

A Step Up for an Architecture Program

Serving the needs of students is one thing. Making a strong architectural statement as a program's add-on is sure to bring lots of national attention to any educational institution. Chicago's IIT was in the doldrums before it staged the Student Center competition won by Rem Koolhaas. Once that building was finished, enrollment in the architectural program there rose from 300+ students to 900! As a state university, Kent State would not envision such a dramatic increase in student enrollment, as the competition they recently staged for a new building to house their architecture program has its spatial limitations. However, as a byproduct, one may anticipate that a remarkable new building will undoubtedly result in more competition for those spaces.

As a program in close proximity to the Cleveland metropolitan area, the Kent State architecture program's mission is, at least tangentially, furnished with a range of urban issues—there is no scarcity of those in Cleveland. One of the resulting outcomes of this connection has been the establishment of The Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative (CUDC, a combined effort of the graduate program at Kent State and the public service activities of the College of Architecture and Environmental Design. One of their primary activities has been the sponsorship of the Cleveland Design Competitions, focusing on subjects, remarkable for their diversity, such as schools, rail connections, and abandoned bridges. So a competition for a new building for the College of Architecture and Environmental Design might well be viewed in this context.

An initial request for Expressions of Interest resulted in a significant response. Thirty-seven firms furnished portfolios to the client, and, of these, eight were shortlisted for a second round of questions:

- Bialosky + Partners Architects, LLC | Architecture Research Office (ARO)
- Bohlin Cywinski Jackson | SoL Harris/Day Architecture
- KZF Design with Morphosis
- NBBJ, Columbus, Ohio office
- Richard L. Bowen + Associates | Weiss/Manfredi
- The Collaborative, Inc. | Miller Hull Partnership
- Westlake Reed Leskosky, Ltd.
- WTW Architects with Overland Partners Architects

On November 19, 2012, the university selection committee narrowed the field down to four finalists, who were to receive a stipend for competing in the competition:

- Bialosky + Partners Architects, with offices in New York and Cleveland, in association with Architecture Research Office (ARO) of New York
- Richard L. Bowen + Associates Inc. of Cleveland in association with Weiss/Manfredi of New York
- The Collaborative Inc. of Toledo, Ohio, in association with the Miller Hull Partnership of Seattle
- Westlake Reed Leskosky with offices in Cleveland and four other cities

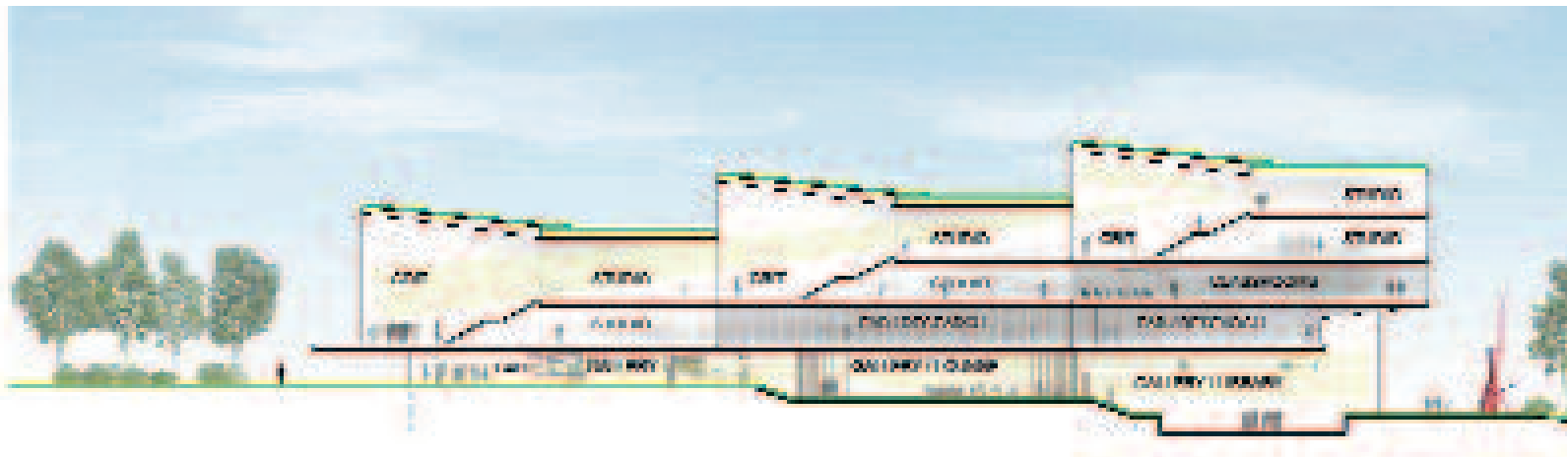
It is notable that the list included only one stand-alone firm as lead designers from Ohio to compete against two New York firms, Weiss/Manfredi and The Architecture Research Office (ARO), and the Seattle-based firm, Miller Hull Partnership. Moreover, a lot of "star" architects were passed over for the job. This is not an unusual strategy by a sophisticated client, as they may often suspect that the 'second team' may be in charge of the project—although we had no indication here that this factored into their decision in this case.

