

Birmingham, Michigan August 25, 1964
At residence of Lydia K. Winston

Notes on conference concerning proposed Visual Arts Building and Art Gallery at Bennington College.

Present were: Paul Feeley, Bennington College Faculty, — Chairman, Art Policy Committee
Lionel Novak, Bennington College Faculty, Music Dept.
Joseph Wehrer, University of Michigan, Architectural Design Faculty.
Lydia K. Winston, Trustee, — Chairman Art Policy Committee

Code: F - Feeley
N - Novak
W - Wehrer
L - Lydia Winston

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L to W - You have reviewed the reports of individual members of the Art Policy Committee (faculty and trustee) who made the tour of New Haven and the Boston areas to observe recent art centers and galleries. This tour was made to aid the Committee in resolving a program for Bennington's proposed Art Buildings.

Following these reports you have also read the revised document: Art Education At Bennington - August 1964, which aims at an explanation of Bennington's needs in terms of educational philosophy and following a program of space needs. When complete, a report of this nature will be given to the Trustees for study and recommendation.

The question of flexible uncommitted space seems to be one of the principal questions. How does one define flexible space when specific needs are spelled out as found in this document? What are your suggestions?

W - In reviewing the document, Art and Education At Bennington, there are bridges to be worked out. The objectives are slightly unstated. A little more precise definition. Focus on differences are easier to articulate. What is different in Bennington's art education approach?

Don't let architect hide behind technical knowledge. Picture you must give should not be physical but a clear abstraction. You have to decide what constitutes success.

L - What constitutes a building program? Do you have in this document a convincing program for the Trustees and for the architect?

W - Role at one art school quite different from others. Consider what the Bennington program does to all students and community. Should have spaces in a certain place: -

W -

Work)	
(Study meeting - students)	Meeting in a certain way.
(Faculty)	
(Faculty and student)	

Performance space is more highly automated. Boiling down of objectives becomes deeper and deeper for architect and committee. Who are going to be involved, equipment, etc. Spell out activities in terms of activity.

F - Get rid of postcard effect. Barn or factory space, no special image imposed on the architect.

W - Non-precious activity and diversity should take everything. You should not minimize your needs.

Wohnus on site plan. Maybe it is time to scrap the original axis and open up the site plan.

The above notes were taken by Lydia Winston at meeting before 10:30 a.m. Taken thereafter by Jane Hickey.

- W - Educational goals. Most helpful to architect. Formulate abstract structure, staying away from architect's realization.
- L - At first a question whether they wanted a quick educational goal to present to the public for fund raising. Not what they want now, but to define what is the opportunity in studying the arts at Bennington in terms of its educational philosophy and following to spell out space needs, then translated into dollars. The most economical solution for their needs.
- W - Architect would appreciate a clear guide on which he could work with - something specific! Architect should work toward Bennington's goal - needs, objectives; - more precise definitions. Focus a difference between Bennington's needs and other schools.
- F - The Eastern architectural tour all effected them in various negative ways according to reports submitted.
- L - Can't blame the architect if he is not presented with proper definitions, needs, etc.
- W - Bennington should establish good relationship with the architect. Have definite needs and plans. Architect should not neglect Bennington's needs. Picture clear abstract relationship of buildings, apply standards required by Bennington.
- L - What in the eyes of the architect constitutes a good program?
- W - Educational objective. Art activity at Bennington. Role at an art school. What does it do to the community? Is it unique? Nature of teaching. To carry on a program to accomplish this. Meeting of students. Faculty meet and contact students, etc. Bennington requires such space to carry out these special activities - the definite departments... Show paintings and sculpture - what objectives for this activity? Forcing yourself into a short and abstract objective - boiling down of your requirements - space, etc. Indicate quality of space. As touched on in report. People - space - quantity of space - specific kind of like space. Barn like - factory like...
- F - I realize: - don't get requirements too specific - more general. Picture postcard effect of art -- fault of most museums. Project image of art at school. Building should show what students are doing - not a pretty picture for a building. Work should be there.
- L - Factory in space. Barn gives kind of space.
- W - Report states: Not hiding student work. Exhibiting it as it is represented. State to architect this is what is needed, suggested.
- F - Read report of Wohnus, of Science Dept. at Bennington. Considers it an expensive plan. Roads re-routed, etc.
- W - Site plan is a real restriction on it. Old campus - future needs can go off in any direction. Internal function requires new space.
- F - Very disturbing.

