

Regilding Goldsmith Hall

Deborah Morris

Goldsmith Hall still appears a bit raw and swollen after a long, troublesome surgery, but is better for having undergone its 27-month expansion/renovation. The initial steps were taken to upgrade and update the 54-year-old Paul Cret building in 1974, when the University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture burst its seams. Then occupying no fewer than six campus buildings, only one of which was designed to accommodate the special needs of design students, the School of Architecture sprawled from the northwest to the southeast ends of the 400-acre campus. The current Goldsmith project is phase two of a three-phase scheme to provide much-needed teaching, research, and administrative space for the school, which has quadrupled its enrollment since the 1930s.

Ten years ago, architects Thomas, Booziotis and Associates, Dallas, and associated architect Chartier Newton, Austin, accepted the challenge of improving a facility dear to many as the cynosure of the UT campus – indeed a challenge, for ostensibly the only place to put an additional 25,000 square feet of building was underground. But seven and a half years later, the three-story addition began to materialize in a virtual crevice between the south wing of the building and the recently renovated Sutton Hall. Today it appears that Goldsmith grew almost naturally into its new profile, in a manner akin to a child filling out a new pair of shoes. Such a comfortable fit was anticipated by few and is considered by Booziotis to be the essence of the project.

The interior space planning was managed with the same ease and grace as was the massing of the building. An additional foyer at the south entrance reinforces the north-south axis and establishes a "through street" along its length. The intersecting south corridor, which hinges the new wing to the old, distinguishes itself on one side by an existing exterior limestone wall and by illumination from lengths of clear-paned skylights above. The disposition of the new building toward the old at once asserts the identity of the structure and a deferential respect for the Cret work.

A conscientious effort was made to restore the spaces of the existing building according to the 1934 design. Reclaiming the original concrete-beam ceilings entailed converting the entire mechanical system from horizontal to vertical



Goldsmith Hall renovation and additions, Thomas Booziotis and Associates, architects, Chartier Newton, associated architect, 1988.

distribution. Cret's use of fanciful stencils to animate the beams, the themes for which were provided by students, was preserved in the old building and carried over to the new, affirming the gregarious nature of the foyers and meeting places so embellished.



Second-floor corridor, Goldsmith Hall.

New to the school are a fully outfitted teaching workshop and printmaking facility, a sunny, commodious student lounge and reading room, an audiovisual classroom (an acoustical marvel designed with the collaboration of David A. Nibbelin, Fort Worth), a new exhibition hall, a preservation lab, and adequate review space.

In contrast to the renovation's fluid and comprehensible spatial organization one finds, at points, a somewhat garbled language of details and finishing mate-

rials – an index, perhaps, of hasty decision-making and lost momentum in the final stages of a project during which work was abruptly and mysteriously halted for an entire year. But the slate and hardwood floors, plaster walls, limestone facings, and clay tile roofs, inherited from the original Goldsmith Hall, represent a commitment to longevity rarely observed in building today.

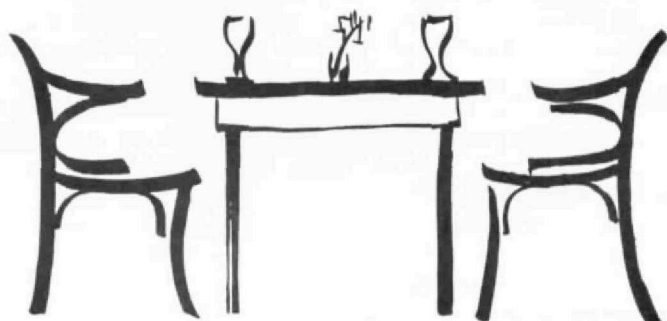
Visitors to the School of Architecture will not take every turn in breathless anticipation of the next architectural surprise, nor are they likely to gauge their response in aesthetic revelations per second. They will, however, experience a modest but confident building whose essential purpose is clear and whose sense of propriety and restraint is altogether admirable. ■



Third-floor corridor, Goldsmith Hall.

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