3*. New York: Visual Reference Publications. 2007.

The final stage in the conversion of a 19th-century department store to academic use, the project began simply as the design of a cultural center on the second floor. Concerned that the scope did not address some of the objectives that emerged from discussions with the client—notably making the Center a magnet for students and a venue for bringing different academic divisions together—Smith proposed an approach that links the street to the Center, initiating the experience at the front door.

Using light as the connective tissue and metaphor for the role of education in society, Smith makes the transition from daylight to artificial illumination with a backlit panel above the interior entry. Further into the ground floor, she designed a floor-to-ceiling glass wall, illuminated with light pipes and framing the open stair. In the center itself, the ceiling slopes upward from the entry to the large loft windows, returning visitors to natural light. Having persuaded the client of the need for a transitional space outside the center, Smith created a gallery and collaborated with artists Sol LeWitt and Kara Walker to develop installations that enliven the space and engage visitors.

ARNHOLD HALL AT THE NEW SCHOOL



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FIRST FLOOR PLAN

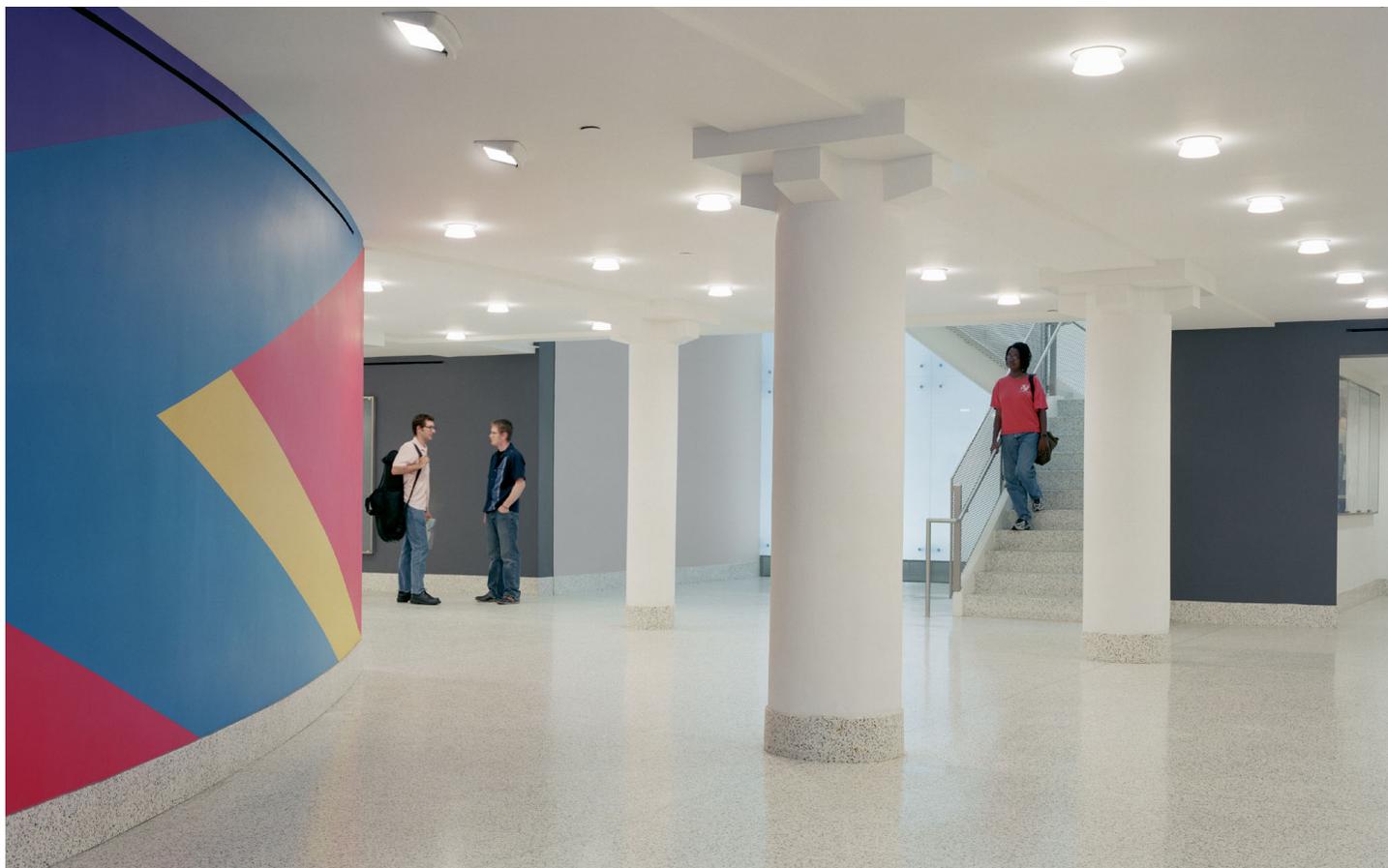
- 1 program space
- 2 lobby
- 3 retail
- 4 storage
- 5 service entry
- 6 security



