

BENNINGTON COLLEGE VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

DEDICATION: May 22, 1976

"Art is an integral part of the life, atmosphere and the experience of art is regarded as an important part of a complete education. Communication, interaction and exploration are approached as a continuum in exploring a diversity of study preceding individual concentration in certain areas. By giving close attention to all arts, the student is discouraged from identifying art exclusively in terms of one craft." "Art is approached as a continuum with many forms and aspects to be discovered and explored. The emphasis is always on process, not on success."

"The building should be an instrument, a tool for the process which will engage itself within and without its walls. Its integrity will begin with a clear acknowledgement of its purpose and its delight will not be a personal conceit, but a maturely direct and simple relationship to this environment."

...Bennington College Building Program Statement, 1966

PAUL TERENCE FEELEY VISUAL ARTS BUILDING

The Paul Terence Feeley Visual Arts Building contains classrooms, workspaces, studios and a gallery devoted to various disciplines in the visual arts -- painting, drawing, graphics, architecture, sculpture, ceramics and photography. Extensively lit by natural light, the visual arts building provides the Bennington artists' need for extensive, adaptable space.

The central feature of the visual arts working space is the vast two-story "Galleria" and sculpture workshop, a 40 by 180 by 45 foot high multiple function group work area. Surrounded on the lower or "meadow" level by ceramics, graphics, photography and sculpture shops, the Galleria is used for instruction, creation of large artworks, or interaction between the various disciplines. Overhead cranes with capacities up to two tons move materials over the entire space. Double height doors on critical routes throughout the building permit large objects to be brought into the working studio spaces and interactively between the visual and the performing arts.

The visual arts studios are large, naturally-lit spaces, varied in size and subdivided by means of removable and demountable walls for various temporal activity patterns. The studio spaces on the upper level are those of painting, drawing and architecture, whereas those media requiring fixed and heavy equipment, such as sculpture, ceramics, graphics, photography, are on the lower level and have direct contact with the "galleria" space and work spaces outdoors, away from the more public circulation and with uninterrupted access to the wide meadow and the pond. Adjacent, but separate for safety reasons, is the ceramics kiln building.

more....

SUZANNE LEMBERG USDAN GALLERY

The 100 by 40 by 16 foot high Usdan Gallery is accessible through large barn doors; an electric hoist and monorail help move objects from the lower level of Lester Martin Exhibit Hall to the Usdan Gallery. The Usdan Gallery is subdividable into two exhibition spaces for simultaneous exhibits of varying sizes. Six large "L" shaped divider units made up of pairs of 10' x 14' panels are readily moved by special detachable caster units to permit a wide variety of gallery arrangements.

The lower level of the gallery will be the future permanent study collection. Its large central study room has storage rooms on either side for the selected collection of two and three-dimensional learning resources in the visual arts. This future study collection will be primarily for interaction of students with objects from the collection and an intimate one-to-one relationship of quiet contemplation. Space for a future curator and exhibit workshop preparation and maintenance are part of the lower permanent study collection area.

PERFORMING ARTS BUILDING

The Performing Arts Building has three main spaces: the 100 by 100 by 30 foot high Martha Hill Dance Workshop and performance area; the 60 by 60 by 30 foot high drama theatre and workshop and the 60 by 100 by 30 foot high Susan A. Greenwall Music Workshop and performance hall.

Support features of the Performing Arts Building include a scene shop with access to the dance and drama areas, dressing rooms, dance practice studios and drama classrooms, and a facsimile drama theatre that has the same features as the adjacent drama performance area, but is 40 by 40 by 20 foot high, or two-thirds the size of the larger theatre. The facsimile room can open to become part of the drama theatre, or it may be used for rehearsal.

DRAMA

The drama workshop and performance area has no permanent stage and no fixed proscenium, but can produce a nearly infinite variability in audience-performer relationships. To create various kinds of settings, curtains on a trackage system surround the drama space, providing either a 16-foot high free-hanging scrim and cyclorama or black velour curtain.