Recent architecture school designs have relied heavily on large, open spaces to accommodate all class studio levels—most notably at Florida International (Bernard Tschumi) and Ohio State University (Mac Scogin Merrill Elam). Faculties in those programs have suggested that such an arrangement leads to more interaction among instructors. Here, the four finalists came up with different approaches to the design challenge. Whereas three of the finalists relied on the tried and true "street" solution (in three different variations), one finalist chose a more scattered approach. In the end, the Weiss/Manfredi – Richard L. Bowen team prevailed and won the right to negotiate for a commission.



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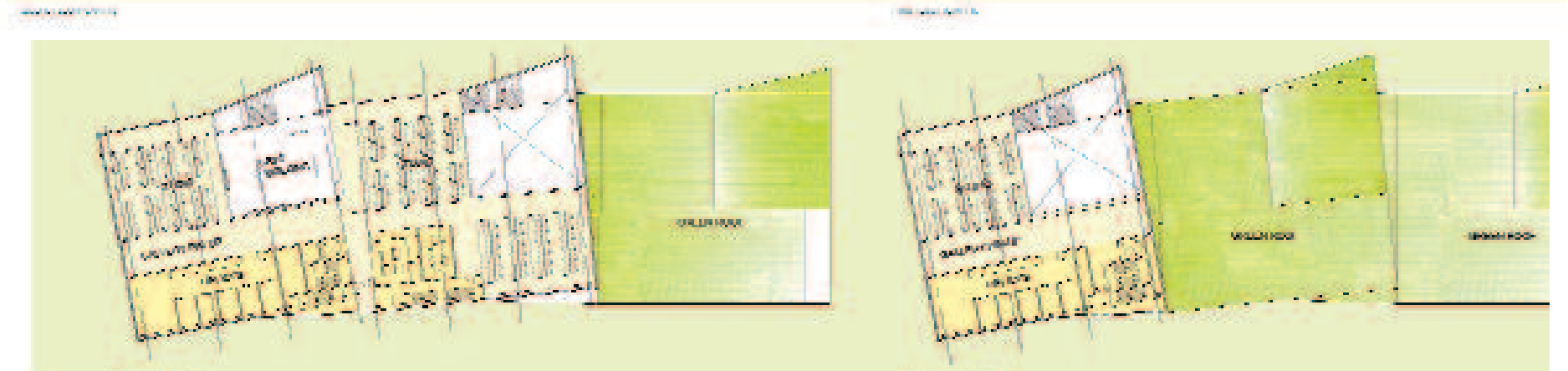
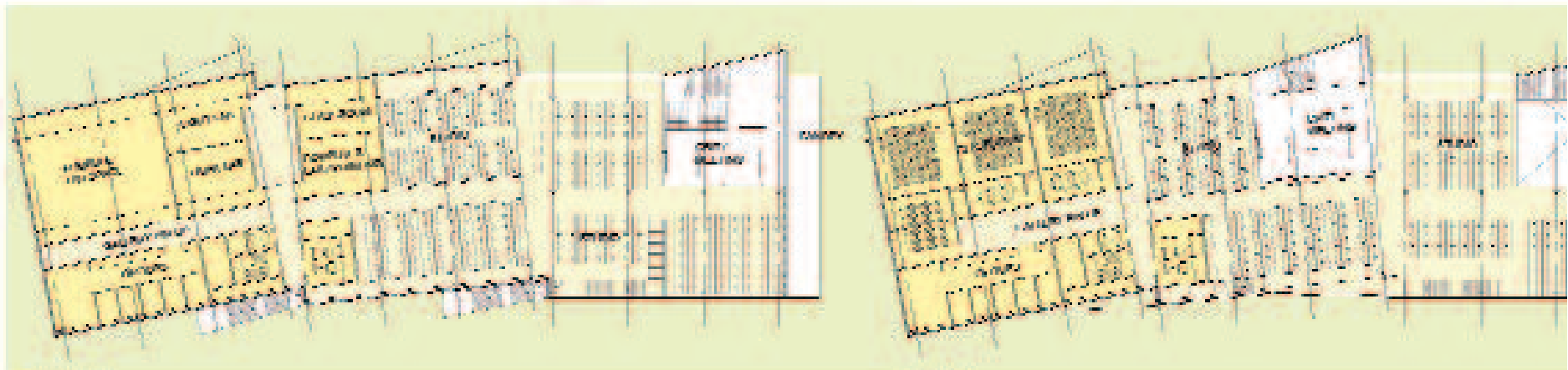