- W - In growth of new Visual Arts Building are certain pressures in new site plan. Perhaps it is time to scrap the original axis and open up new site plan. Can you open up the pond to the old campus?
- F & N - Beautiful and unique pond - has possibilities.
- F - Can do anything you want with roads.
- W - In new site plan you have a formalistic plan with an informal setting - do not need to carry on formal plan. Visual Arts Building near what? A new building? Should it be injected among students or in woods - remote from them? To be ready to shift with activity. Only taken care of three important buildings. Planning Committee should impress on site planners what their need really is.
- F - Roads are unimportant.
- N - Point report makes are good. You have to assert your needs.
- F - Should make things clear right now.
- W - Can accept and reject plan - and then give site which is not good. You want building located where other activities are entered into.
- F - Museum and Art Building should be separate.
- L - It should serve the entire college, but should consider the Bennington City and world community too. Exhibits should attract the public - as should the theatre - dance and music, etc.
- F - Agrees with this. Museum in respect should serve function of interest. Art Building is only for student work. Not in same category as Museum. Student work has not come up to high standards of usual artists, etc. Two buildings give image of what you believe. Could be adjacent to each other. Enterprises are viewed closely. Museum not like function of Art Building.
- W - Solution - Bennington view of art operation is extremely private - Towns- men, etc., cannot penetrate this. Private and public interest. A barrier here.
- F - No question that the Carpenter Center is viewed with public in mind.
- L - A gallery incorporated with student work shop. - Would exclude students working in other fields. A gallery should have same entity - in order that its program can be accessible to a wide group - students - professionals and public.
- F - A subtle line. Space available now - college dorm rooms. Objections to some work hanging now. Public has right to object to some of the art, etc. He agrees with public. Approves of galleries for private view, but public has the right to object.
- W - Art Building could have constant work on view. Students can hang their work in their work space. Function of building itself denotes that it is an art building.

- F - Agrees with Wehrer. Corridor art - as in Chase Manhattan Bank - Middle class art carried into decor.
- W - A big problem of students defacing art decor of these buildings.
- F - Problem of maintenance - problem of defacing walls - should be changed.
- W - Museum maintenance - to eliminate the cost could use new materials, less expensive than plaster walls. Impermanent materials attached to solid walls. Student could take home a part of the surface of impermanent wall.
- F - In the normal tradition of school life - type of subjects taught you don't have these same problems as you do when art is brought in.
- W - If you can establish it as an educational requirement, student should have respect for property of school - walls, floors, etc.
- F - High maintenance will continue as long as you have art students. It is all very subversive. Gallery walls - hanging destroys the walls, beaver board, etc. Inclination to be subversive about walls. Do what they see fit at the time instead of hassling over it.
- W - Bennington walls a different problem. Clarify at beginning and tell architect not to put up precious walls.
- W - Flexibility again - helpful to architect, spacial flexibility. Visual and audio privacy. Flexibility.
- F - Teachers have reputation of being repetitious. Contributes to embarrassment. All being overheard. Repetition in teaching.
- W - Accoustical privacy needed. Perhaps of a moderate visual break. Could have a re-usable system as at U. of Michigan. Cost of flexibility. Face up to how many changes to be made in a specific time. Variety of spaces. Ceramic studio with its dirt and dust not to be in other class room areas. Sculpture studios with noise and dirt should be in other areas too. General studio spaces. What is system. Large classes - small groups? Re-evaluate organization. Choice may be open to you. Small work space for each student, different. Should have space to be flexible. Can we add more space? Can architect help?
- F - Architect didn't seem to carry out client's help. Pretty aesthetic. Client did have a good program to be presented. After building was finished school tried to rent space elsewhere. (New Haven) Unclear ideas in the first place.
- W - Architect wants to get teeth into something. Bennington can give architect a good concept of what you want. Architect can see what you want. Most architects start with vague idea from client. Cannot really meet needs.
- F - Yale building - Rudolph was free to express his c.B. DeMille ideas!! Barnes started to do buildings at Bennington. Site plan, etc.
- W - Architect should arrive at design function. Yale wanted building at expense of function. Cart before horse idea.