Above the Bennington Drama and Dance Workshop areas, chain link safety-netting has been secured. The netting, unique feature of Bennington's Performing Arts Building, permits access to the complete ceiling area through the upper truss space. Thus, through the placement of "rigging," a dramatist may suspend ropes and pulleys for the lowering of curtains, lights and objects in and out of the performance space. With nearly 500 electrical outlets, a variety of controllable lights can be fixed, above and below the safety net, for focusing on particular points of the dramatic action.

To complete the variability of audience-performer relationships, the architect's unusual non-fixed seating platforms can be arranged to form a variety of theatre configurations.

The flexible modular platform seating system is a kit of parts from which different theatres are formed. Rigid platforms on lockable rolling casters are held together by accessory links and lock pins at the floor level. The 22-1/2-degree corner platforms and the unit-to-unit attachment permit a wide variety of angular and height relationships.

The intent of these units is to serve as both acting and seating platforms which can be entered from the lower-meadow level and the lobby-middle level. As well, the platforms stack vertically to allow compact storage when not in use. The drama audience capacity is for 150-200 persons.

The drama performance area is floored with linoleum over Douglas Fir, permitting stage screws for securing scenery to be set in the floor. A system of 30 removable 4-foot by 8-foot floor panels--or trapdoors--allows special effects and access to the stage from below the floor. Lighting and sound is controlled from the control booth above the lobby level.

THE MARTHA HILL DANCE WORKSHOP AND PERFORMING AREA

The Martha Hill Dance Workshop, named after the founder of the Bennington Dance Program, also employs the unique chain link safety netting secured below the ceiling. The nearly 600 electrical outlets above the dance floor and on the catwalk surrounding the workshop serve to pinpoint light to the locus of the performance.

This extremely large space will permit a new range of experimentation in performance. A dancer may dance 140 feet in one direction or may dance within a small, restricted stage area, surrounded by the flexible seating platforms that are also used in the drama and music area, -- or a dance event may surround audience islands. The audience capacity is 250-350.

A unique aspect of the dance theatre's construction is in its flooring. Most previous dance floors achieved resiliency by wood-on-wood construction. But at Bennington, industrial fiberglass cubes, secured underneath the floor, provide the springiness so valuable to optimum performance. The finish of the hardwood floor is dark to avoid light reflection and with the dark wall and ceiling finish, permits maximum light control.

Because of the size of the dance workshop, a movable rather than fixed curtain trackage system will be used. This will consist of movable 16-foot high curtain towers. Mounted on casters, the curtain towers allow convex, concave or flat curtain assemblies in order to achieve further variations on definition of the dance space.

MUSIC

The Susan A. Greenwall Music Performance Area offers a delightful view of a Bennington landmark -- the 2,340 foot high Mt. Anthony.

A wide open space with ample windows, the music concert area and workshop has a seating capacity of 300-600. It has a larger seating area because music concerts are often single-performance occasions, especially when soloists are involved.

Six feet from the ceiling, catwalks surround the workshop in order to fix lighting and microphones; the additional flexible seating platforms, as in the dance and drama areas, will be added in the next months.

The Music Workshop has the same special resilient dance floor as in the Dance Workshop and Dance Studios and has extensive lighting control network to permit collaborative efforts in Dance events and Lyric Theater. The same roof structure permits "rigging" pulleys, lighting, and adjustable reflective and absorptive ceiling elements for future "tuning" of the space. The room may be entered from the lower-meadow level and the middle-lobby level.

