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Historical Overview

The Andy Warhol Museum, architecturally no less than institutionally, is an engaging hybrid that simultaneously represents the hottest trend in museum design---the conversion of industrial buildings into exhibition galleries---and reinvigorates the more venerable typologies of *Kunstkammer* and purpose-built ideal museum. Its architect, Richard Gluckman, has knowingly formed into a functional and expressive synthesis these divergent approaches to the display of, and instruction about, works of art.

That the museum has been established in the former Frick & Lindsay warehouse, built in 1911 as a distribution center for products sold to mills and mines, is a spectacularly fitting trope. A setting that still bears the imprint of its industrial origins provides an ideal showcase for works by the artist who proclaimed one of his studios “the Factory” and exploited techniques of mass production in the service of his multifaceted art. Indeed, many of the objects made by Warhol and his cohorts have already been shown in comparable settings, and they will reside familiarly, if provocatively, at 117 Sandusky Street, across the bridge from downtown Pittsburgh.

The Pittsburgh location seems preordained not only by its identification as Warhol’s birthplace, but by the city’s emergence as a center for current cultural manifestations. Carnegie Institute, established in 1895, is one of the sponsors of The Warhol, and its traditionally diverse programs and collections, which span science, music, and literature as well as art, adumbrated the tendencies seen since the 1950s in the practice of Warhol and many other artists, to break down or transcend the disciplinary barriers. Furthermore, held under the auspices of the

Carnegie Museum of Art are the tri-annual Carnegie Internationals, which offer local and visiting audiences tantalizing encounters with the most recent artistic movements.

Converted industrial structures have become an extremely popular venue amongst artistic institutions due to a wealth of practical reasons. Not only is it less expensive to start with an existing building on its own site---even though renovation work that includes the creation of a climate-controlled environment especially geared to often fragile works of art can raise the budget substantially---but maintenance costs tend to be lower. These buildings were usually built tough and strong to withstand abuse from machines and sustain heavy loads. Many of them have structural skeletons of metal and/or reinforced concrete, which permitted generous spaces that once superbly accommodated manufacturing and warehouse functions and now can accommodate extensive installations. Many come already equipped with skylights, one of the distinguishing features of the classic museum building. Their outer walls are usually brick or, as in the case of The Warhol, glazed terra-cotta, materials that in out noxious environment can better withstand soot and smog than can the stone-clad walls that tend to come with the territory of much museum design, old and new.

At The Warhol, as elsewhere, the architecture is also at the service of the art, but Gluckman has had more opportunity to assert himself. He has made bold transformations within the existing 73, 000 square foot, seven-story building, and has designed a 15, 000 square foot, three-level addition at the rear.

While the existing structure always makes its presence felt, it has been manipulated to provide a desirable variety of galleries for the diverse works that will be on display. Through the provision of new walls, exhibitions spaces are given different proportions to maximize flexibility, and at the fifth level, floors have been partially removed to create double height spaces. The unbroken, wall-

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to-wall galleries have been exchanged for intimately scaled rooms, and large galleries on the second and seventh floors are 50 feet in width by 80 feet in length.

A richer palette of materials and hues also distinguishes The Warhol from Gluckman's previous work. Buff colored fiber MDF board, cobalt blue and cherry wood furniture and gleaming aluminum play against the concrete frame and white walls. Circulation spaces are set off by color and texture, and a sophisticated system of signage clearly identifies the various materials on display on each floor. There are no galleries at below ground level, where the coffee shop and education departments are located, or on the third floor, where visitors can consult The Warhol archives in a comfortable research and reading room. Not all of the furnishings are custom-made; classic chairs and tables from other eras intermingle with Gluckman's built-in pieces, contributing liveliness and informality to the ensemble and realizing Warhol's intuition that "department stores are kind of like museums."

A grand stairway has been inserted at the southern end of the building, and visitors are encouraged to take the elevator to the top story and walk down; there is a measured cadence to the experience. The stair has elegant metal railings and is lighted by a wide window that climbs the full height of the original structure and matches in detail the fenestration of the new addition at the rear.

The addition shelters the elevators, the theater---fitted out with tubular steel seats clad in brilliant green fabric, designed by Bauhaus-trained designer Marcel Breuer for a theater in France in 1931, and the administrative offices. Gluckman's solution for the exterior was to pick up the materials and colors of the existing wings, which at the back and side are faced with brick in subtly varying blond hues. He has treated the surfaces in a frankly modernist way, so that while the new is sympathetic to the old, it is also distinguishable.

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This is also true in the handling of the main façade and the ground floor behind the entrance. A clear boundary separates the exterior frame and the interior interventions, for Gluckman has excavated a two-story narrow volume immediately behind the street elevation. Although the original windows survive here, they do not give a view into a ground floor commercial space, as formerly, but disclose a surface that carries museum message for passersby. The public areas in the basement also benefit, as they receive light filtering down this slot. The entrance hall narrows as one penetrates the museum, all the more to dramatize the sudden release of space encountered in the first exhibition gallery, where Warhol's huge self-portraits are hung. This area thus becomes a memorial reminiscent of some nineteenth century European single-artist museums that enshrine the dedicatee.

Unlike a rather self-effacing brick warehouse, this Pittsburgh museum is garbed resplendently in cream-colored glazed terra-cotta on its two street facades. Terra-cotta as a facing material became very popular at the turn of the century, not only for its decorative beauty but for the possibilities of self-cleaning it offered; Pittsburgh is endowed with a number of buildings similarly clad. In these facades the structure is expressed but also framed at the sides and on the top, so that the open-ended character of the grid is repressed to suggest completeness and integrity; the composition is typical of Beaux Arts practice. Although little is known about the background of the original architect, W.G. Wilkens, he was responsible for a Beaux Arts office block in Pittsburgh, the Maul Building at 1700 East Carson Street, on the South Side.

All in all, the restored building represents a uniquely American solution to commercial and industrial design in a downtown area. Moreover, the architecture provides a fitting emblem of the uniquely American contribution of Warhol himself. One suspects the artists would have appreciated the mingling of

the commercial and the museological, the popular and the elite, the confrontation of the sturdy concrete frame with the exquisite facades, the maintenance of existing materials and spaces and the introduction of new ones.

The most recent and, thus far one of the largest, of these celebrated conversions, The Warhol will not be the last of these exciting hybrids.

Architect's Statement

Situated near Pittsburgh's downtown business and cultural districts, The Warhol is housed in a renovated industrial warehouse built between 1911 and 1922. To accommodate the programs of The Warhol, the eight floor, 73,000 square foot building has been enlarged by a 15, 000 square foot addition to its southwest corner. The project contains 35,000 square feet of exhibitions space, a 110-seat theater, art storage facilities, an Archives Study Center and archives storage, an education department with space for art activities, a coffee shop, and a museum shop.

A rich palette of colors and materials was employed throughout the building to provide contrast with the white walls of the galleries. When entering the museum, the visitor moves into an entry characterized by its forced perspective, aluminum-leaf ceiling and deep blue plaster walls.

The museum-goer traverses a bridge marking the transition from the historic exterior to the renovated interior, allegorically connecting the museum's two functions: a permanent repository of the artist's works, and an active place to study his enduring influence on contemporary art.