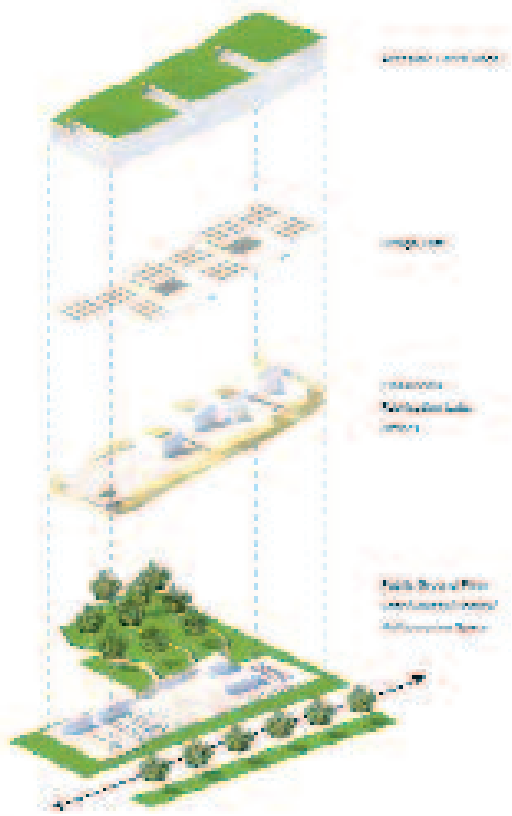
The Winning Design

The 'Design Loft' entry by Marion Weiss and Michael Manfredi featured a tiered solution, whereby a continuous stairway serves as a link to all of the studio levels and crit areas on the north side of the building. This might be interpreted as an aboveground variation of the Pompidou Center's rising, connecting system served by escalators on the exterior. The authors describe this as a "vertical campus quad, interweaving the spaces of the building into those of the campus." Their open plate concept is intended to encourage more dialogue between the different year levels. Given that the school is now located in three different locations, better communication is a certainty, and the open-plate system would seem to encourage dialogue.

