

Metal mag

Spring 2016

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Art Project

CONNECTING THE CLASSIC
WITH THE MODERN IN A
PENNSYLVANIA ART MUSEUM.

BLAND TO GRAND

How an abandoned
grocery store
became a national
model for university
partnerships.

SUSQUEHANNA ART MUSEUM

Art Project

Connecting the classic with the modern in a Pennsylvania art museum required a creative approach.

BY HENRY BURKE

Art is a vital element in the tapestry of any society's culture. How we celebrate and share art is reflective of who we are as a society. As President Lyndon Johnson once said, "Art is a nation's most precious heritage. For it is in our works of art that we reveal to ourselves and to others the inner vision which guides us as a nation."

In the late 1980s, a group of arts educators and community leaders in Pennsylvania came together with the vision for an art museum in their state's capital.

The group wanted to enhance the cultural identity of the state.

Their dream drove a dedicated group of volunteers to found the Susquehanna Art Museum (SAM) in Harrisburg in 1989.



Susquehanna Art Museum Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Architect: EwingCole
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

General Contractor: JEM Group
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Dealer/Installer: Hershocks, Inc.
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

CENTRIA Products:

Formawall® Dimension Series® 3"-T
Vertical; Champagne Bronze; 4"
Reveals in Off White; 1,971 square feet

Formawall Dimension Series 3"-T
Vertical; Limestone; 4" Reveals in Off
White; 1,276 square feet

Formawall Dimension Series 3"-T
Vertical; Light Seawolf; 4" Reveals in
Rich Black; 614 square feet

Formawall Dimension Series DS-60
2" Vertical; Light Seawolf;
362 square feet

Versawall® Vertical;
Light Seawolf;
2,310 square feet

For many years, SAM functioned without a permanent home, but that finally changed with the opening of the new Susquehanna Art Museum in January 2015. The 18,500-square-foot museum is anchored in a renovated bank building with a newly constructed metal-clad addition.

The 10,000-square-foot addition houses a new 4,000-square-foot gallery designed for paintings, prints, and sculpture, says Don M. Jones, FAIA, LEED BD+C, principal and director of sustainable design with design firm EwingCole. Jones was designer and project manager on the Susquehanna Art Museum project. The restored bank building has flexible exhibition space, a gift shop, and a children's activity area in the bank's hall and vault, in addition to offices and storage.

Building Brush Strokes

The dream of a permanent home for SAM had long been percolating but started gaining real momentum in 2010. "We had been working with a SAM board member, Andrew Gior-gione, for some time to develop the possibility of a permanent home for the museum," Jones recalls. "Late in 2010, the prospect of purchasing the vacant 1920s Keystone Bank building and adding a modern gallery led the SAM board to engage EwingCole in the design. When grants and private funding were assured, we started work in earnest. Construction took place in 2014 and the museum opened in 2015."

With a permanent home for the museum finally in reach, dedicated SAM supporters did everything they could to move the project along smoothly and efficiently. "The SAM building committee met with us as often as needed to make planning and design decisions, and took on the tasks needed to free EwingCole and the general contractor [JEM Group] from items beyond our control," Jones says. "That saved construction and design costs."

Blending New and Old

The design team needed to create a strategy to deal with combining the form and function of an old bank building with the newly built addition. "We wanted the Keystone building to be the focus of the exterior and the point of entry to the museum," Jones says. "Accordingly, the addition has a neutral color palette and complements the neoclassical bank building with a sleek, contemporary aesthetic. We used robust, straightforward materials for the exterior, combining them in an extraordinary way."

“The museum has inspired visitors of all ages in the Harrisburg community, weaving itself into the cultural tapestry of Pennsylvania.”

A metal exterior skin enabled the project team to achieve the unique aesthetic, without sacrificing performance or running up the budget. "We used CENTRIA Formawall® and Versawall® insulated metal panels for their ease and simplicity. Using a row of single vertical panels with integral insulation, we created a two-story R-20 wall," Jones says. "CENTRIA worked with us as we developed a pattern of varying widths and depths to create an abstraction of the light and shadow of the neoclassical bank building. This very economical system was erected quickly and accomplished exactly what we intended aesthetically and technically."

Working with a combination of materials on the exterior presented some challenges. "Since the 28-foot-tall vertical wall panels span from a masonry base to the parapet, we had to pay attention to the differential vertical expression of the building structure and skin," Jones says. "We developed connection details at the second floor and roof slabs, which allow the two systems to move independently. We created a pattern of varying widths and thicknesses of panels using standard widths, slightly modified, to achieve the effect we wanted."

A team approach, involving the designer as well as the general contractor, JEM Group, the dealer/installer, Hershocks, Inc., and the manufacturer, helped everything come together and perform as hoped. "Our good friend Bob Sterling at CENTRIA was there to help us from schematic design to project closeout," Jones says. "Bob helped us create the panel system and offered suggestions for improvements along the way." As a longtime district sales manager at CENTRIA, Sterling is more than familiar with the product capabilities and advantages.

The museum has inspired visitors of all ages in the Harrisburg community, weaving itself into the cultural tapestry of Pennsylvania. The museum and the local AIA chapter mounted an exhibition called "Toward an Old/New Architecture," which featured SAM prominently. "Susquehanna Art Museum is an anchor for Harrisburg's emerging Midtown neighborhood," Jones says, "and a big success for the state." The design team's imaginative approach is an ideal match for a museum that fosters cultural connection and creative exploration.



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