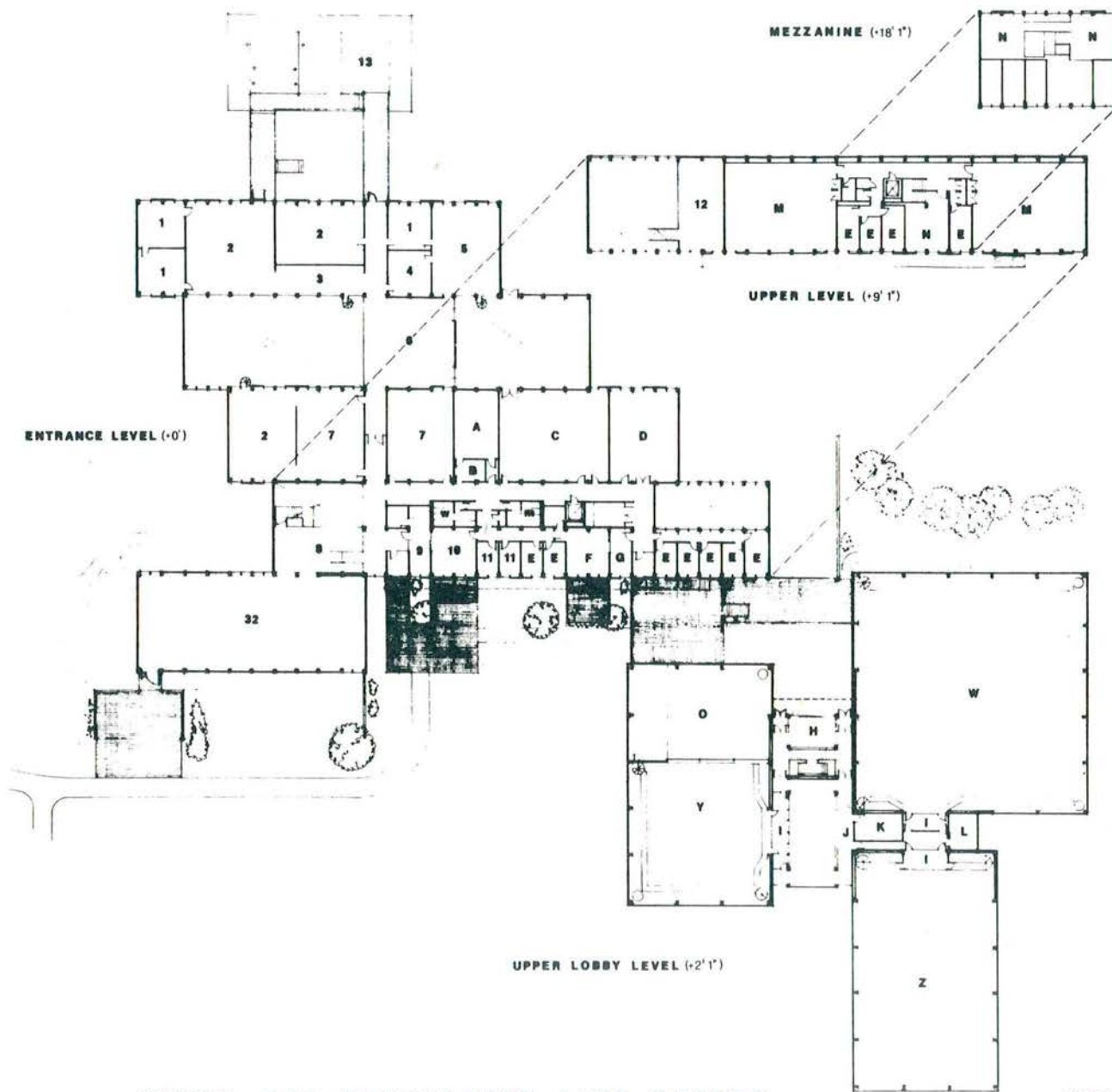
ARCHITECT: Robertson Ward, Jr., F.A.I.A.

Timothy D. Smith, A.I.A., Resident Project Manager
 Brian K. Ferguson, A.I.A., Project Job Captain
 M. Wayne Griffin, A.I.A., Equipment Job Captain

Structural Engineers: The Engineers Collaborative, Ltd.
 Mechanical Engineers: Environmental Systems Design, Inc.