- W - All kinds of lousey architects. Inadequate programs for schools, etc. Client should give ideas to architect and he should perform this function in a good way. State architects good example of this type of architect.
- F - Architect is responsible for his design.
- W - Art aspect of architect is at end. Must solve problems to fit our times. Architects responsibilities are great compared with painter or sculptor. The great form givers - F. L. Wright, Mies Van der Rohe. Significant architects are ones who use tools of science, etc.
- F - Architect may no longer be sculptor, as sculptors are more architectural sculptors.
My first interest in architecture was my worship of F. L. Wright. Worshiped him as an artist. One of difficulties is not to produce things in which he can be free because of space, etc. Site plan. T. Smith built crazy building at Bennington. A mad structure! To get things at Bennington is to put up real structural things. Can architect do this? A painter can do any work he pleases.
- W - Just wrote a proposal for a new art theatre building at U. Of Michigan. To work with the architect, ideas on paper, etc. Architect is more than visual, models made to translate ideas to client. Laboratory to demonstrate as a back stage of theatre, lite, space, etc.
- W - Every line made immediate feed back. Equal spaces not made equal
Experience - make mistakes, etc. - trial and error.
- F - Architect to serve great role. Structure to go up, but not stick people.
- N - You have a life laboratory for architect. Problems of music same as architect's in trying out and experimenting.
- F - Concrete ideas at Bennington take space. Wonder about site plan.
- W - If you give a student studio he knows what he can work on. Space dictates his work.
- L - We noticed this on our tour; - the kind of work observed appeared to be the result of the working space (example, Brandeis and Wellesly, small, confined and traditional work).
- W - Space in sculpture studio dictated work at University of Michigan.
- F - Authorities worry large sculpture injuring students, etc. - falling on them or catching on them, etc., because of lack of proper space.
- F - His reaction on site plan: 1. Ease up on symmetricality and formality.
2. Don't build structures that are fixed - to be flexible changes - openness. Fusion of physical form and uses of building.
- L - At the N. Y. meeting it was stated that the college enrollment is not to go beyond 600 students.
- W - If true, you have a compactness. Ways of relating spaces in relation to other buildings. Should emphasize spirit of change in growth, regardless of number of students.

- F - Very true. Difference between painting on floor and on easels. Large paintings changed everything. Many reasons to change space.
- L - With limitation for needs in site plan. Why not use meadow?
- F - Just a great open space.
- W - The two are compatible.
- L - If art center is located near one group of dormitories all students would live near it. Bennington does not want this.
- W - This is somewhat relative.
- F - Doesn't amount to anything.
- N - Not important - this segregation.
- F - Doesn't work this way.
- W - Are students entered as art students?
- F - A fair number are.
- N - He compared this to the Dance students.
- F - Not significant.
- L - Do you feel this is sufficient to hand over to the trustees? (Report("Art at Bennington")).
- W - Tends to feel a gap between his statements and what is stated.
- N - Report could be any college. Not specific enough. Reports talk on gallery could be any gallery. Is his department asking for more?
- W - Have to have public involved.
- L - Should have community interest.
- N - (Re Report Art Education at Bennington): - More should be done to be PRESENTED TO TRUSTEES.
- W - I find a gap again, space, etc. Should find a more capsulated form - explain drawing studio, etc. What are future needs - over all activities. Students' needs - number of hours working.
- F - Vision of that space.
- W - Quantity and quality.
- F - Good ideas.
- L - Philosophy (like a page out of catalog) is known by trustees. Can condense original document.
- F - You need 30 spaces for 30 students. Yea gods! Outlandish! Why necessary? They would think.