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

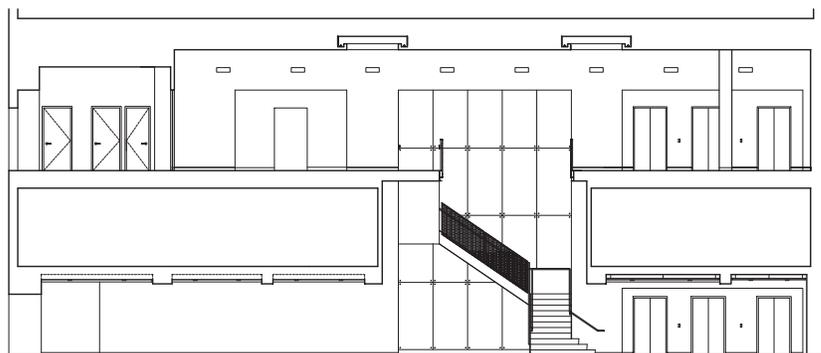
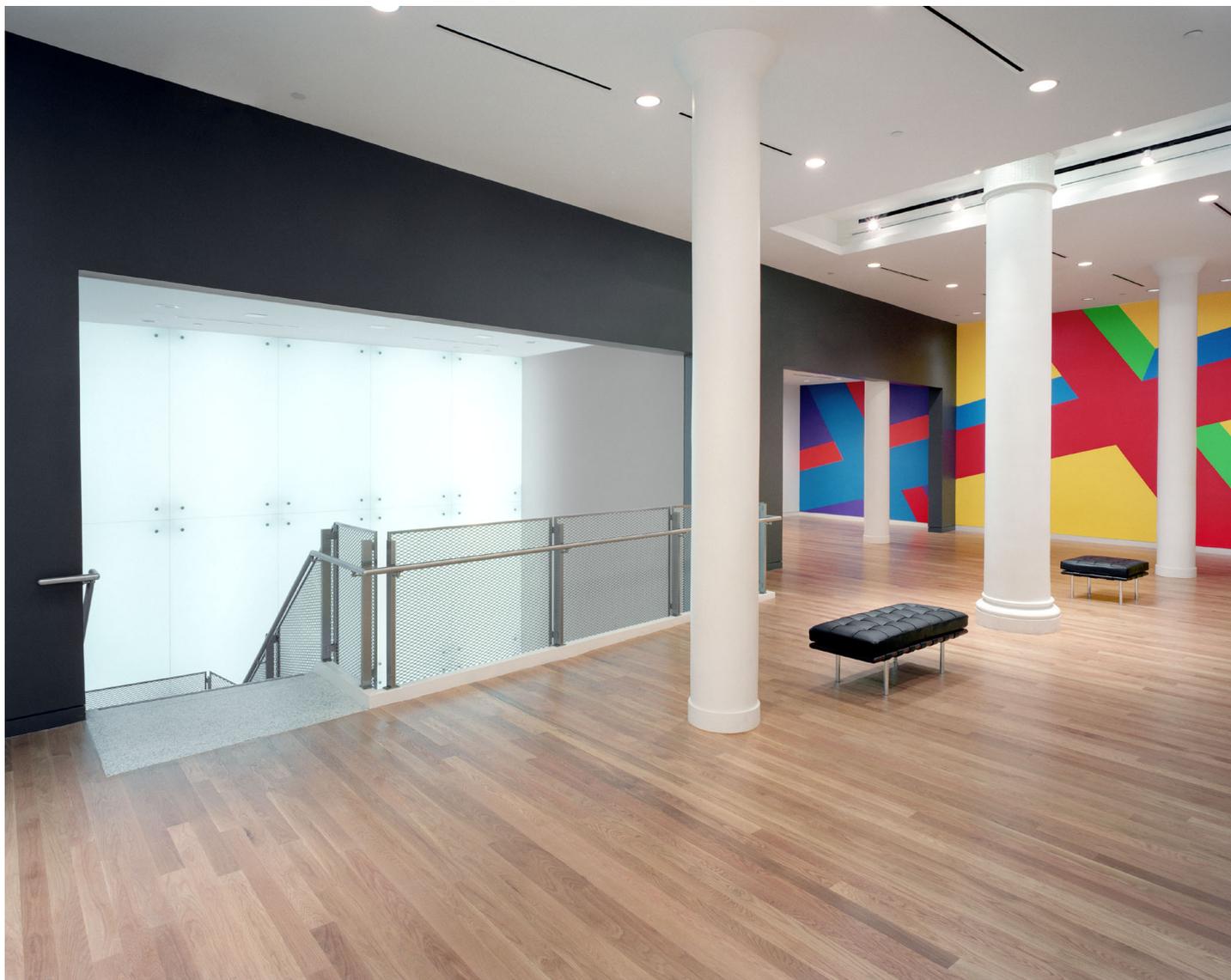
- 7 main hall
- 8 gallery
- 9 executive dining
- 10 pre-function
- 11 kitchen
- 12 elevator lobby
- 13 mechanical
- 14 classroom
- 15 storage
- 16 jc
- 17 I.D.F.

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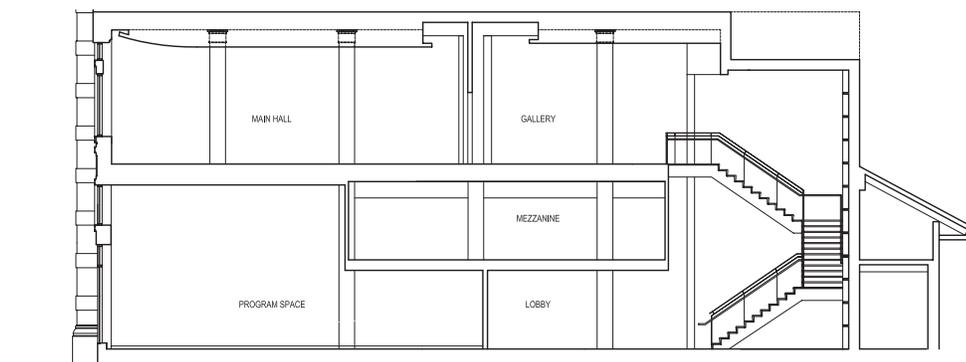
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