General Contractor: Granger Contracting Co., Inc.

Mechanical: Seward and Arnold, Inc.
 Electrical: MATCO Electric Co., Inc.
 Structural Timber: The Koppers Company, Inc.
 Laminated Siding: Potlatch Forests, Inc.
 Steel: Gouverneur Iron Works Div., Cives Corp.



VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

UPPER LEVELS

**PAUL TERENCE FEELEY
VISUAL ARTS BUILDING**

- entrance level (+0')
 1 FACULTY STUDIO
 2 PAINTING STUDIO
 3 STORAGE
 4 **FRANCIS R. DEWING SEMINAR ROOM**
 5 ARCHITECTURE STUDIO
 6 INTRODUCTORY AND MULTI-USE
 7 DRAWING STUDIO
 8 **LESTER MARTIN EXHIBIT HALL**
 9 SECRETARY
 10 **BARBARA AND MAURICE DEANE ART READING ROOM**
 11 OFFICES
 12 STUDENT LOUNGE AND EXHIBIT (+8' 9")
 13 WORK DECK

- meadow level (-13' 9")
 14 KILNS
 15 CERAMICS WORKSHOP
 16 STUDENT STUDIO
 17 WOOD AND METAL SHOP
 18 GALLERIA
 19 INTRODUCTORY
 20 SCULPTURE WORKSHOP
 21 GRAPHICS WORKSHOP
 22 PAINT AND CLAY SHOP
 23 **CAROLYN CROSSETT ROWLAND PHOTOGRAPHY DARKROOMS**
 24 VISUAL ARTS STORAGE
 25 EXHIBIT AREA
 26 **LOIS AND RICHARD MAZER PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO**
 27 COLLEGE ARCHIVES
 28 MEN'S LOCKER ROOM
 29 WOMEN'S LOCKER ROOM
 30 MECHANICAL ROOM
 31 WORK TERRACE