- L - At Harvard I asked Trottenberg, Assistant Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences (he helped write program for Carpenter Center) about crowding.
"It's good to crowd, he said. Students are excited and attracted to the activity - what is more it becomes difficult to quality for the work"
- F - They produce more when crowded.
- W - Crowding not good working space. Good for discussions, etc. Relaxing space can be crowded.
- F - Good suggestion to make concrete idea - explain meaning of spaces.
- W - Another thing - given all activities and their games - put together in a social sense. What is your role as an instructor? A relationship of student to instructor. Set student up in an ideal work space where instructor can come thru for criticism. 30 studios but no 2 alike. Space not fixed. Art majors should be a stimulation to the one shot student. Could become a clique, - diagram relationship of these studios.
- F - Your ideas could be doubled, private and public - sort of a private gregariousness.
- W - Don't need to impose same pattern on all.
- L - How to do this, when we speak of a large flexible space?
- W - Walls, doors, etc.
Don't worry about answers. Let architect supply the answers. Will permanently make studios, various kinds, large - small - one-man, two-man. More or less permanent.
- L - Only faculty can spell this out.
- F - Would take these into account.
- W - Open philosophy accommodates mistakes.
- F - Space needs for Bennington. Lieberfeld's precise specifications for precise space, certain sizes, desks, etc. Very specific! Preciseness.
- L - No allowance for separte gallery at Bennington. Reviewed space plans, etc. according to 450 students, etc. (from report).
- F - Storage space in Visual Arts Building.
1. All underground for storage. Storage should be equivalent to exhibition and working space.
Manner of handling it in art schools - closets, compartments and other spaces not assigned to storage, attics, etc. Short and long range - sculptors order metal and stone by the ton. Need margin space.
- W - Architect would need to know what storage - students' work held back. Model of group projects. Things that can't be destroyed immediately.
- F - Museum at Wellesley storage O.K. Designed to be stored so can be seen easil

- L - For gallery preparatory material to be stored. Storage of valuable pieces which need protection. Lots of study material to work with. Adjacent study space to expose art works.
- F - Storage for Museum or gallery different from studio storage.
- L - A new use of Museum techniques, as a tool for students in art history and pre-curatorial studies - in other words an "idea" museum or gallery.
- W - Like a library reading stacks.
- L - Report doesn't give anything new. Should be much stronger to present to trustees. Bennington - its reputation in the art world - its advanced and prophetic loan exhibitions, its attitude toward growth and change.
- F - In my personal studio I have 1/2 working area and 1/2 storage, tools, etc. Worried about working space becoming storage space at school.
- L - In ceramics one must be able to get at materials always. Awkward storage works against experimentation.
- F - 20 to 30 students using room - rapidly gets out of hand, out of site, out of mind, so to speak.
- W - If point is never enough storage - can capture it at really little cost. Additional foundation not expensive.
- F - Give precise idea about its use - storage. Time getting ready to work among clutter.
- W - Would be criticized if designate one space for storage only and working space only.
- F - Space adjacent to working space. A growing kind of encumbrance! Storage grows and grows!
- L - I can't see them working in unclutter. What about Brandeis storage?
- F - It was behind curtain racks. Cupboards around rooms. Locked by padlock, a nuisance - always losing keys, etc.
- W - Is all work done at school?
- F - Some in Dorm rooms.
- W - In new school too?
- F - Nothing wrong - should be done.
- W - If 30 art majors, would rooms continue to be used as studios?
- F - Yes, garret type studio not frowned on. Separate part of room for painting.
- W - Can they continue to use studios too?
- F - Yes. A problem to keep studio clean.

