

2004 AIA HONOR AWARDS FOR INTERIORS

Project

Carol & Carl Montante Cultural Center
Buffalo, N.Y.

Architects

Cannon Design
Grand Island, N.Y.

Owner

Canisius College
Buffalo, N.Y.



Photo Credit: Timothy Wilkes

Notes of Interest

Dedicated in 1926, this 20,000 square foot decommissioned church is an historic Buffalo landmark. The registered building is a rare example of Byzantine-Lombardic architecture in the United States, as is the Gustavino-tiled dome on the interior of the Center. While preserving the form and architectural integrity of the church, the renovation transformed the building into a cultural center on a 2,500-student liberal arts college campus.

The program called for a 600-seat, multipurpose space suitable for a variety of performance types, including lectures, plays, concerts, and multimedia presentations. Additional space for small performances, meetings, receptions and lectures was also desired. Infrastructure systems were in need of upgrades for contemporary uses; and most importantly, the acoustics of the space – historically, very poor – needed to meet the performance criteria of this \$3.4 million, multiple-use facility.

The challenge was to introduce sound-reflecting surfaces within the domed volume, while preserving the view of the striking mosaics and architectural details. The solution led to the overall concept of establishing new constructed pieces as an “insertion” within the existing, undisturbed fabric of the building. Forms and materials of the new are articulated in a clean and simple manner. The exterior has been cleaned and re-pointed with additional landscaping and a new balcony at the front, serving to highlight the formal entry, and a dedication wall for the primary donor.

Jury Comments

“The respect for the original architecture is clear... The technology is inserted and does not destroy the original building... The lightness of the gesture helps to create the soaring feeling in the space... The technology becomes the new ornament in an old ornamented space.”

Additional Credits

Engineer

Cannon Design
Grand Island, N.Y.

General Contractor

Ciminelli-Cowper Co., Inc.
Buffalo, N.Y.