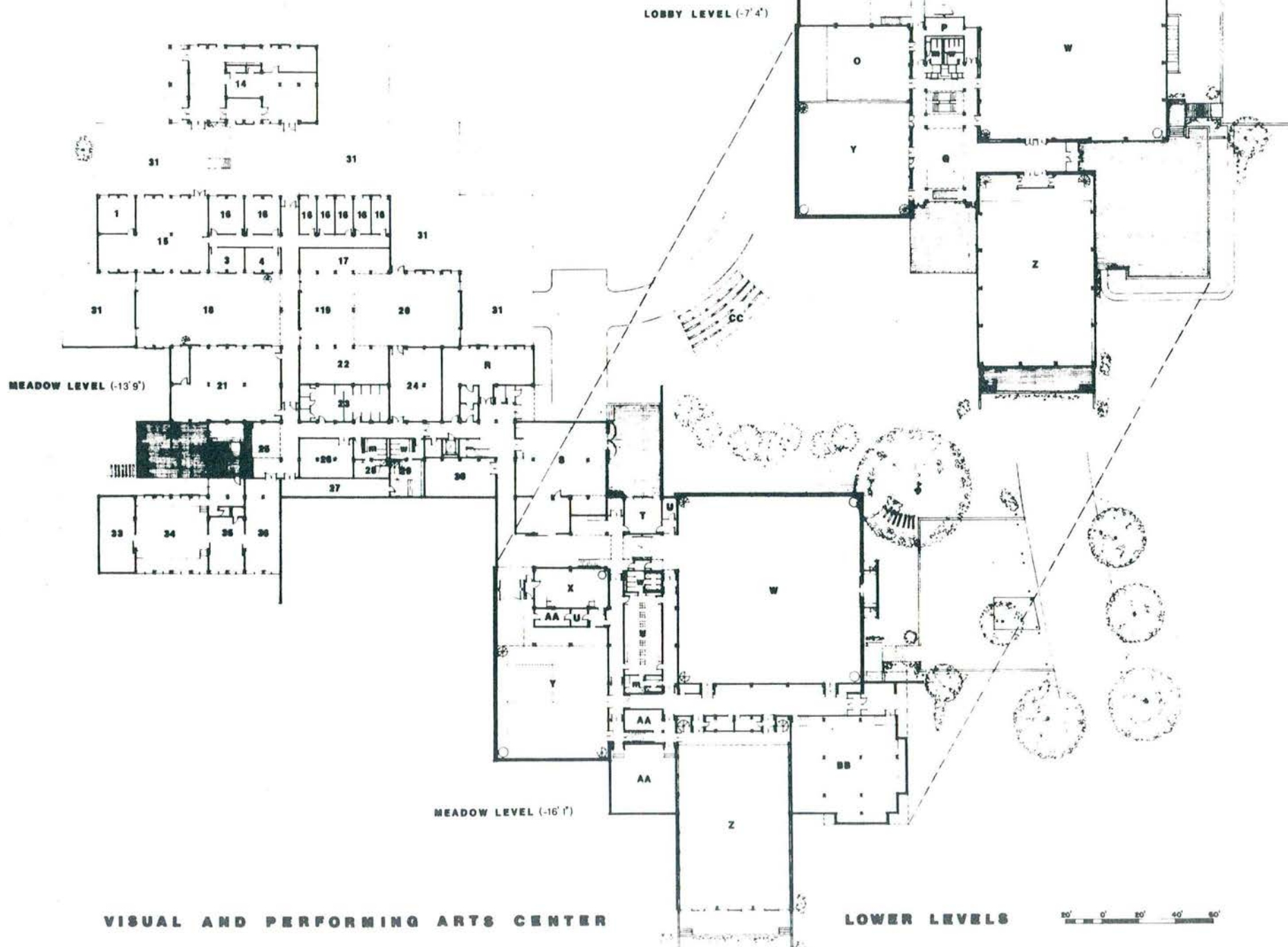
SUZANNE LEMBERG USDAM GALLERY

- entrance level (+0')
 32 GALLERY
 meadow level (-13' 9")
 33 PAINTING STORAGE
 34 PERMANENT COLLECTION STUDY
 35 SCULPTURE STORAGE
 36 PREPARATION AND STORAGE

PERFORMING ARTS BUILDING

- entrance level (+0')
 A SEMINAR
 B PROJECTION ROOM
 C FILM AND LIGHT STUDIO
 D STUDIO
 E OFFICES
 F READING ROOM
 G SECRETARY
 upper lobby level (+2' 1")
 H ENTRANCE LOBBY
 I CONTROL BOOTH
 J GALLERY
 K MECHANICAL ROOM
 L WORKSHOP
 upper level (+9' 1") and mezzanine (+18' 1")
 M OFFICES
 N DANCE STUDIO
 O SCENIC DESIGN STUDIO
 lobby level (-7' 4")
 P DRAMA FACSIMILE
 Q COATS
 R **JEROME A. NEWMAN COURT**
 meadow level (-16' 1")
 S COSTUME WORKSHOP (-13' 9")
 T SCENE SHOP
 U **SARA JANE TROY SCHIFFER GREEN ROOM**
 V STAGE MANAGER'S ROOM
 W DRESSING ROOM
 X **MARTHA HILL DANCE WORKSHOP**
 Y ACTING TUTORIAL ROOM
 Z DRAMA WORKSHOP
 AA **SUSAN A. GREENWALL MUSIC WORKSHOP**
 BB STORAGE
 CC MECHANICAL ROOM
 DD OUTDOOR THEATER





VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

LOWER LEVELS

BENNINGTON COLLEGE

BENNINGTON VERMONT

ROBERTSON WARD JR

FAIA

ARCHITECT