- W - Work space becoming domain of instructor? Student puts her work in domain of instructor. Then next class same thing. So can be controlled.
- F - Yes, but not always. Some studios used by many instructors.
- W - It is a scheduling function.
- F - Not to give rooms more than one purpose.
- L - Like drawing?
- F - Yes. Things don't work out for continual use, with too many purposes.
- W - Allow luxury for short time. Set up an ideal footage temporary for experimenting with space for each class. Suggest only. Formulate ideal situation to architect.
- F - Past experience to use what possible space is left and available. Four spaces for drawing and painting. Two still-life and figure painting. (new set-up) Saves a lot of moving of materials, etc.
- W - Where is flexible space to come in? Now you are talking about definite space.
- F - 2 things: - 1. Art school should keep alive traditional art, study of the figure, for example. Still-life too. Or geometrical forms. Space be provided to keep these things alive.
- W - Allocation of space is tight. If still-life not used later, could be used for other things. Disturbed by details of specific space.
- F - Variations of all activities. Make a room for still-life.
- W - How space is highly different for one class to another, "Still-life" painting.
- L - How is still-life done? On table top: Easel?
- F - Longo uses table top. Deck not so well.
- L - Not as much action? Definition of size. Not as large?
- F - Three rooms for painting? Still-life, watercolor? Almost impossible to do different work in same room.
- W - Various reasons for set purposes of rooms. Attach specific requirements to each room. 2 painting studios?
- F - 2 for each instructor.
- F - Visual Arts group to work in separate areas. Flexibility defined. Group paintings - happenings, motion pictures.
- W - To call for space for large group performances.
- F - Space theatre. Dance, etc. Happenings. No space assigned for this at present.
- W - Allow a real program space for group performances. Happenings - things that would last a long period.

- W - Space there - why? Space for "happening", etc. easily accessible. Don't let architect dress up the idea for rooms. Need a space - not large. Basement good. If handsome (by architect) it may become a conference room or something else. Could serve as a room or a combination of rooms.
- L - Do you mean an auditorium or lecture room?
- W - Not a good idea. Can innumerate a combination of uses rather than steal from studios. Define number of students for use in these studios.
- F - Changes character if plan becomes a specific plan. Areas for things to take place.
- N - Flexibility not a good word to use.
- W - Lecture room, can this accommodate things other than lectures, slides, art history. Seat 150 people. a tiered room? Could be used for dance, lectures, concerts, etc. Removing seats. Adjacent to shop space for "happening" storage of material.
- L - How about the shape of it? Round (like space theatre).
- W - Cube as good as a vaulted space. It seems less aspecific than a vaulted space.
- L - Nothing to impose itself upon you.
- F - Would have to take place organically.
- W - Gallery for works in progress? For students.
- F - For students' work in progress and other school's work.
- W - Separate?
- F - Yes.
- W - For students' use in Visual Arts building 900 sq. ft. for gallery(30'x30') (Not to be confused with Museum) could be used for various things. Hall exhibits. Non art majors to view them to tune in with work. Alive environment.
- F - Hallway for exhibits - don't count on this space. Don't like idea. (More like corridor decor). Not looked at much after first few days. Like one-man shows by students. Couldn't support this idea of hallway space, nor or later.
- L - What happened to old gallery by telephone booth?
- F - It got lost in space quarrels.
- L - Could audio-visual, lecture, student gallery for works in progress be combined?
- F - No.
- W - Audio-visual should be separate.

- F - Any lecturer likes his room devoted to his work only. No, would not work out.
- W - Would there be two lecture rooms?
- F - Stroud's idea of 2 lecture rooms.
- W - Museum and school lecture rooms could be one room.
- L - Both lecture rooms should be combined.
- F - Gallery space could be used as "happening" space.
- L - Could be a lecture room.
- W - Lecture room would have constant room (Art History).
- F - Not allergic to teaching more art history. Would come from students.
- L - I'm critical of Bennington's Art History department. Sometimes I am surprised at deficiencies in student information.
- F - I agree, but if a girl wants only that, she's not for Bennington!
- L - Architecture - humanistic study?
- F - It could be most significant subject. It's not a humane study, at present.
- W - Thought as a professional subject.
- F - I want to keep it alive.
- L - Why?
- F - A girl may become a first class architect. She gains something.
- W - Agrees with Feeley to get an education thru architecture as well as art.
- F - It is not only a drafting board subject.
- L - It should be more technical if "Architecture" as such is offered in the curriculum. Otherwise, the title is wrong.
- F - Bennington is not a graduate school.
- W - He agrees with Lydia. Could become too dilettante.
- F - Want to keep it alive. Have to have an architectural teacher as a humane subject. Devices vary - drafting board, models, to actual buildings.
- W - Should be non-technical approach. Architecture a good education, orderly approach to solution to human values. No professional aspirations.
"Experiencing architecture!"
- L - Would have new title, explain angle of what it is.
- F - Training for painting is what is meant by architecture.