Located at the edge of campus, as a link between the university and

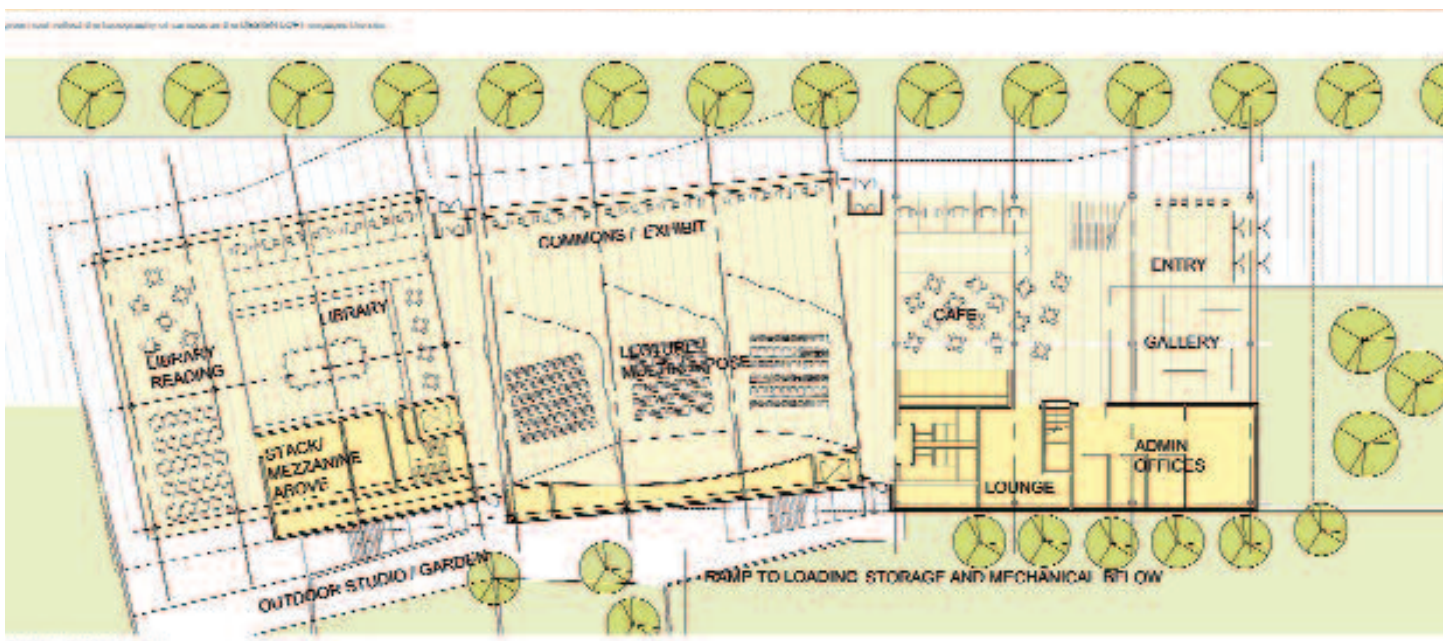
the city, the building can serve as a significant campus arrival feature. In this, it would seem to have outshined its competitors. Its transparency is one of its greatest assets, suggesting to the visitor that the campus is a place for open dialogue and cross-pollination.

The existence of what appears to be an open library/resource area may be problematic, even with an isolated reading area. Such facilities, even in schools of architecture, are normally relegated to a secluded existence within those buildings, usually on the top floor (Ohio State University and the University of New Mexico). Students sometimes require an island for contemplation, apart from the hustle and bustle of the school's environment. Also, many books have to be placed on reserve, and one wonders how that will be handled. -Ed



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ART | STATE COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL
 Architecture | Institute of Buenos Aires



Winning Design

**Richard L. Bowen +
Associates I
Weiss/Manfredi**
Cleveland, Ohio/
New York, NY

ABOVE
Axonometric perspective
LEFT AND OPPOSITE PAGE, BELOW
Floor plans
OPPOSITE, ABOVE, LEFT
Exploded diagram
OPPOSITE, ABOVE, RIGHT
Interior view to crit area