- L--L - Students have no understanding of what they are doing. Much too involved to teach architecture without technical knowledge. Departments of painting and Music more varied and students can explore more deeply.
- F - Can't divorce painting and sculpture from architecture.
- L - You can't learn professional architecture without engineering.
- F - I can't agree with you.
- W - Conception of space a concern of all arts. Ability to deal with space. Can't eliminate art history from architecture.
- F - Many students have gone on in architecture after Bennington. Introduction To Architecture is a better title.
- L - Another subject is Ceramics at Bennington. Not adequately taught compared with Cranbrook, where technical training is basic. Why not call it Ceramic Sculpture? The term "Ceramics" seems to be too comprehensive, when there is an emphasis on sculpture.
- F - Not a major subject. Graduate work done after you leave Bennington.
- F & N - Good physical therapy. Maybe Ceramic Sculpture is a better title for subject as taught at Bennington.
- L - Would space be different if Ceramic Sculpture is emphasized?
- W - 40% more space needed for circulation.
- L - Remember? You are not to be an architect, but to present your problem to him and then check.
Can we summarize the day's discussion?
- F - 1. Eliminate space figures.
2.
3.
Mr. Feeley was side-tracked and didn't finish his statements.
- W - Architect should check your figures.
- F - We used space figures based on present operation.
- W - Don't fall back too much on old facilities and figures. Forget present circumstances.
- L - You are all so nostalgic about the old carriage barn. Can't see it at all. Is crowded and dreary.
- F - Never had use of pit - only end room. Space figures for Museum should all be revised in view of your criticism.
- N - Figures are mis-leading. Can check your figures as now in existence. Allowing too many figures - they will re-check.
- W - The Museum-Gallery is not a very compelling case to be presented to

trustees. Should be stronger. Emphasize loan exhibitions. Play down permanent collection.

- L- Permanent collection can grow in time and be of infinite value in studying original material for Art History and for curatorial experience.
- F- Will have to have a place to house these. If museum gallery is out we should not attempt a permanent collection.
- W - Would a successful permanent collection rule out loan exhibits?
- F - Definitely not; this is our plan. Continue strong loan exhibitions and a growing permanent collection for reasons given.
- W - Not just another idea. A ready reference section and pre-curatorial studies, using original materials could be a new approach and use of a museum-gallery.
- L - Where students will use a museum - it will not become static. A valuable tool in art education.
- F - Re-write plan for gallery.

Discussion of art gifts to Bennington - fakes, etc.

The arts policy committee is to help with acquisition of quality works when offered to the college. If Bennington will have a museum gallery the committee will aim to activate the growth of the college collection, working in directions significant to Bennington.

SUMMARY - END OF DAY!

1. "Flexibility" word not too meaningful. Space and dimension and use of space must be carefully defined.
2. Do not go on past uses of space out of necessity, but think in fresh terms of activity and then program possibility.
3. (Wehrer). Concepts of space can create new concepts and technical possibilities at Bennington.

L.K.W. - When on tour at Harvard, Dean Trottenberg, who helped with the building program for the Carpenter Center, told us that the Carpenter Center started a whole new direction of art studies at Harvard, the technics of which are presently reaching into many departments.

The committee silently realized that the ^{ir}particular technics "learn thru doing" are basically a part of Bennington education.

But Bennington will continue to lead in its educational role in the Arts. What can a new center do for us?